

Littleover Community School



and Sixth Form Centre

Bereavement Policy

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School Leader	Laura Johnson
Link Governor	Mohammed Basherat

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Bereavement Policy

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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 Students 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 Students 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:

- Determine which member of staff is best placed to liaise with the family of the deceased
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to Students and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Liaise with the local authority and implement, where necessary, the critical incident protocol
- 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 Students 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 Students or staff
- Attend, where appropriate, the funeral or the bereaved.

2.2 Safeguarding and Wellbeing staff

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved Students and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved Students and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved Students 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 Students 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 monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through receiving updates via school email or at Governors meetings.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing
- 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 Students and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

Informal mutual support opportunities should be considered, such as providing time and space for staff to share feelings and reactions at the end of the school day.

The DSL and DDSL hold Mental Health First Aid qualifications to support students. In addition, the Operations Manager, Head's PA, and Cover Supervisor Manager hold Mental Health First Aid qualifications to help identify and signpost staff to appropriate support services. Staff may access the school's Staff Wellbeing offer or be referred to external support agencies where appropriate.

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing area should also be available to staff who require support or time away from their usual duties.

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

The Headteacher and DSL/Assistant DSL, in liaison with the Senior Leadership Team, will determine which procedures are appropriate to the circumstances.

The Headteacher or most appropriate member of Senior staff should establish contact with the deceased's family and ensure their wishes are respected when communicating with the school community.

Communications should be factual, sensitive, and mindful of cultural and religious considerations.

Particular attention should be given to the potential impact of social media, where rumours and misinformation can spread quickly.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

Staff, including absent and part-time staff, should be informed before students.

Where appropriate, a staff meeting should be held. Due consideration should be given to vulnerable staff members and, where appropriate, information shared outside of the whole staff meeting.

Staff should be prepared through prior training to communicate information in age-appropriate ways in anticipation of the news being shared with students.

4.3 Sharing the news with Students

A decision should be made regarding whether a whole-school approach or targeted communication is most appropriate.

Ideally, students closest to the circumstances of bereavement should preferably be informed in small groups by someone known to them.

A special assembly may be arranged to communicate information or celebrate the life of the deceased.

Suicide Response

- In cases where a student or staff member dies by suicide, support can be accessed through Samaritans' step-by-step programme for schools via 0808 168 2528

4.4 Informing parents/carers

A letter should be prepared and distributed to affected school families at the earliest opportunity, with consideration given to the appropriate audience and method of distribution.

4.5 School Operations and Support

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

The school timetable may need flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of affected students and staff.

Wherever possible, routine should be maintained as it provides security and familiarity.

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing area should be available for students who are too distressed to remain in lessons, and for staff if required.

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:

Where appropriate, the Headteacher will liaise with the Local Authority Press Office regarding a press statement.

All communication with the media should be factual, sensitive, and aligned with the wishes of the deceased's family.

Consideration should be given to the impact of social media and the potential for misinformation, speculation, and rumour.

4.7 Death during school holidays or school closure

In the event of a death during school holidays or school closure the above procedures should be followed as far as possible, with thought given to the means of communication. No information will be made public or actions taken without the knowledge and permission of the deceased's family. In the event of a death during school holidays or school closure, the Headteacher should be informed as soon as possible and, together with the DSL, will decide the most suitable course of action, in consultation with the family of the deceased.

NB: Many of the guidelines in this policy are only appropriate when the school community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a student or another staff member. Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a student experiencing the death of a parent or close relation. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual student should still be given careful consideration.

If a student has been bereaved, it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss. The DSL/DDSL or other key member of staff will talk to the student about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.

4.8: Critical Incidents

- In the event of a critical incident, it is important that school lets the Local Authority know as soon as possible. A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within the school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of school. The DCC Critical Incident protocol requires contact to be made with the PACE officer; Public Health Manager Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing and Principal Educational Psychologist. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) will offer support to the leadership team in order to appropriately manage the situation. The approach taken is based on research into best practice and is founded on helping schools manage the immediate aftermath of an event, including advice and support around communication, practical arrangements and managing the emotional response to it.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for Students and staff

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

Ongoing support will be offered through:

- The Safeguarding Team
- Wellbeing Coaches
- External Counsellor referral
- Head of Year
- Tutor
- A trusted member of staff identified by the bereaved individual
- External support agencies where appropriate
- Local Authority
- Education Support

5.2 Monitoring Vulnerable Students

Where a student experiences the death of a parent or close relative, whole-school responses are unlikely to be appropriate. The needs of the individual student should be carefully considered. The student should be involved in decisions about how information is shared with peers. The DSL, DDSL, or another key member of staff should discuss:

- How the student wishes their peers to be informed.
- What support they would find most helpful.

Students and staff who may be particularly vulnerable should be identified. This includes those who witnessed the death or may be at greater risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Symptoms of PTSD may include:

- Re-experiencing the trauma
- Avoidance behaviours
- Increased agitation
- Significant emotional, mental, or physical distress

Individuals experiencing persistent or troubling symptoms should be encouraged to seek support from a medically qualified professional, such as their GP.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

The deceased person's family should be consulted regarding any plans for memorials. Where applicable, the school will communicate with the student's family regarding any examinations or qualification results.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or Students are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and Students can contribute
- If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so.

6. Support for Students returning to school after bereavement

Whether a student 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

A student's Head of Year will meet with the bereaved student 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 student 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 student and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the student about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the student and relevant staff to ensure support should the student feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the student's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a student who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

6.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the student's parents/carers to monitor how the student is coping

- School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a student throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new students. To this end it is important to have effective communication with partner schools.

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

7.1 Reintegration meeting

A member of the Senior Leadership Team 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
- 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 Students 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.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by Senior Leadership Team.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident arrangements (DCC)
- Bereavement Policy (DCC)

Appendix: useful contacts

- www.winstonswish.org.uk – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.
- www.childbereavement.org.uk - a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss
- bhf.org.uk/smallcreature - British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using carton creatures.
- www.samaritans.org - providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.
- www.cruse.org.uk - a bereavement charity, which provide free care and bereavement counselling to people suffering from grief.
- <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/dealing-grief/bereavement-or-grief-counselling> - bereavement or grief counselling for people who have lost a loved one to cancer.
- www.nhs.uk – you can find bereavement support services via the website
- <https://www.derby.gov.uk/> - you can search for local bereavement support services
- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> –
 - A network of child bereavement services including some training resources
- <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk> - For Young People by Young People offering hope in
 - in grief and loss (part of Cruse UK)
- <https://www.tcf.org.uk> – The Compassionate Friends. Support for families who have lost a child – parents, grandparents and siblings. Helpline, support groups and online resources. Good examples of what to say/not to say if supporting someone.
- <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk> – Gingerbread is a specialist support for single parents including advice on bereavements, what to expect from your workplace and accessing benefits
- <https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk> – Widowed and Young (WAY) offers support for those bereaved of a spouse at a young age
- <http://www.griefencounter.org.uk> – Griefencounter offer online and helpline support for those bereaved
- <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org> – The Good Grief Trust - resources for those who are bereaved or those who want to help a friend but are not sure how to do it
- <https://www.sands.org.uk> - Sands 0808 164 3332 Information and support for anyone affected by the death of a baby
- <https://uksobs.org> – Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS) 0300 111 5065 Emotional and practical support and local groups for anyone bereaved or affected by suicide
- <https://www.acas.org.uk> - ACAS Advice for employers on supporting bereaved employees
- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> – Finance/Support for families with links to advice on how to access government support and the practicalities of administration around a death