



Bereavement policy

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1. Definition of bereavement and grief

- Bereavement is the experience of losing someone important to us. It is characterised by grief, which is the process and the range of emotions we go through as we gradually adjust to the loss.
- Losing someone important to us can be emotionally devastating - whether that be a partner, family member, friend or pet. It is natural to go through a range of physical and emotional processes as we gradually come to terms with the loss.
- Bereavement affects everyone in different ways, and it's possible to experience any range of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- Feelings of grief can also happen because of other types of loss or changes in circumstances, for example: the end of a relationship, the loss of a job, moving away to a new location, a decline in the physical or mental health of someone we care about.

2. Ethos

The Trust will create an environment that is sensitive and compassionate to the needs of those wishing to grieve, whatever their cultural or beliefs framework. Our extensive set of policies will be used as a supportive framework to guide leaders and managers to approach each situation in a consistent and personal way, recognising that every situation will be different and that we are dealing with people and not a policy.

It will be necessary to consider what may be the best form of support to offer. The following options should be considered:

- Appoint a main point of contact. This is not necessarily the Academy Head and may be another member of staff or Central Team member.
- Agree jointly what support is needed/wanted/acceptable
- Regular check-in
- The workplace may be the support mechanism that an employee may need and adjustments should be made to provide support but ensuring the least disruption to the workplace.
- Consider a phased /supported return to work with reduced responsibilities that may be amended quickly as required
- Offer Trust Wellbeing support
- Research and offer appropriate alternative support from recognised bodies

3. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the school will respond to a death in our Trust community
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our Trust community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key colleagues
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning their settings following bereavement



4. Roles and responsibilities

The Academy Head

The Academy Head has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Academy Head will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support any staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- Will nominate and support a designated member of staff - see responsibilities below

Designated member/s of staff

A designated member of staff or multiple staff will:

- Coordinate support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Ensure additional support is provided during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

5. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

- Academy Head will monitor and support staff members who are supporting the bereaved through regular conversations
- Academy Head will signpost any staff members who need support to other colleagues or services where appropriate, such as counselling through our Wellbeing package.
- Specific bereavement training has been provided to some colleagues in the Trust and contact details can be accessed through Central training log. Further training can be booked with organisations such as Cruse: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/organisations/bereavement-training/webinar-loss-and-bereavement-awareness-for-everyone>



6. Immediate actions following a death (of pupil or staff member)

The Trust, including schools, will respond in a planned and agreed manner, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute their part in a way that is consistent with the ethos of the Trust.

- The CEO will co-ordinate the Trust's response and be vital in creating an appropriate atmosphere. They will be the first point of contact and will liaise with all parties concerned and affected.
- They will allocate a specific person (usually the affected person's Academy Head or Line Manager) to support the bereaved. This person would, in the later stages of bereavement, offer support and check on the progress of any individuals involved.
- The specific allocated person would make contact to sensitively clarify information and establish an understanding of the wishes of the family.
- In addition, a small group of staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention. This group would probably consist of the Academy Head/Line Manager or their representative, and a member of staff particularly close to the individual affected.
- The CEO or his representative will inform members of the relevant community.
- Pupils and parents or carers will be informed at the same time and as promptly as circumstances will allow, usually by letter on the same day. Staff who are absent will be informed by their line manager.
- The CEO will liaise with the media and possibly the police.

Death of a Member of Staff

When such an event occurs it is usually extremely traumatic, especially for members of staff dealing with their own grief as well as comforting pupils and the wider community.

- To avoid rumours it is advisable that the news is broken as soon as possible.
- A gathering together of staff to allow them to grieve in private before announcing the news to the rest of the school is something that should be considered.
- Generally such news is broken in assembly or in classes, in a manner where everyone may be told simultaneously.
- Later in class pupils should be allowed the opportunity to express their grief individually with the support of the teacher and or support staff
- A memorial service may be considered. The coming together of the whole school collectively for one purpose helps each individual come to terms with their own grief in a shared experience. Such services also offer the opportunity for those who may have been unable to attend the funeral to express themselves through drama, poems and letters.
- Without encroaching on their privacy, colleagues should keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death.
- Support through the Trust's Wellbeing package and relevant external providers should be signposted.



Death of a pupil

The death of a pupil is probably the most demanding situation that the school community might face. Comprehending and coming to terms with such an event is going to be equally difficult and will require great emotional support from the school staff and wider Trust.

- If faced with a sudden death the Academy Head should contact the deceased parents/carers/next of kin as soon as possible thus enabling compliance with any of their wishes.
- The immediate class friends and siblings of the deceased should be gathered and the news, if not already known, be broken before an announcement is made to the rest of the school, thus allowing private grief.
- To avoid rumours an announcement should be made to the whole of the school as soon as practically possible.
- Additional support from fellow teaching colleagues may well be required as well as the assistance of the Trust's pastoral support structures. It is important that all interactions are based on accessible and child friendly language.

In the event of a child becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents or carers should always be respected. Should the child wish to attend school, staff may need to inform pupils of the young person's condition. Occasionally the pupil may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying we feel is the best line of approach. It is important that all interactions are based on accessible and child friendly language.

