



Bereavement Policy



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Ivy House School is a happy, supportive and purposeful environment where pupils feel safe and are nurtured, praised and acknowledged for who they are.

We pride ourselves on being a school; 'Where Every Child Matters' which is crucial to the nurture and development of the whole child.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepare pupils for coping with bereavement.

Experiencing bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Due to the nature of our pupils' complex medical and health needs, sadly there are times when children become very ill and pass away. This loss affects the whole school community including pupils, staff and families.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and responds to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish. It has included input from our staff, our governing body, our school nurse, parents and carers and external agencies (such as Link Educational Psychologist).

1.2 Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- [Child Protection and Safeguarding policy](#)
- Critical Incident Policy
- [Curriculum policy](#)
- [Anti-bullying policy](#) and [Charter](#)
- Confidentiality policy
- [Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Health and safety policy](#)
- Leave of absence policy (staff)
- [Attendance Policy](#)
- Data Protection Policy

1.3 Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to pupils, staff and families before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children, families and staff require. However, we also need to

be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school and the wider community.

2 Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's [child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures](#) to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, families will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school safeguarding systems to record when a child or family has experienced a close bereavement.

3 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

All school staff and local authority have roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement in our school, these are as follows:

3.1 The role of the Academy Counsellors is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it

3.2 The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff

- contact The Shaw Education Trust in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. Social Worker, Educational Psychologist and Health Professionals
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children and families.
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- keep the Academy Counsellors appropriately informed
- School Leaders should ensure they liaise with the SET central team for direction around media coverage if this is a possible consequence of the child's death, and they can seek advice from the Local Authority Head of Press and Communications.

3.3 The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral lead
- cover loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum at a level that the child will be able to access / understand. This may be a very early stage of development and teaching may be through story, music, use of keywords / signs/ objects of reference and so on; rituals (e.g. clap for carers etc; Poppy day).
- Dragonfly story used in all classes. Add other books.
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

Our Mental Health First Aiders have had more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other members of staff etc.



Claire Porter – Safeguarding and Pastoral Lead / Mental Health Lead.
Specialises in Adult Mental Health



Tara Gaskin – Mental Health First Aider
Specialises in Child / Youth Mental Health



Rachel Whittaker – Mental Health First Aider
Specialises in Adult Mental Health



Alex Paul – Mental Health First Aider
Specialises in Child / Youth Mental Health



Moira Coleman –Academy Councillor Mental Health Lead.

3.4 The role of the local authority

The role of Derby City Educational Psychology Service is to:

- offer specific support when there has been an incident affecting a section of the school community, and / or a critical incident, suicide or sudden death of an adult or child, initially meeting with the head teacher and key lead staff in the school to discuss the immediate plan of action, with timeline outlined where possible for follow up actions
- inform appropriate colleagues within the local authority on a need to know basis
- advise and support staff who are supporting bereaved children and young people including offering and providing training on request
- advise on referral pathways and offer triage to support pathways of support, through identification of those requiring more specialist support and those whose needs can be met through the Whole School Approach on request
- ensure that any staff significantly affected by a death are made aware of the support that's available to them.

DCEPS can be contacted via your link Educational Psychologist or through STePS admin on 01332 641400 or by contacting Richard Lakin (Principal Educational Psychologist 07812301671) email: richard.lakin@derby.gov.uk

4 Procedures – flow chart

School is informed about the death of a child, family member or member of staff

1. Head teacher or Pastoral Lead to gather factual information about the bereavement and act as key contact person for family/ child / staff affected by the bereavement
2. Head teacher to inform Academy Regional Director and the local authority via the Head of Inclusion Services
3. Inform your link Educational Psychologist or Principal EP-link EP will then arrange a meeting / discussion with lead to support the setting / staff
4. Set up a private space for the lead for the bereavement to follow the bereavement policy / flowchart actions
5. Inform staff team (starting with class team affected), including those off ill on the day or part time workers, midday staff, parent helpers etc.
6. Inform Governing Body

Other considerations:

- * Is the bereavement likely to involve media interest? If so, then contact Derby City Head of Press and Communications 01332 643500 for advice
- * Letter to families of all pupils by the end of day 1 (see templates)
- * Which staff will attend the funeral, being mindful that some cultures arrange this very quickly?

- * Continue with normal routines in school as much as possible so those not directly affected can feel safe and calm
- * Be mindful of different cultural and religious perspectives and practices
- * Review to evaluate the day's events, reflections and any next steps for the next day and beyond
- * Lead adult to keep in touch with family as required and check in with the most affected staff daily for the first few weeks
- * Specialist support / counselling is not needed unless those affected continue to experience distress for more than a few months

5.1 Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school, namely Claire Porter Lead Practitioner of Safeguarding and Pastoral, in terms of information exchange and to update when things change, this would be a member of the senior leadership team
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with others in the school community
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice, such as Rainbows
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils and families affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupils and families
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community, for example the pupil's peer / class group
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

5.2 Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- will prepare a press statement, with support from the SET communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (head teacher)
- inform staff of the death. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected if appropriate, preferably in small groups or individually, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school. Staff may use resources such as the Dragon Fly Story
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through class-based assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the pupils and staff by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which key staff may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport.
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff
- open a remembrance book for staff to share their memories and thoughts with each other and with the family
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school, if this is appropriate
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support, including an open door policy for affected staff
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly
- hold a remembrance assembly and / or add a leaf to the tree of remembrance (to be developed).

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference
- Be aware that staff members may require longer term support if the death has been of a child in the school, and someone they worked closely with
- signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement, and take account of the level of language and understanding each child in the class has.

5.3 Following a sudden and unexpected death – Suicide

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with; it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 4 we will seek advice from the Academy Regional Director and the Local Authority Head of Press and Communications. As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days

It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide. <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/> and please see other local services below.

5.4 Following a sudden and unexpected death – Other

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston's Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

6 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make staff aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

7 Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate. Staff will monitor the emotional well-being of these pupils through observations and consult with Complex Behaviour Team or Educational Psychology if support is needed.

8 Supporting staff

8.1 Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it. Staff will be advised to seek support from the Mental Health First Aiders in school and SLT will check in with affected staff, ensuring an open door policy is maintained.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling if the staff member continues to be affected beyond the expected period of mourning.

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the council or trust's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

8.2 Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers [training courses](#) and also a [free online training course for school staff](#).

9 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our [PSE curriculum](#) and [RSE](#).

We also use class and whole school collective worship to address aspects of death and significant national events and other occasions which is delivered at a suitable level of understanding for the children and young people involved.

Staff can be supported by trained professionals around when planning for discussions around the topic of bereavement.

We will address loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

10 Additional support and links

10.1 National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk>
Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> a website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> a range of guidance and support for schools.

10.2 Local support services

Please check the Local Offer <https://www.derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/derby-send-local-offer/> for information and signposting

Emotionally Healthy Schools website <https://emotionallyhealthyschools.org/>

Rainbows <https://www.rainbowtrust.org.uk/>

11 Appendices

Visit the Winston's Wish website www.winstonswish.org/schools

Please also refer to the Derby City Bereavement Guidance document

