



# Bereavement Policy

2020-21

## **Introduction**

Seven Stars Primary School is fully committed to supporting all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment, in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances. Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children, families and staff.

We are dedicated to the continual development of a mentally healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life.

We want to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

We will endeavour, to the best of our ability, to work in partnership with parents, carers and all agencies to provide the children with the support needed to manage the effects of bereavement and to maintain their emotional well-being.

This policy links to the school's Critical Incident Emergency Plans Policy and procedures. It outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances.

## **Overview**

- Ensuring that there are designated, named members of the school staff who will provide support to children and/or staff before (where applicable) during and after bereavement
- Enhancing effective communication and clarifying the pathway of support between school, family and the community
- Setting out how to inform children/colleagues about a death and what to do if required to tell a child that someone close to them has died
- Identifying key staff within the school and Local Authority and clarifying the pathway of support that will be offered to staff/children if they have been bereaved
- Setting out clear procedures in respect of what to do in the case of a crisis or disaster situation on school premises or on a school trip (see Critical Incident Emergency Plans/Guidelines for Visits)
- Ensuring that all staff members are trained and are able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief

- SLT to discuss how to respond to behaviours which may be exhibited as a result of grief and how to manage these in conjunction with our Behaviour policy.
- Ensuring that the contact details of local and national support agencies specialising in bereavement such as Cruse Bereavement Care, Child Bereavement UK and Seesaw are available (see links at end of this policy)

### **Rationale**

- Every 22 minutes in the UK a child loses a parent, this equates to around 111 children a day
- Teachers in a primary school are certain to encounter students who have been deeply affected by bereavement
- 1 in 29 children aged 5-16 year has lost a parent or sibling and many others have lost grandparents
- It is thought that 92% of children in the UK will experience bereavement before the age of 16
- There is no fixed pattern to how a child will grieve
- The 'Five Stages of Grief' (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) can be used as a way of starting to understand what the child or young person may be experiencing

### **The role of the Governing Body**

- To approve the policy and ensure it is implemented
- To review the policy

### **The role of the Headteacher**

- To keep the Governing Body informed
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To refer media enquiries to the Local Authority
- To be the first point of contact for the family/families and child/children concerned
- To keep the Governing Body fully informed

## **The role of the Local Authority In the event of a death in the school community during Covid 19 and bereavement in the school community (contacts):**

### **Critical incident support team:**

[Stephen.mccoy@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.mccoy@lancashire.gov.uk)

01772 531597

### **Emergency Duty Team:**

0300 1236720

Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm

Saturday to Sunday 8am to 7pm

0300 1236722 (out of hours)

Monday to Friday 8pm to 8am

Saturday to Sunday 7pm to 8am

### **Communications/Media support:**

Andy Swain, Media Manager

[andy.swain@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:andy.swain@lancashire.gov.uk)

01772 532781

07824 598066

### **Teacher Support Network**

Provides practical and emotional support to staff in the education sector and their families.

08000 562 561 (24 hour)

### **The Critical Incident Psychological First Aid (CIPFA) team**

Offers support to schools and settings when a traumatic incident has occurred which is outside the normal range of coping. Does NOT provide general advice to support the school's response.

CIPFA is a telephone consultation service for headteachers following a traumatic incident affecting pupil(s) provided by Lancashire Educational Psychology Service:

- Information on the impact of trauma
- Practical advice on the initial school response to the situation
- Sign-posting

### **Contacts**

Please note: In the first instance schools should always contact their area SEND office.

South Area SEND Office Contact: 01772 531597 (Sarah Purcell)

Landline: 01772 536578 Mobile: 07824 434280

Sally Richardson Mobile number: 07920 086432

Schools Safeguarding Service - 01772 531196

### **The role of the Local Authority:**

- To advise and support staff
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief
- To manage media enquiries through the Press Office

### **Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of a staff member or child**

- ❖ Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations
  - ❖ Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared to share information in age appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance
  - ❖ Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. See the following link about how to do this:  
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/telling-a-child-that-someone-has-died>
  - ❖ If it is appropriate, and with the agreement of the deceased's family, 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
  - ❖ If during term time, the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable, as this also offers a sense of security and familiarity
  - ❖ Staff affected by the death will be offered support
  - ❖ In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances
- Where necessary, the Headteacher will work with the School Counsellor and Local Authority to prepare a press statement

***“A child can live through anything so long as he or she is told the truth and is allowed to share the natural feelings people have when they are suffering.”***  
Eda LeShan

### **Staff Support**

- ❖ It is important that staff feel confident in delivering support for children and mutual support for each other and for implementing this policy. If possible, bereavement support training will be sourced for staff as required.