Death of a close family member of a pupil or staff member

We acknowledge the enormity of losing a close family member on the rest of the family and undertake to provide sensitive and ongoing support to those people in our school community who have been bereaved.

- A specific person (usually the Academy Head) will be allocated to support the bereaved. It is important that it is established how the bereaved wants to be supported and the level of contact initially as this will vary from individual to individual.
- This person would offer support and check on the progress of any individuals involved.
- The specific allocated person would make contact to sensitively clarify information and establish an understanding of the wishes of the family.
- In addition, a member or small group of staff will be identified to keep in touch with the colleague/family so contact from their point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention. This group would probably consist of the Academy Head/Line Manager or their representative, and a member of staff particularly close to the individual affected.
- If it is a member of staff who has been bereaved, leave from work may be taken according to the leave of absence policy.
- Return to work or school will be managed on an individual basis according to the needs and situation of the individual, acknowledging that school may be a place where the bereaved chooses to be and is good for their mental health and wellbeing but that they may well not be able to access their usual work patterns and reasonable adjustments should be made and documented.



Multiple Deaths, Death in School

In the event of multiple deaths, additional support and resources will probably be required.

- The Trust Critical Incident team should meet to agree a planned course of action and the Critical Incident Plan will be actioned.
- It is likely that there will be considerable media interest. The CEO will decide what information should be released. Clearly information that might upset, confuse or exacerbate the situation should be withheld.
- It is important that one individual, pre-selected and briefed by the team, acts as spokesperson, relaying consistent information, this is most likely to be the CEO.
- Another consideration might be the setting up and running of an emergency Trust hotline.

Informing parents/carers

- In the event of the death of a pupil or member of the school community, the Academy Head will liaise with the CEO to agree the timing and wording of a letter to be sent home to families.
- The letter will inform families as to the actions taken during the day to inform and support staff and pupils and signpost them to additional support. Permission to share information must be sought from 'next of kin'.
- Responding to the media
- In the event that a death that affects the school or Trust raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:
- The CEO will coordinate the Trust's response and liaise with media if appropriate. It is important that other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the CEO

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

Support for pupils and staff

- Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death. Ongoing support such as that already mentioned will continue for as long as necessary and appropriate.
- Additional support from external providers and charities will be accessed and signposted where appropriate.
- A re-integration meeting will be arranged between pupil and family or colleague and the Academy Head. (see below)
- The school and Trust will support them in their return to school/work and for as long as necessary afterwards.



Funerals, Memorial Services/Pupil Participation

Before the bereaved pupil or member of staff returns to school there is likely to be a funeral. It is probable that pupils and staff will express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the agreement of the deceased's family or relatives' prior agreement, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers.

- The CEO/Academy Head, or their representatives, should be the only person representing the Trust and in contact with the family/relatives to discuss funeral arrangements.
- If the bereaved family wish families and staff to attend, the Trust's Mental Health First Aiders, family support workers and where appropriate TIS practitioners should be available to offer support before and after the service.
- If they do not wish members of the Trust to attend, their wishes should be respected and the Trust/school should consider arranging an alternative such as ;planning a memorial service, reading lessons, poems and choosing hymns/songs which may all assist in the grieving process.

Tributes and condolences

- It may be appropriate for the school community to come together to memorialise the deceased in an appropriate way such as a plaque, tree or new item for use in the school.
- Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate
- This may take the form of a ceremony, but is to be decided on an individual basis and always with the agreement and knowledge of the deceased's family.

Timetables

- As previously mentioned a bereaved pupil or member of staff may need an adjusted timetable or workload/responsibilities on their return to school/setting and this should be discussed and documented with the person involved and the Academy Head.
- Pupils not directly bereaved should return to normal timetable as soon as possible, whilst acknowledging the need for memorial work and additional and bespoke PSHE curriculum work where appropriate. Their ongoing feelings, mental health and wellbeing should be monitored on a ongoing basis

Reintegration meeting

The Academy Head will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers or bereaved colleague to discuss how best to manage a return to school/work

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil or colleague is emotionally ready to return to the classroom/work either full-time or with adjustments to their timetable/workload to allow for a phased return
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers or colleague have about the return to school/work
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)



- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed. In the case of a colleague, have an identified point of contact and protocol for if they are feeling overwhelmed once back at work.
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability
- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

Ongoing support for pupils

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how they are coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will endeavour to track these dates and offer support.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that TIS and other pastoral support is accessed and involve the inclusion team for advice if needed.

Ongoing support for colleagues

- We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.
- We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will endeavour to track these dates and offer support.
- We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person.



Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish Helpline	08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/about-bereavement/
Further contacts	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/



Document Control

Changes History

Version	Date	Amended By	Details of Change
1	15/12/2022	Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, CEO & Principal	New Policy

Approval

Name	Job Title	Signed	Date
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	Principal/CEO	Electronic signature	15/12/2022
Dawn Carman-Jones	On behalf of the Trust Board	Electronic signature	15/12/2022

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