

Trust Bereavement Policy

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Owner	CEO and Executive Team
Approver	Risk & Audit Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our Trust will respond to a death in any of our school communities
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school communities 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 those involved in governance
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. The designated person within the Trust who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is the Chief Executive with support from the Headteacher of the particular school and the central Trust team. In the event that this person is absent then the Headteacher will take responsibility, with support from the central Trust team.

2.2. The responsibilities of the designated person, with support from the Headteachers, are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, trustees, academy councillors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the Trust and sharing the responsibilities.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

2.3. There should be a nominated Academy Councillor with responsibility for bereavement in each school.

His/Her responsibilities are:

- To support the Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

3.1. Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported by their direct line manager and the HR team where appropriate. The wellbeing of these staff will be supported in the same way as Trust Safeguarding staff.

3.2. Appropriate and relevant training for responsible staff should be provided to all those staff responsible in any way for supporting bereavement in school.

4. Following a Bereavement

4.1. We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve.
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

4.2. We recognise that:

- Grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- Differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- The death of a child or member of staff has huge repercussions beyond those immediately involved with that individual, and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching contacts.

5. The Management of Bereavement in School

5.1. A universally accepted procedure outline will not, in itself, enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build.

5.2. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a Trust we state our commitment to do our best to assist any such family that may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

6. Transition

6.1. It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement (particularly recent bereavement, or loss of a parent/carer/sibling) that this information is passed on to the relevant staff when they move onto a new class or school.

7. Death of a Pupil

7.1. The school may be notified of the death of a pupil in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- The person being informed must make every effort to alert the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends, the parents/carers will contact whoever they can. In that instance the member of staff who has received this information, will immediately contact the most senior member of staff possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

7.2. The school will notify the Trust Chief Executive (or Chief Operations Officer in the CEO's absence) if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity.

8. Sharing Information

8.1. It is important to agree with the parent or carer how they would like to proceed, before the Trust can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community.

8.2. There can be no definitive list of people to contact: it will be different for each child, however the news should be shared in a timely and appropriate way. The school should also ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner, rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'.

8.3. The following people should be considered:

- Current staff in school that day – an appropriate time should be chosen to notify them of the pupil's death
- Pupils in the child's class, or who are known by staff to be close to the child who has died
- Other pupils across the school
- Current staff not in school that day – including support staff
- Previous staff who worked closely with the child, particularly where they have only recently left the school
- Social Work team if applicable
- Chair of the Academy Council and of the Trust Board
- Other external professionals who work with the child in school, such as the Education Psychologist, medical team (including school nursing), therapists etc.
- Other parents and carers – if children have been informed, the school should send a letter to parents and carers informing them of the loss, and explaining that they may need to support or comfort their children. A template letter (which will be adapted for the circumstances) can be found at Appendix C. Some parents/carers may need to be telephoned if their relationship to the pupil is closer but who have not been informed by the family – this should normally only be done at the request of the parents/carers.

8.4. The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made about how to communicate the news and by whom. However, it is suggested that the [Form Tutor/Class Teacher] of the deceased child will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class with support from senior staff.

8.5. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow.

8.6. Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief.

8.7. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff should answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge. Responding to specific causes of death.

8.8. Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- If the death is the result of suicide, the Trust will use the Samaritans step-by-step programme to support them
- If the death is due to murder or family violence, the Trust will use guidance from Child Bereavement UK on 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter',
- If the death is due to contagious disease, the Trust will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

9. The Funeral

9.1. Before making a decision about the funeral, it is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private

9.2. The Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral if the parents wish this, and will identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport.

9.3. For some schools, it is appropriate to close, for others it is not, consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance.

9.4. Further considerations include:

- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.
- A letter should also be sent by the Headteacher and by the CEO
- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.
- If the parents/carers wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this should be facilitated by the school.

10. Memory Assemblies

10.1. It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child.

10.2. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

11. If a Child is Seriously ill in School or Passes Away

11.1. If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they must contact a first aider and, where the incident appears serious, the CEO, the Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher.

11.2. In the case of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the first aider or a member of the Leadership Team.