- ❖ Staff will have opportunities to speak to a bereavement counsellor (e.g. from See-Saw or the Listening Tree) and will also be referred to Local Authority wellbeing provision.

### **Breaking news to Staff, Children & Families**

This is usually done when a member of staff or a child has died and would not usually be appropriate when a single child/family has experienced the death of a parent or close family member.

- ❖ Headteacher or member of the SLT will speak to the family to offer condolences and support and to ascertain what the family would like to happen. The family will be given details of a school contact
- ❖ Headteacher or member of the SLT will prioritise obtaining of factual information
- ❖ Headteacher and/or members of the SLT will inform all staff immediately preferably via phone (including lunch supervisors/peripatetic staff etc) ideally before children are told
- ❖ SLT to decide how and when children will be told, having first identified any vulnerable children and considered what additional support they may need
- ❖ Children should be told as soon as possible, ideally in familiar groups by an adult who is someone they know (staff may need guidance on words to use and approach to take)
- ❖ If possible, send a letter to families on the same day
  - include guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter

### **The first few days** (if the bereavement takes place when schools are open)

Map out the first few days after an incident.

- ❖ It is usually best to have minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required.
- ❖ Consider what the school approach will be if pupils or staff are too upset to attend lessons.
- ❖ If it is a teacher who has died, what will happen to his/her class?

### **Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of member of a pupil's family or the bereavement of a member of the community that has had strong links with Seven Stars Primary School:**

- ❖ Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information

is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations

### **Funeral**

- ❖ Adhere to any Government guidelines imposed due to exceptional circumstances e.g. Covid 19

Where no restrictions apply:

- ❖ Establish whether the family would welcome involvement of members of the school community or if they wish to keep it private
- ❖ Identify which members of staff and/or pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport if appropriate
- ❖ Decide if flowers are to be sent and/or a collection made
- ❖ Take into account any cultural or religious implications
- ❖ If necessary, a familiar member of staff could talk to the child regarding expectations of the funeral Support for a bereaved child following the death of a family member Return to School of a bereaved child
- ❖ Consider a home visit, return interviews, prior to the pupil returning to school
- ❖ Ensure that the appropriate staff are aware and prepared
- ❖ Inform peers and prepare them on how to support their classmate. Not all children will need the support of specialist practitioners; they will need support from familiar people who care.
- ❖ Offer the child(ren) the opportunity to speak with a familiar and safe adult eg the school Home Link Worker /designated adult
- ❖ Keep a routine, providing a sense of normality
- ❖ Offer a safe place, away from an emotionally intense atmosphere
- ❖ Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent)
- ❖ Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment)
- ❖ Regular correspondence with home, providing assurance about behaviours and general well- being, will ensure the child is managing the grief
- ❖ Access to appropriate resources via Bereavement counselling, See-Saw or other support agencies

- ❖ An individual link person to support the child(ren) when necessary
- ❖ A suitable place in school for children who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support (e.g. school counsellor/nurture room)
- ❖ Ensure that the information is passed to the next class/school as part of transition
- ❖ Support may need to be offered to other vulnerable children.
- ❖ Therapeutic books should be readily available to assist with counselling. These can be found in the Nurture Room.
- ❖ Staff will be aware of important dates which may need to be prepared for. E.g.: Birthdays, religious celebrations such as Christmas/Eid, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Anniversary of the death.
- ❖ There should be appropriate expectations around homework
- ❖ Where appropriate additional support for SEN needs
- ❖ Where appropriate TAF support for family Monitoring & supporting staff

We recognize that supporting bereaved children will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions.

A list of outside agencies that may offer help, both in the short and long term will be shared with staff

We will give staff time to attend the funeral if appropriate

Staff will be made aware of available resources and time to become familiar with these.

