



WREN'S NEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Key Policy 2024-2025

Bereavement Policy

September 2024

Document to be read in conjunction with ***other key school policies (listed within document)***

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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

Rationale:

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community - a child or staff member.

We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and guiding principles need to be outlined and developed in an objective manner. This policy will deal with bereavement following the death of a school child or staff member and will also address the procedures which will be followed should a child become terminally ill or die whilst at school.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- Learning Mentor Team
- Governing Body
- Designated safeguarding lead
- SENCO

2.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher (Deputy Headteacher in HT's absence) 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 immediate family of the deceased.
- School will take into the wishes of the immediate family and will support them wherever possible.
- 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 (LM Team) or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.
- Work alongside the SENDCo and the DSL to provide support for children and families affected by bereavement.

2.2 Learning Mentor Team

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).

The pastoral support team will:

- 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)
- 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 Governing body

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

The governing body will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through the link governor/committee meetings who focus on bereavement.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair of governors.
- 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.

- Support from the Educational Psychology Team will be available for staff who support those who are working with the bereaved. This will support their emotional wellbeing when dealing with such cases. There are a range of resources available in school to support this.
- Staff will be regularly monitored and receive supervision from the Senior Leadership Team (HT, DHT, DSL, SENDCO) to ensure staff dealing with those who are bereaved maintain a positive sense of self and wellbeing.

FOLLOWING A BEREAVEMENT:

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve. (This will not affect attendance records - see section 5)
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate - if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise:

- That grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- That differing religions/culture's view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching contacts.

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher or Family Support Worker will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how.
- If the family are uncontactable, the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will contact the emergency contact number held on the child's file to confirm the news of the death.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- The Headteacher be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- The Headteacher will active communications to ensure that staff will be informed promptly (e.g. calling a staff meeting, activating a phone tree or using staff emergency notification systems to bring staff together virtually if your school is closed)

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- The Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. This will take the form of an assembly - whole school/class/year group as appropriate.

- Pupils will be informed in a timely and appropriate way (e.g. calling a whole-school assembly, having year group leaders calling year groups together to share the news, or using school emergency notification systems - ParentHub/school website to alert parents of where to find important news online if school is closed)

4.4 Informing parents/carers and families

- The Headteacher will contact Parents/Carers to notify them of a death (This will normally take the form of sending a letter home with pupils explaining the steps school has taken during the day to inform pupils of the death and what additional support has been made available including 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 death is the result of suicide, the school would contact Samaritans. They provide a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens. Each individual case will be treated with sensitivity and in the strictest of confidence to protect the families identify and privacy.
- If the death is due to homicide or family violence school will follow guidance provided by Child Bereavement UK - 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter'. Each individual case will be treated with sensitivity and in the strictest of confidence to protect the families identify and privacy.
- 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 the following manner:

- The Headteacher will be responsible for responding to requests from the media. Any other staff members should not respond to media requests and should instead refer enquiries to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will liaise with both the Chair of Governors and The Local Authority.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils, staff and families

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

- Appropriate support will be made available in school when the child or staff member returns. This could be in the form of an adapted timetable, direct support from the Learning Mentor team, support from a counselling service, peer-to-peer support. Support would be tailored to meet the individual needs of the child of staff member.
- When appropriate as well as liaising with families, when the death of a child's parent occurs, time off school to grieve, for a parent's funeral and for special times during the year, will be dealt with sensitively and support offered by the school for all manner of needs. Attendance records for the child will also be reviewed - the school will use its professional judgement along with regular communications with the family so that they are not penalized for non-attendance at these specific times. Families will need to discuss significant dates and periods of grief with the Head teacher, Deputy Headteacher or Family Support Worker (Tracey Cadman) so this can be supported through our attendance protocol as well as pastorally for both the child and the family in the home, as well as when the child returns to school.

- › If appropriate, children and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities. This will be done sensitively and on needs led basis. Communications with the parents of the bereaved child would take place prior to any referral.

5.2 Timetables

- › Timetables for pupils would be tailored to meet individual needs regarding their bereavement journey. Depending on the circumstances of the death - family member or the death of another pupil/peers, the Headteacher will review the timetable and communicate any changes with parents/carers accordingly.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

- › The school community will come together to memorialise the deceased in an appropriate manner
- › This may take the form of a physical memorial (e.g. A memory book, photo book)
- › Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account, as appropriate

5.4 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
- › The Head, or in their unavoidable absence, the deputy, will always attend as a mark of respect.
- › Children attending the funeral of a parent will be supported by school as per the wishes of the family. This will not affect the child's attendance records.

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

The Headteacher will make sure that appropriate and relevant staff are asked if they wish to attend the funeral. It may be that the school could not run safely if everyone were granted their wish and, in that case, difficult decisions will be made according to how close people are to the child and family.

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a child 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. Attendance records for the child will be reviewed (see section 5.)

6.1 Reintegration meeting

The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher, Family Support Worker and Learning Mentor will meet with the bereaved child and their parents/carers/family to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- › Determine whether the child 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 child and their parents/carers and families have about the return to school.
- › Consult with the child about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- › Open lines of communication between the child and relevant staff to ensure support should the child feel overwhelmed.

- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers and family to coordinate support.
- Consider any additional support needed for a child 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 and families to monitor how the child is coping - we will support the family and child in anyway we can.
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. These dates will be kept by the Learning Mentor Team and Family Support Team to ensure additional support is available at these particularly difficult times. Attendance records of the child will be reviewed (see section 5)
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will provide Learning Mentor sessions to allow the child time to talk.
- 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

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:

- Regular 'check ins' with line manager
- Weekly meeting to monitor well-being and progress
- Offer adjustments to be made to regular working pattern to support individual - e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables
- Each case will be treated individually and addressed appropriately, based on each individual's needs.

8. Monitoring arrangements

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school by all staff. The school will review this policy through the Personnel committee annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

9. Links with other policies

The Bereavement Policy links closely with a range of other policies to provide a coherent package of provision for Children at Wrens Nest:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Policy
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2024

Date of Review: September 2024

Policy to be reviewed: September 2025

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

- Useful Books - an example of some books that may be used in school to support with a child's grief. (School will provide these for in the home environment should parents or families require them.) The texts are used in school with a child and their usage discussed with families.

