

Bereavement Policy

2022-2024

Reviewed by: Headteacher

Member of the school Senior Leadership Team

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This policy was created with the Kingshill Church School and governors.



BATH & WELLS
Multi Academy Trust

'That they may have life, life in all its fullness' John 10:10

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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

- Headteacher
- Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust Central Team
- Designated safeguarding lead
- SENDCo

- North Somerset Bereavement or crisis team

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
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Arrange 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 The DSL/DDSLs/SENDCo/Mental Health Lead

The DHT/DSL/DDSL/SENDCo will form the pastoral support team that has 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 support team may:

- Have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
- 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)
- Arrange support from local clergy/other faith leaders
- 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
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Local Governing Committee

The local governing committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

The governing committee 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 Headteacher or pastoral team
- Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor if relevant
- 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 Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust will provide resources to support these staff members
- The wellbeing of staff performing this role will be monitored by the BWMAT and LGC

- Pastoral support may be offered from local clergy/other faith leaders

4. Immediate actions following a death

- In the case of terminal illness, the school will liaise with the family to arrange for a member of staff to be the main point of contact throughout the illness. This member of staff will support the family regarding school procedures to support them during the illness and will help keep the pupil informed about events at school during any prolonged periods of absence. A member of staff will support the pupil during their time in school, and be available to the family before, during, and after the death.
- At times of bereavement, it is important that rumour and speculation are avoided. We will take time to talk to the affected family or staff member about the circumstances surrounding the bereavement. Knowing the background will help us provide the best support for those affected by bereavement. We will discuss with the family the extent to which the circumstances should be shared with other staff members and pupils, in order to provide the best support for the grieving child.
- In the event of the pupil being bereaved of a loved one or close friend we will discuss what the pupil has already been told in order to provide clarity and consistency for the pupils.
- Where there are religious considerations we will also seek the views of family, and endeavour to respect those beliefs.
- We will allocate a member of staff to whom the pupil relates well to be a mentor in school and encourage the pupil to feel free to express themselves when and how they choose, by providing timeout space and a range of activities and channels through which the pupil may wish to express their feelings.

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The Headteacher or DHT will be responsible for liaising with the family. They may appoint a member of staff to fulfil this.
- Subject to the wishes of the family, in the event where a pupil or staff member has died, the school may be closed if necessary, in order to allow staff and pupils to attend the funeral. Where a member of the school community has died, the school will endeavour to provide additional space and time for those staff or pupils most likely to be particularly affected. Staff will be expected to be particularly vigilant regarding the emotional wellbeing of pupils close to the deceased.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- Pupils should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision should 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.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.

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 some instances support may be sought from other agencies

- The death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)

- 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 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

- Where there is media interest no member of staff should engage with the media. All comment should be made through the Headteacher, CEO of the Trust or Chair of LGC.

5. Support for Pupils and Staff

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

- Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.
- School will provide ongoing support for children to explore their feelings and memories through identified activities. Some opportunities may include storytelling, remembering activities, and expressing feelings activities
- Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

5.2 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 should request leave to attend
- Considerations will be made in granting permission, e.g. availability of cover
- If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so parents should request absence permission

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 headteacher/DHT/Class teacher will arrange the meeting 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 peers 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
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure there are regular pastoral meetings in place and also consider a phased return to school
- 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. Pastoral support may be offered from local clergy/other faith leaders.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

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

- Internal and external sources of support such as Care First
- Adjustments to working patterns e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed biennially.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding policy
- Critical incident policy
- Positive Behaviour policy

Books on Bereavement

- Grandpa – John Burningham
- When Dinosaurs Die – L & M Brown
- Liplap's Wish – Jonathan London And Sylvia Long
- The Memory Tree – Britta Teckentrup

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 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/