



# Bereavement policy

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## Contents

1. Aims .....	2
2. Roles and responsibilities .....	2
3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved .....	3
4. Immediate actions following a death .....	4
5. Follow-up actions and support following a death .....	5
6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement .....	6
7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement .....	6
8. Links with other policies .....	7
Appendix: useful contacts .....	7

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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 governing board

Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 The Headteacher

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

The headteacher 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

Seeks advice from the Local Authority and if necessary 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

Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff

### 2.2 School staff – including Class teachers and TAs

All school staff have responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor the well-being of all staff.

SLT take on particular responsibility: Year Group Leaders will take on the responsibility of monitoring the well-being of their team members.

The Deputy Headteacher (also Senco) will also monitor the well-being of TAs, and also Midday Supervisors, as these members of staff are not linked to a particular year group.

The School Business Manager, as the line manager, will monitor the wellbeing of the caretaker and the office staff.

All staff may be required to provide direct support to bereaved pupils. SLT may be required to provide direct support to staff, although this task is more likely to be taken on by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

The Headteacher alongside the Senco will signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff.

The Headteacher alongside the Senco will organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.

SLT will organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages

The Headteacher will arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)

Class teachers are expected to 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

All staff are expected to provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

## **2.3 Governing board**

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them. The Chair of Governors leads on well-being at Manby Lodge, and as such would be the person to support the Headteacher in the event of a death that affected the children, staff or parents.

Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through keeping in touch as usual, with regular catch-ups.

Assist the Headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death

Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the Headteacher 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.

The internal resources available to support staff members could include compassionate leave, or the chance to talk to line managers if required.

The external resources available to support staff could be counseling organised through our employee assistance programme, or an opportunity to speak to the Educational Psychologist.

We already cover bereavement support for staff in our annual safeguarding training, however in the next year we endeavor to provide staff training specifically on supporting a bereavement.

For members of SLT who are most likely to have to carry out this role, Supervision would be offered to them and organised if required.

## **4. Immediate actions following a death**

The actions we would take at Manby Lodge school will differ depending on who has died.

### **➤ For the death of a child, or staff member:**

The Headteacher would in the first instance liaise with the family of the deceased to offer condolences and support, on behalf of the school.

The Headteacher would seek advice from the Local Authority and / or the EP Team in this instance.

### **➤ For the death of a pupil's or member of staff's close family member:**

The Headteacher would in the first instance liaise with the family of the deceased to offer condolences and support, on behalf of the school.

### **➤ In the unlikely event of situation that involved multiple fatalities:**

The Headteacher would still liaise with the families of the deceased to offer condolences and support, on behalf of the school, but may need to contact the Local Authority first.

Due to the likelihood of media interest in an event such as this, the Headteacher would definitely need to seek advice from the Local Authority on how to manage the media interest.

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

The Headteacher will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and 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 can't be immediately contacted then the Headteacher would seek advice from the Local Authority on confirming the news of a death.

If news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made, then the school would maintain silence for 24 hours while it seeks to confirm the death. A statement may be made to staff and parents explaining our stance.

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

The Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it

If we are informed during the school day then an immediate staff meeting will be called to inform staff promptly.

If we are informed out of school time e.g. in the school holidays then the Headteacher will communicate to all staff via email, then call a Teams meeting if necessary. On the return to school a full staff meeting will be held.

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

The Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.

Guidance provided to our school from the EP service, suggests that children in our age range should be informed of news such as a death, by their class teacher. If the class teacher does not feel comfortable sharing the news then the Year Group Leader would be asked to take on this role. Everything would be coordinated so that children are informed at the same time so that they would not be able to share information with one another before being informed by an adult.

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

Parents/carers will be notified of a death via an email letter. Information would be provided about what additional support has been made available to pupils, and where parents/carers can go for more help and information)

## 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.

In the event that the death is the result of suicide the school would follow the guidance from the Samaritans, who provide a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools.

The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which we will follow (you can find at the bottom of this page)

If the death is due to contagious disease, 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 Headteacher is responsible for responding to requests from the media, but this can be delegated to the Local Authority.

Staff will be directed not to speak to the media, but to direct requests for information to the Headteacher who will either get in touch with the media, but is more likely to seek advice from the Local Authority.

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

### 5.1 Support for pupils and staff

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

What support will be made available in school:

- We will seek advice from the EP Team to offer support to staff and pupils.
- We will follow guidance from experts e.g. Charities listed below at the end of this policy.
- Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

### 5.2 Tributes and condolences

SLT will work together, after liaison with the family, to decide how the school community will come together to memorialise the deceased. We may consider:

a book of condolences or a temporary tribute

fundraising for a chosen charity in the name of the deceased

an assembly to celebrate and give thanks for the deceased

Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate

### 5.3 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
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute
- If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:
- Staff can request leave to attend via our normal request for staff absence. This will be granted as compassionate leave. We would do all that we can to try to enable all staff who want to attend the funeral are able to do so. This may involve additional resources to cover staff absence.

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

Pupils' parents can request leave for their child to attend the funeral via our normal request for pupil absence. This will be an authorised absence.

## **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. If necessary we may refer them to ELSA, and they may be able to 'jump' the waiting list if one is in place. This will be decided at the time.

### **6.1 Reintegration meeting**

In the event of a child losing a close member of staff, the class teacher 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
- 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

### **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 e.g. mother's day, or father's day, or the birthday or anniversary of the death of the deceased. The class teacher will ensure that they have this information from the pupil's parents/carers.

We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we may refer to ELSA, and if necessary, refer to Behaviour Support for further advice.

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 Headteacher 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)

Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

## 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. Details about support for a bereaved member of staff can be found above in Section 3.

## 8. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Behaviour policy
- Staff Stress Management 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> <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/sudden-death-including-accidents-suicide-and-homicide">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/sudden-death-including-accidents-suicide-and-homicide</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>
Samaritans	<a href="https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/step-step-resources/responding-suspected-suicide-schools-and-colleges/">https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/step-step-resources/responding-suspected-suicide-schools-and-colleges/</a>