11.3. Immediately inform the Headteacher or, in her absence, the most senior member of staff on site.

11.4. The Headteacher will then ensure that the parents/carers are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital.

11.5. If the child stops breathing, a trained school staff member will administer CPR. In some cases, parents or carers may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incident. In rare cases, this may include a request that mechanical resuscitation is not administered. However, whilst the school respects the parents' preference in this matter, due to the statutory responsibility imposed on the school regarding "duty of care", the need for school staff to administer manual CPR overrides such preference.

11.6. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered. Where the parents/carers have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring - e.g. no resuscitation - this protocol will be handed to the paramedics.

11.7. Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents/carers must be reported to them as soon as possible. NB: Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent or carer if they are travelling in a car alone. Once the child is placed in the ambulance, a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with the Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher.

12. If a Child Passes Away on a School Trip

12.1. If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - must telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher who will in turn inform the Chief Executive. Out of hours, the teacher in charge must contact the trip's emergency contact, who will make contact with the Headteacher or most senior member of staff available, and the Chief Executive. The school will then take responsibility for contacting the parents or carers.

12.2. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions. The off site visits protocols give guidance for such situations and must be followed.

13. Responding to the Media

13.1. Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. Any press enquiries relating to the death of a pupil are to be routed through the Chief Executive. Individual members of staff must not respond to journalists, but must politely refer them to the CEO/Headteacher.

14. Ongoing Support for Pupils and Staff

14.1. Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of the school community will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection or an opportunity to discuss their feelings.

14.2. The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room or area could be allocated for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a drink. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- Individuals could be given access to one-to-one time with a member of staff who is trained in bereavement support.
- The LA Educational Psychology team offer counselling support and staff will be reminded about this service.
- Information about accessing bereavement support outside of school, e.g.: CRUSE is contained in Appendix A and can be shared with members of the school community.
- In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach.
- Social stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss.
- Pupils may wish to commemorate the deceased child in their own way; staff should try to be supportive of this as far as possible.
- The LA Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

15. Ongoing Support for the Family

15.1. On learning of the death of a child, the Chief Executive and Headteacher should attempt to communicate with the family straight away and offer support as follows:-

- Send a letter of condolence from the Trust/school.
- Give parents/carers the opportunity to collect any personal belongings, workbooks of the child who has passed away.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection or arrange for flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- Invite parents/carers/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents/carers at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this should be agreed. Parents should be told that they are welcome in the school and encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and should be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents'/carers' wishes. It will then be for the parents/carers to decide if they wish to maintain ongoing links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school should always be there to act as a source of support and information.

16. The Death of a Member of Staff

16.1. All of the principles and procedures listed above apply equally to the death of a staff member. For a letter template see Appendix C.

16.2. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Headteacher will seek permission from the Trust Board to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral. Where it is deemed not appropriate for all staff to attend, the Headteacher should endeavour to allow as many staff as wish to attend the funeral the opportunity to do so, taking into consideration the effect on operational requirements.

16.3. The Trust Central HR team should be informed so that the relevant information can be updated and completed for Death in Service benefits, payroll and pension arrangements.

17. Management Information Systems

17.1. In the event of the death of a pupil it is important that all management information systems are updated with this information so no future correspondence is sent to the family post bereavement.

17.2. In the event of the death of a member of staff it is important all management information systems including payroll and human resources are updated to correctly reflect this information. It will also be important to check if the next of kin details need to be entered as the contact in order to communicate any relevant information to the family.

18. Monitoring Arrangements

18.1. This policy will be reviewed biannually by the Chief Executive and Executive Team.

Appendix A - List of Resources and Information

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 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
Samaritans	https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/ Get in touch with our Step by Step service or Freephone* 0808 168 2528 in the UK
Wakefield Council - Educational Psychologist Service (EPS)	Advice and Guidance service on Loss, Bereavement and dealing with critical incidents. Email: eps@wakefield.gov.uk Telephone: 01924 307403

Appendix B - Books on Bereavement

- **GRANPA** John Burningham (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3)

Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

- **WHEN DINOSAURS DIE** L & M Brown (Little, Brown, 1996, hb, ISBN 0-316-10197-7)

Charming busy anthropomorphic pictures of dinosaurs illustrate topics and questions and a range of answers about death: Saying Goodbye; Customs and beliefs about death; Why do people die? What does "dead" mean?. It is also quite acute psychologically, acknowledging that disbelief, anger, fear, and sadness are common feelings when someone dies. Expensive, but attractive and appealing to children.

