



*Doing our best to achieve our best*

**Clarendon Primary School and Nursery**

## **Bereavement Policy**

### **Purpose**

This policy outlines the school's approach to supporting children, staff and families during times of bereavement. It aims ensure that the school community is prepared to respond compassionately and appropriately to death, grief and loss.

### **Aims**

- To provide a safe and supportive environment for grieving children and staff.
- To respect individual beliefs, cultures, and grieving processes.
- To ensure consistent and sensitive communication with families.
- To offer guidance to staff on how to support bereaved pupils.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- The death of a pupil, staff member or someone within the school community.
- Children experiencing bereavement in their personal lives.
- Anticipated deaths, (e.g. terminal illness within a child's family).

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Headteacher**

The headteacher will:

- Lead the response, communicate with families and coordinate support.
- In the case of a publicised death, after consultation with the LA, respond or appoint a member of staff to respond to media requests for information.
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews, as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for children or staff returning to school after a bereavement.
- Arrange for monitoring and support for the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of children at funerals. (Where permitted)

#### **Pastoral support staff – Headteacher, SENCO and Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA) person**

Pastoral support staff will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved child/ren and staff.
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved children and staff. (See Appendix)
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take time out.
- In consultation with the family, organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes and books of condolence.
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved children or staff and ensure they feel 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.

#### **The governing body**

- Monitor the implementation of this policy and provision of support for the headteacher.

- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Where necessary, arrange for another member of SLT to take the lead if the headteacher is not available. (This would usually be the deputy headteacher.)

### **All Staff**

Show empathy, maintain routines and refer any concerns to pastoral support staff or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

## **Responding to specific situations / causes of death**

### **Pre-bereavement**

- A member of pastoral staff will meet with the child regularly to provide them with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.
- All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the child is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to pastoral staff who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

### **Pupils with a life-threatening illness**

- The headteacher, the child, their family and other relevant staff members (e.g. a member of pastoral staff) will decide how to share the news that a child is terminally ill with the school community.
- Other children will be informed about how they can best support the child in the most appropriate way.

### **Terminally Ill Pupils / Staff**

- In the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, the headteacher will liaise with them and / or their family about their wishes.
- Should the child wish to attend school, the headteacher / pastoral support team will consider whether the class teacher needs to inform the class of the child's condition.
- For a member of staff, if required, advice and support from Occupational Health will be obtained to ensure appropriate support / reasonable adjustments to working conditions can be implemented.
- For a child, the headteacher will liaise with parents and other relevant professionals about any specific support or care the child may require in school.
- As a child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves, consider in advance about how best to support the child to do this; providing appropriate support to both the child and fellow children.

### **Forces' families**

The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' children will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required. This includes:

- implementing appropriate support bereaved forces' children, particularly during times of change, e.g. ELSA or Drawing and Talking sessions.
- Protecting bereaved forces' children from any unwanted media attention
- Providing a designated area in school that the child/ren can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

### **Suicide**

- The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours. The headteacher, or other appointed member of staff, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.
- If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.

- If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the headteacher will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- Staff will be told about the death first.
- The script that staff will use to inform pupils of the death will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the suicidal act itself.
- Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any children and staff who require it.
- Staff will report any concerns about children to the headteacher and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with the Child Protection Policy.
- Any information distributed to the school community and media regarding the death will:
  - Be factually correct but not include detail of the cause of death or method used.
  - Not include speculation over the motivation for suicide or details of any suicide note.

### **A death involving murder or manslaughter**

- The headteacher will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.
- A designated staff member will be available to talk to the child to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.
- As research indicates that children that have been bereaved due to murder or manslaughter can be at significant risk of developing PTSD, any concerns relating to the child will be addressed in line with the Child Protection policy.
- Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

### **Immediate Response to a Death**

In the event of an immediate death the following steps / actions will be taken:

- Contact will be made with bereaved families to offer condolences and support.
- An identified member of staff will talk with the family about their wishes with regards to how and what will be shared with children in school as well as the wider school community.
- Informing staff and children in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner.
- Liaise with the local authority and educational psychology service, if necessary. This is particularly important in the case of e.g. a sudden or violent death.
- Provide support to staff and children throughout the grieving period. (Anyone displaying signs of stress will be offered appropriate support.)
- Offer opportunities for children to ask questions and express feelings.
- Consult the family, as appropriate, to confirm whether members of staff and / or children are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service. Explore their wishes regarding how condolences should be made and how staff and children can contribute.
- Provide space for remembrance, e.g. assemblies, memory books, class circle times.

### **Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement**

#### **General principles:**

- Maintain normal routines to help provide stability.
- Allow flexibility in academic expectations.
- Offer one-to-one emotional support or refer to external services.
- Use clear language (e.g. "died" rather than euphemisms like "lost").

#### **Reintegration meeting**

A member of the pastoral team will meet with the bereaved child/ren 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 child/ren are emotionally ready to return to school either full-time or with adjustments to their timetable to allow for a phased return.
- Address any concerns the child/ren and their parents/carers may have about the return to school.
- Consult with the child/ren about how or even if they want classmates to know about their bereavement. (Where relevant)

- Consider any additional support needed for the child/ren who are vulnerable or have special educational needs (SEN) or a disability.

### **Ongoing support**

The school will maintain regular contact with the child/ren's parents/carers to monitor how their child/ren are coping. As a school we acknowledge that significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. As a result, dates will be monitored and additional support will be available when required. We also know that grief may impact a child's progress and affect their behaviour. To help manage this we will:

- Address behaviour using our Behaviour Policy.
- Keep a record of anniversaries and days which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
- Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved child is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies; taking into account the child's needs and circumstances.
- All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved child is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to pastoral staff who will put appropriate support in place.
- Ongoing care will be taken to manage changes for bereaved children by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions.

### **Support for staff returning to school after bereavement**

#### **Reintegration meeting**

The Head teacher will meet with the bereaved member of staff 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 easier, 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 children 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

### **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. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies (see Appendix). Staff are also able to make contact with the Employee's Assistance Program, whose number can be found displayed in numerous places around the school including the staffroom.

### **Support for staff**

Managing situations involving bereavement can be difficult and stressful, for both the individual directly affected and the wider staff working with them. To support this the school will:

- Acknowledge the emotional impact of bereavement on staff.
- Provide access to counselling or peer support if required.
- Encourage open conversations and time for reflection.

### **Cultural and religious behaviours**

The school will keep in mind the cultural attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will make sure these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected. This includes respecting the

diverse beliefs and practices around death and mourning. The school will also consult with families about their preferred way to commemorate their loved one.

### **Training and Resources**

- Staff will receive bereavement awareness training as required.
- Access to Child Bereavement UK's resources and helpline.
- Regular review of policy and practices.

### **Links with other policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Child protection policy
- Behaviour and anti-bullying policies
- Critical incident procedures

### **Monitoring and Review**

- The policy will be reviewed annually or following a significant bereavement event.
- Feedback from staff, pupils, and families will inform updates.

**Policy written:** Autumn term 2025

**Policy review:** Autumn term 2028 or sooner if required

**Appendix**  
**Useful contacts**

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
<b>Child Bereavement UK</b>	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>
<b>Winston's Wish</b>	Helpline: 08088 020 021 <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>
<b>CRUSE Bereavement Care</b>	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a>
<b>Mind</b>	Info line (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/usefulcontacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/usefulcontacts/</a>
<b>Place2Be (internal)</b>	Helpline: 02079235500 <a href="https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-andblogs/2015/may/bereavement-and-the-impact-on-children/">https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-andblogs/2015/may/bereavement-and-the-impact-on-children/</a>