### **Support for bereaved families of a member of staff or a child who has died**

We will:

- ❖ Communicate with the family straight away and offer our support
- ❖ Send a letter of condolence from the school
- ❖ Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people
- ❖ Give the parents and/or family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who died
- ❖ Send a representative to the funeral unless Government guidelines do not permit this

- ❖ Hold a collection or send flowers, as appropriate
- ❖ Invite parents/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 book, this will be returned to the parents at an appropriate time and the children informed where it has gone

**Documents and websites to support schools in relation to bereavement and coronavirus:**

Cruse Bereavement Care has published a helpful range of booklets for children young people and their carers that can be found here:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/parents/free-booklets-children-young-people-and-theircarers>

Organisations offering bereavement support and advice include the following:

For children and young people :

Winston's Wish

[www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus](http://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus)

0808 802 0021

Helpful guidance specific to coronavirus:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Seesaw

[www.facebook.com/SeeSawCharity](https://www.facebook.com/SeeSawCharity)

01865 744768

Child Bereavement UK

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

0800 028 8840

Compassionate Friends leaflet:

<https://www.tcf.org.uk/content/resources/LP06-When-a-student-dies-C14-R1507.pdf>

For adults:

Bereavement Care

[www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk](http://www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk)

0208 427 5720

Cruse Bereavement Counselling

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

0808 808 1677



## LANCASHIRE EMERGENCY PLAN INFORMATION

Ref	Post incident support - funeral arrangements	Tick / sign / time
P26	Contact bereaved families to express sympathy on behalf of the school.	
P27	Take account of religious and cultural factors (e.g. some faiths wish to hold funerals within 24 hours of death). Consider contacting religious leaders within the community for support.	
P28	<p>Consult parents / carers sensitively about funeral arrangements. Try to establish if representatives from the school will be invited to the service. It may be useful to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Closing the school on the day of the funeral as a mark of respect</li> <li>▪ A senior member of staff attending the funeral on behalf of the school</li> <li>▪ If staff and pupils can be allowed time off school to attend the funeral (it is advisable for pupils to attend funerals either with a member of staff or their parents, but not to attend without adult support)</li> <li>▪ Providing transport to take pupils and staff to the funeral</li> <li>▪ Providing pupils with information about what happens at funerals</li> <li>▪ Arranging floral tributes and/or donations</li> <li>▪ It may be appropriate to arrange for a commemoration within school rather than having large number of staff and pupils attending the funeral. School will need to be guided by the wishes of the family.</li> </ul>	

Ref	Post incident support - remembrance	Tick / sign / time
P29	<p>Taking into account the wishes of the family, consider providing a suitable memorial at the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garden</li> <li>- Seating area / bench</li> <li>- Tree</li> <li>- Book of condolence</li> <li>- Fountain</li> <li>- Sculpture</li> <li>- Painting</li> <li>- Photograph</li> <li>- Prize (e.g. a sporting / academic trophy for older children).</li> </ul>	

P30	Be aware of important dates which may need to be prepared for. E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Birthdays</li> <li>- Christmas</li> <li>- Mother's day</li> <li>- Father's day</li> <li>- Anniversary of the event.</li> </ul>	
P31	Discuss with governors, staff, parents / carers and pupils how to mark anniversaries and other important dates. E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commemorative service</li> <li>- Special assembly</li> <li>- Concert</li> <li>- Display</li> <li>- Sports event.</li> </ul>	
P32	Be aware of renewed media interest near anniversaries of the event.	

## **Lancashire Educational Psychology Team**

### **Loss and bereavement**

Many children and young people will experience bereavement, through the loss of a parent, carer, sibling, grandparent or friend.

Loss and bereavement can affect children and young people in many different ways.

During a bereavement, children may experience a range of different emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety, fear and guilt.

Most children will not require professional or 'expert' help during the bereavement process. However, they will benefit from having support and the understanding of familiar and trusted adults.

#### **A note on bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic**

At the current time, when people are more isolated than usual, this may make feelings of loneliness and grief more intense.

Isolation may make it harder to process grief, and family and friends who might have provided practical or emotional support may not be available at this time.

Activities which would usually be available to help children and young people relax and cope with stress are not necessarily available.

This will be difficult for children and young people, as well as for parents/carers, who will be dealing with their own emotions and fears.

A bereaved family might be isolated together, and whilst this at times may be a support, the intensity of being around each other in close quarters all the time may be stressful, making it difficult for them to help each other.

The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations, can mean that feelings of grief are not fully expressed.

All children will have questions about the effects of the coronavirus but for children who have had someone important die or have a member of their family who is ill, this anxiety is likely to be heightened.

Children and young people may become worried that others close to them might die and will also pick up on worries that parents and carers may have.