- **REMEMBERING GRANDAD** Sheila and Kate Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)

A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.

- **FRED** Posy Simmons (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)

When Fred the cat dies, his owners Nick and Sophie attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

- **GRANDAD, I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU** De Bode and Broere (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8)

A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

- **LIFETIMES** Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between – a beautiful way to explain life and death to children Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9). Lifetimes places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants; for people; and for birds".

- **BADGER'S PARTING GIFTS** Susan Varley (Collins Picture Lions, pb, 1992)

An old favourite, a charming illustrated book in which a very old and much loved badger dies. The forest animals gather and reminisce about the important part Badger played in their lives, and as time passes memories of Badger make them smile. These memories were different for each of them, including very recognisable things like a favourite recipe or showing someone how to knot a tie - Badger's "parting gifts"

- **WE LOVE THEM** Martin Waddell (Walker Books,1990, ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)

Death is seen very much as part of life in this nicely illustrated story of life in the country, which conveys the idea that life goes on and that old creatures give way to young ones. But it is a bit too matter of fact about loss - barely is the old dog dead than the children have found a new one, is there an implicit message that dead pets (and people?) are easily replaced.

- **GRANDMA'S BILL** Martin Waddell (Macdonald Young Books, pb, ISBN 0- 7500-0307-3)

Bill's grandma is a widow, and he learns about her "other Bill" by looking through her photo album with her. A bit too stereotypically suburban and middle class for general appeal perhaps. Some like its ordinariness, gentleness and factual accuracy, and couldn't fault what it had to say about death and living on in memories and in the family.

- **I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU** H Wilhelm (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985)

A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated

- **A BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR DANIEL Juliet Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)**

This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly".

Appendix C - Template letters

Template 1 – Letter for informing parents of the death of a pupil

This template is intended to support the Principal/Headteacher faced with producing this difficult letter. It is a suggestion only, and should be adapted as appropriate to the circumstances. Before sending a letter home to parents and carers about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed between the parents and school.

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's [Form Tutor/Class Teacher] has had the sad task of informing the children of the death of [Name of child], a pupil in [Year Group].

[With the agreement of parents/carers, you could provide basic details of the reason why the child died e.g.

Unfortunately [Name of Child] was suffering from cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly [Name of Child] had been ill for a long time and he/she died peacefully at home yesterday

or

Unfortunately [Name of Child] was involved in a road traffic accident yesterday and, sadly, died of his/her injuries].

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion.

The children/pupils have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school and we will be more than happy to help you.

[If there are any further details available at this point about plans to remember the pupil, include them here, e.g.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating [Name of Child]'s life.]

Yours sincerely

[Principal/Headteacher]

Template 2 – Letter for informing parents of the death of a member of staff

This template is intended to support the Principal/Headteacher faced with producing this difficult letter. It is a suggestion only, and should be adapted as appropriate to the circumstances. Before sending a letter home to parents and carers about the death of a member of staff, permission must be gained from the individual's next of kin. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed between the next of kin and school.

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's [Form Tutor/Class Teacher] has had the sad task of informing the children of the death of [Name of staff member], who has been a member of staff at this school for (a number of years).

[With the agreement of next of kin, you could provide basic details of the reason why the staff member died e.g.

Unfortunately [Name of Staff Member] was suffering from cancer. As you may be aware, many people who have cancer get better but sadly [Name of Staff Member] had been ill for a long time and he/she died peacefully at home yesterday

or

Unfortunately [Name of Staff Member] was involved in a road traffic accident yesterday and, sadly, died of his/her injuries].

Our thoughts are with [Name of staff member]'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school and we will be more than happy to help you.

[If there are any further details available at this point about plans to remember the member of staff, include them here, e.g.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating [Name of Staff Member]'s life.]

Yours sincerely

[Principal/Headteacher]