



## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

Approved and signed by the Learning & Standards Committee

**05.10.22**

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**CHANGES**

**OCT 22**

Policy implemented

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## 1. Aims

Our Trust aims to ensure that:

- There are plans in place to deal with death, grief and bereavement
- Pupils and staff are supported
- Impact of death within a school is considered
- Use expertise and share responsibilities
- Create a bereavement aware culture within the community

## 2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on guidance from:

Child Bereavement UK

A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools

## 3. Ethos

This policy works alongside the schools:

- Mentally Healthy Organisation (TISUK) work
- PSHE and SMSC Policy
- Relationships Policy
- Emergency procedure guidance
- Attendance Policy

Empathic understanding in the familiar secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support that some pupils, or members of staff require. We train all staff in empathic listening and conversations on induction. Where the impact of the grief is more complex, referral to more specialist support may need to be considered.

Specialist support may come from:

Childbereavementuk.org

Plymouth Excellence Cluster/ MAST

Jeremiah's Journey

## 4. Rationale

1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen have been bereaved of a parent or sibling – that is one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person. Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement, or sometimes, the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

## 5. Objectives

- \* This policy will give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement.
- \* To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.

- \* To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- \* To identify key staff within the school and the Trust.
- \* To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

## **6. Working with a family who are expecting a bereavement**

If a family are expecting a bereavement of a family member whether that be an adult or child this can be a harrowing time for the family. Communication with the parent/carers is paramount and school need to be led by their wishes. If the expected bereavement is that of a pupil at the school it is vital that the parent/carers are encouraged to share their wishes with the school around attendance and communication, what the child knows etc. If parents wish for their child not to attend school or to have a reduced timetable this should be reviewed with the Education Welfare Officer. A care plan may need to be put in place by the InCo. This may not be information that everyone needs to know and again this should be led by the family, however, key adults working with the child should be informed. Pastoral support may be necessary through the HUT, 'time out' and 'safe space' opportunities should also be considered. There may be external agencies who can support the family – Marie Curie, Macmillan, Together for Short Lives.

## **7. The death of a pupil or member of staff**

### Who?

The CEO and Head of School alongside the InCo will take charge of the incident. This will be overseen by the Trust Inclusion Lead if appropriate.

In the case of a sudden or traumatic death of a pupil, the school may be called upon to be part of a multi-agency review. The school should seek advice and support from Plymouth Excellence Cluster.

If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a step by step programme to support schools – 0808 1682528.

The best person to liaise with the family may depend on the specific situation and relationship with the pupil/family, however, it is likely to be the Family Support Worker alongside guidance of the SLT.

### Communication

The indiscriminate spread of news via social media may mean that some members of the school community hear the news before others. The school will let members of staff know about the news via email at the nearest opportunity. Some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family are consulted.

We will seek advice from the Local Authority PR link and PLPCIC HR link. Legal advice can also be sought from Browne Jacobson as well using their Quick Call advice line.

When delivering the news to pupils this may be more appropriate in smaller groups with a familiar adult. If a pupil has died, it may be more appropriate to share the news with their class first. A script may be useful to help staff feel prepared. Staff should not be afraid to show emotion as this is a human

reaction. Children with SEN should be considered as well as children with English as an additional language.

### Training

Staff across the MAT are frequently signposted to Winston's Wish and some members of the team may have had 'Grieving in Puddles' training offered by MAST.

### Tribute

The family should be consulted around plans for a permanent memorial or tribute. A temporary tribute/book of condolence should be available and placed in a safe accessible place (HUT). This should be supervised. The family should be offered to visit and see the tribute book if they wish. Photographs can be taken to be shared at a later point when the family are ready. When the tribute/book is removed, the family, staff and pupils should be given notice to prepare them beforehand.

### Funeral

It is important that the family are consulted to find out whether staff and or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral.

If a collection is organised the family again should be consulted as to what they would like this to be spent on e.g. flowers, charity.

If staff are permitted to the funeral practicalities of cover and time off need to be arranged. Depending on the number of staff the school may need to be closed.

If pupils are attending the funeral this needs to be supported and supervised by parents.

### Staff Wellbeing

Staff may find this period of supporting bereaved pupils stressful and upsetting. Being alongside anyone experiencing a loss can be emotionally draining and supporting a bereaved pupil particularly so. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Consider how school can support these members of staff. If possible, capacity should be made to share the load. It is important that staff's wellbeing is considered. They may want to contact the Child Bereavement UK helpline – 0800 0288840.

## **8. Supporting a bereaved pupil**

Most grieving pupils do not need a bereavement 'expert'. They need support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person.

### Safe Space

The HUT staff and environment will be used to provide a safe place and time to grieve. Although school can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils there may need to be some flexibility. Young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to leave a classroom and visit the HUT or a safe place should be permitted/encouraged.

## Communication

It can be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school if the pupil has had any absence. This could be a familiar adult, FSW, InCo, HOS etc.

The purpose of the meeting should be to:

- Acknowledge the death
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need some 'time out'. A plan should be put in place for the child to be able to inform the teacher if they need this time.
- Consider resources for these 'time out' periods – journals, art, craft, books
- Set guidelines for the communication between home and school

A short film is available with regards to the child's reintegration: [Childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved](http://Childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved)

## Long term support

The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support. Significant dates, anniversaries, Mothers and Fathers Day etc may be difficult. Regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the child is coping.

The grief may impact on the pupil's progress. This should be monitored and interventions should be put in place if and when necessary.

Bereaved young people can find change difficult, so preparing them in advance where possible may help them to voice their worries and ease the process. Transitions should be carefully managed.

Peers of the pupil may also need support if they have a friend who is bereaved.

## **9. Death, Grief and Bereavement within the curriculum**

Teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand their feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. Informing parents and carers in advance of any lessons regarding this will help to gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared. Recently bereaved pupils may find it helpful if they are given the option to work elsewhere or have 'time out' from areas of the curriculum which cover grief or bereavement.

## **A.Script**

Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.

Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.

If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred.

If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife say which of these are definitely not correct. Where appropriate, remind pupils of their responsibilities and the impact when posting on social media.

Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them.

Mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support.

Acknowledge that not everyone may feel sad and that is ok.

Allow a break in the timetable for the pupils to process the news and take a little 'time out'.



## **B.Template letter to Parents and Carers - death of a member of staff**

Dear parents/carers

I am sorry to inform you that a member of our staff, NAME, died WHEN. The pupils were told today by their class teacher and many will be reacting to this news.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger.

Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language.

For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website [childbereavementuk.org](http://childbereavementuk.org).

Our thoughts are with family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember life.

Sign-off Head of School

## C.Template letter to Parents and Carers - death of a pupil

Dear parents and carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the pupils of the death of NAME, a pupil in CLASS. NAME died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term. He/She was a member of the class/school community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

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Sign-off Head of School

## **D.Template letter to Parents and Carers**

Dear NAME

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of NAME death.

There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

As a school community, we will miss NAME very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to friends, classmates and teachers.

NAME was a member of our school family. If we can do anything to help as you plan funeral, please let us know. We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With sympathy Head of School