The steps below are recommended to help bereaved children and young people who are worried about the effect of the coronavirus on their family:

- Acknowledge their worries
- Reassure them
- Talk to them about coronavirus
- Share memories
- Look after yourself

Please see Winston's Wish at the following link for more information:  
<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-youngpeople/>

The Winston's Wish website also provides contact details should you need advice.

See below for a list of resources that might be useful for supporting children and young people through this time.

Although there are a number of resources available, it is important that adults select resources carefully and explain to children what is happening in such a way that is appropriate for their age or stage of development.

Children and young people with special educational needs may need resources to be adapted or simplified to support their understanding. Some of the websites include resources to support children with special educational needs.

### **Websites:**

Winston's Wish: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

Cruse Bereavement Care: <https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Child Bereavement UK: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Grief Encounter: <http://www.griefencounter.org.uk>

### **Books:**

'Badger's Parting Gifts' (2013): S. Varley.

This book provides young children with a means to understand grief through a story about a badger and the special items he gave his friends during his lifetime.

'Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children' (2004): D. Stickney. This book uses the analogy of a water bug and their emergence as dragonflies to explain death to children.

'Always and Forever' (2013): A. Durant. This book explains death gently through a story about animals, for children aged 3 to 5.

'It's OK to be Sad' (2005): M. Collins. This book contains activities to help children aged 4 to 9 to manage loss, grief or bereavement. Stories about different life events are used to illustrate the range of feelings, 3 give permission for the expression of feelings, encourage empathy towards others and demonstrate that loss is a common experience for us all.

'Goodbye Mousie' (2004): R.H. Harris. A book that teaches young children about death through the loss of a beloved pet mouse. This story is suitable for children aged 4 to 8 years.

'The Dragonfly Story: Explaining the death of a loved one to children and families' (2018): K. Owen. This book tells the author's experiences of grief and child loss through the adaptation of the fable of the transformation of the dragonfly.

'Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your activity book to help when someone has died' (2000): D. Crossley. This book offers practical and sensitive support for bereaved children through a series of activities and exercises for children aged 5 to 7.

'The heart and the bottle' (2010): O. Jeffers. This book explores themes of love and loss through a story for children aged 5 to 8.

'What on earth do you do when someone dies?' (1999): T. Romain. This book offers practical strategies for dealing with grief and the overwhelming emotions involved, such as sadness, fear, anger, guilt, and helps answer all the questions children have about death. It is suitable for children aged 5 to 10.

'I miss you' (2009): P. Thomas. This reassuring picture book explores the difficult issue of death of a loved one for young children. It is suitable for children aged 6 to 11.

'Rudi's Pond' (2000): E. Bunting. A story that explores the death of a classmate: his friends remember him by building a schoolyard pond in his memory.

'The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back' (2003): M. Sunderland. This book is a story about a sand dragon and is for children who have lost someone they love, suitable for children ages 4 to 12.

'When someone very special dies' (1988): M. Heegaard. This book involves drawing and colouring to help children work out their feelings about death, for children aged 9 to 12.

'Remembering: Providing support for children aged 7-13 who have experienced loss and bereavement' (2004): L. Nelson and T. Rae. This book provides a range of sensitive, positive and emotionally literate activities that can be used in whole class, small group or individual settings for children aged 7 to 13.

'Grief encounter' (2004): S. Gilbert. This book encourages conversations about loss between children and adults and is suitable for primary and early secondary school pupils.

### **Templates for letters going home about a death of a member of the school community**

Before sending a letter home to parents 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 by the parents and school

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

*Dear Parents*

*Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of ....., a pupil in.....,died from .....(e.g.cancer or after a long fight with or suddenly in the night etc).*

*(As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.)*

*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 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 office and we would be more than happy to help you.*

*We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating their life.*

*Yours sincerely Head Teacher*

Sample letter to bereaved parents:

*Dear ....*

*We are so very sorry to hear of ..... 's death.*

*There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.*

*Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and classmates.*

*.... was a much loved member of our school family. If we can do anything to help as you plan .....’s funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know.*

*In time, we will also ensure that anything of ....’s that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.*

*Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.*

*With sympathy,  
Headteacher*

*Suggested wording for a letter to parents about a bereavement in school of a child or staff member:*

*Dear parents I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died.*

*The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news.*

*No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement.*

*I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news.*

*Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.*

*You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.*

*You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)*

*We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known.*

*Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory.*

*It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community.*

*I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives. Yours.....*