



# Bereavement Policy 2023-2024

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**Approved by the Board of Governors:**

September 2023

**Review:**

July 2024

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# 1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the School will respond to a death in our School community;
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school 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 staff members and the Board of Governors, and
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 The Head

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

The 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;
- Where appropriate, liaise with the diocese and local parish priest;
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death;
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested;
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to School after a bereavement, and
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.

### 2.2 Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The DSL leads the pastoral team, including the DDSLs, Senior Teacher (PSHE and Pupil Wellbeing) and SENCO, in taking responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant - for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral team will:

- Provide direct 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, and
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new School.

## **2.3 Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the Head.

The Board of Governors will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the School is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through regular catch-ups with the Head or pastoral team by the link governor;
- Monitor the Head's emotional wellbeing through regular meetings between the Head and chair;
- Assist the Head, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death, and
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the Head is not available to respond to a death immediately.

## **3. 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. That support may include, as necessary:

- Regular meetings with a member of the pastoral team or Head;
- Access to the School counsellor or external resources;
- A risk assessment undertaken, and
- Training offered.

## 4. Immediate actions following a death

In the case of a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member):

- The Head will normally oversee a meeting of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to confirm initial steps and delegate responsibilities;
- Contact with the deceased's family/families will be established by the Head and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations. We will be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time as rumour and gossip spread quickly;
- The Chair of Governors (or, in their absence, a vice chair) will be informed and kept abreast of developments by the Head;
- Staff will normally be informed before pupils and will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance;
- Pupils will, where appropriate, be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision will be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole School approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed;
- A letter to all School families affected will normally be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed, and
- Where necessary, a press statement will be prepared by the Head.

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member).

- The DSL (or other member of the SLT) will normally oversee the response in this scenario, keeping the Head informed of each step;
- The DSL will meet with the pastoral team to discuss the School's response and delegate duties;
- Contact with the deceased's family/families will be established by the DSL and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations. We will be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time as rumour and gossip spread quickly;
- Staff will normally be informed before pupils and will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance, and
- Pupils will, where appropriate, be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision will be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole School approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed.

The procedures listed above are not exhaustive and may be adapted according to the circumstances. They may also be used in the event of a serious accident.

#### **4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family**

In the case of a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), the Head will make contact with the family to confirm news and to determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how. If the Head is not available, the Deputy Head Pastoral or another member of SLT will be tasked by the Chair with this responsibility.

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member), the DSL (or another member of SLT) will make contact with the family to confirm news and to determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the School community and how.

If the family cannot be immediately contacted, a decision will be made by the person leading the response, in consultation with the SLT on what information may be shared whilst contact is being established.

In the initial response, we will be mindful of the possibility of news of a death spreading via social media before confirmation can be made and decide what may be communicated in the meantime to the School community.

#### **4.2 Sharing the news with staff**

In the case of a death that affects the whole school community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), the Head will be responsible for sharing news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. Depending on the circumstances, this may involve calling a full staff meeting (either in person or online).

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member), the DSL will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. This may happen on an individual basis or via a staff briefing, depending on the circumstances.

In both instances, it is important that staff are informed in a timely manner.

We will ensure that the family's wishes are respected in communicating with others.

#### **4.3 Sharing the news with pupils**

In the case of a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), the Head will be responsible for sharing news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. To ensure that pupils are informed in a timely and appropriate way, it may be appropriate to call a whole school assembly or having members if the SLT or form tutors share the news with smaller groups.

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member), the DSL or senior member of the pastoral team, will be responsible for sharing

news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. To ensure that pupils are informed in a timely and appropriate way, members of SLT or form tutors may be called upon to share the news with individuals or small groups.

We will ensure that the family's wishes are respected in communicating with others.

#### **4.4 Informing parents/carers**

How parents/carers will be notified of a death (e.g. sending a letter home with pupils explaining the steps you've taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information)

In the case of a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), the Head will decide how parents/carers will be notified of a death. This may, depending on the circumstances, involve sending a whole School email or a letter home with pupils.

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member), the DSL, in consultation with the Head, will, if necessary be responsible for informing parents/carers.

We will ensure that the family's wishes are respected in communicating with others.

#### **4.5 Responding to specific causes of death**

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation. We will seek additional advice, as necessary, in response to:

- A death that is the result of suicide (for example, the Samaritans provide a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens);
- A death that is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter'), and
- A death that is due to contagious disease. In this instance we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

#### **4.6 Responding to the media**

In the event that a death that affects the School raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The Head, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, will be responsible for responding to requests from the media;
- Staff members would be asked not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the Head or a member of the SLT;
- The Head would decide what steps would be taken in response to requests.

## **5. Follow-up actions and support following a death**

The following actions may be taken after a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), and after a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member).

### **5.1 Support for pupils and staff**

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

In the case of a death that affects the whole School community (such as that of a pupil or staff member), the Head will meet with the SLT to discuss support that may be offered. This may include:

- Meetings with a member of the pastoral team and SEND department;
- In the case of pupils, meetings with the form tutors;
- Access to the School counsellor;
- Access to diocesan, parish or other religious resources if appropriate;
- Signposting by the DSL to external support, such as community mental health resources and bereavement charities; and
- An individual risk assessment in place (including, for example, access to a safe space in School).

In the case of a more personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member), the DSL may meet with the pastoral team (including the SENCO) to discuss options for providing support, including those listed above.

### **5.2 Timetables**

There may be occasions when adaptation to individual or even whole School timetables may be appropriate. The Head (in the case of a death that affects the whole School community) or DSL (in the case of a more personal bereavement) will decide, in consultation with the SLT, whether any such adjustments are needed.

### **5.3 Tributes and condolences**

It may be appropriate for the School community to come together to memorialise the deceased, for example in a whole school Mass or physical memorial such as a book of condolences.

In any such action, we will be guided by the wishes of the deceased's family and mindful of any religious/cultural considerations that need to be taken into account.



## 5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service, and
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute.

The procedure for staff and pupils to request leave to attend will depend on the circumstances, but will be made clear to those concerned by the Head or DSL.

## 6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### 6.1 Reintegration meeting

The DSL (or other senior member of the pastoral team) will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to School.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return;
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to School;
- 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, and
- Open lines of communication between the School and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support.

Additional support will be offered for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a "disability".

### 6.2 Ongoing support

We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping.

We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. These will be monitored by the DSL, who will offer additional support at such times.

We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that the pupil is known to the appropriate staff as a 'pupil of

concern', so that concerns can be raised in staff briefings, pastoral meetings or via CPOMS and appropriate action can be taken by a member of the pastoral team.

We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions.

## **7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement**

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the School will support them in their return to School and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### **7.1 Reintegration meeting**

The Head of Operations will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to School.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- 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);
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school;
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant), and
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member.

All meetings will be recorded.

### **7.2 Ongoing support**

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 will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

- Enabling access to internal and external sources of support such as the School counsellor or agencies such as [Cruse Bereavement Care](#);
- Regular meetings with a member of SLT or other staff member; and
- A risk assessment to consider provision for flexible working or a reduced timetable.

## 8. Associated policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy;
- Behaviour and Discipline policy, and
- Staff Wellbeing policy

### Appendix: useful contacts

Organisation	Contact details
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a>
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a>
Cruse Bereavement Care (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)	Link: <a href="https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contactsdirectory/az.aspx?OrgId=454">https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/contactsdirectory/az.aspx?OrgId=454</a>