

Bereavement policy

MELBOURNE JUNIOR SCHOOL



Approved by: F&GP Committee

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1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our 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

Role of the Headteacher

- To be first point of contact for the family concerned
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To respond to media enquiries
- To keep the governing body fully informed
- To have bereavement training and cascade learning to other staff

Role of the Educational Psychology Service

- Designate an Educational Psychologist to support the school, pupils parents and staff.

Role of the LA

- To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief

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
- › 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 Pastoral support staff: SENDCO, SBO, ELSA in consultation with the Headteacher

The pastoral support team 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).

- › Provide direct support to bereaved pupils
- › 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, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- › 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 – for example, 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 through a link pastoral support governor, Chair of Governing Board: David Mather.
- › Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair.

- 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 Educational Psychology Service will be used to provide immediate support.
- Staff will be guided to self refer for counselling if needed.
- A referral to Occupational Health can be made.
- In school support and time out will be made available for staff.
- Training will be provided for staff.

4. Immediate actions following a death

1. The death may be communicated through social media before the school is informed.
2. Contact with deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communication with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
3. If the family cannot be contacted, the Educational Psychology Service and Legal Service will be contacted for advice.
4. Where possible, 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.
5. Pupils affected should be informed, preferably in small groups , by someone known to them
6. Communication 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. The family of the deceased should be informed of this and permission sought for any details provided.
7. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as required.
8. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified , with consideration of full or partial closure in some circumstances
9. Where necessary a press statement will be prepared in consultation with the Press Office.
10. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant agencies, especially at the point of transition.

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

The Headteacher, or nominated other member of staff, will be responsible for communicating with a member of the family or their representative.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

Staff will be informed as soon as possible through a briefing or meeting. Part time staff, not in school will be informed by the Headteacher, or designated staff member, by phone.

If a death happens during the weekend or holidays, the Headteacher will liaise with SLT to inform colleagues

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

1. Pupils affected should be informed, preferably in small groups , by someone known to them.
2. During holiday or weekend periods, parents will be advised and asked to speak with children, if appropriate to do so.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- Parents/carers will be notified of a death by email. They will be informed of the steps 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.

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.

If:

- The death is the result of suicide Samaritans [step-by-step programme](#) will be followed.
- 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 can be found 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 consultation with the Press office at Derbyshire County Council:

- The Headteacher is responsible for responding to all media interest in dialogue with the Chair of Governors and Press office
- Other staff should not respond to requests from the media.

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.

- The Educational Psychology Service will provide immediate support and counselling. A decision about further support to be made available will be made in education with this service.
- How pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

5.2 Timetables

Some flexibility to the school timetable may be required to accommodate the needs and well being of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

Tributes and condolences will be determined in consultation with the family of the deceased, or their representative.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff 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 they should discuss this with the Headteacher. Partial, or full closure of the school may be considered on some occasions in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

It may be necessary to send representatives from the school if it is not possible to send all staff who wish to go.

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, class teacher and ELSA 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.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will provide nurture support and refer to bereavement counselling where appropriate.
- 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. This may include a referral to Occupational Health, flexible working or counselling.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40• https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 08088 020 021• https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0808 808 1677• https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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/
Tree Tops Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline 0115 9491264• https://www.treetopshospice.org.uk/our-services/therapeutic-services/counselling-emotional-support-service/