



# **Bereavement Policy**

**Updated: Oct 2023  
To be reviewed: Oct 2025  
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Farndon Primary School

**EQUALITY SCHEME  
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR  
BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

Staff / Committee involved in development:	Health Safety Committee; Headteacher / SENCO / Family Liaison	
For use by:	Staff and Parent/Carers	
This policy relates to statutory guidance:		
Key related Farndon Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal Opportunities policy</li> <li>• Discipline/Behaviour policy</li> <li>• PSHE and Citizenship policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding policy</li> <li>• Anti-bullying policy</li> <li>• Outside Visits policy</li> <li>• Medicines policy</li> </ul>	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b> Does this document impact on any of the following groups? If YES, state positive or negative impact, and complete an Equality Impact Assessment Form or action plan, and attach.		
<b>Groups:</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>	<b>Positive/Negative impact</b>
Disability	No	
Race	No	
Gender	No	
Age	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
Religious & Belief	No	
Gender Reassignment	No	
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No	
Pregnancy & Maternity	No	
Other	No	
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Leadership and Management	
<b>Agreed by</b>	Finance / Health Safety Committee  Policies with negative impact must be notified at full governing body	
<b>Next Policy review date</b>	Oct 2025	
A copy of this form, and any related impact assessment form or action plan must be sent to the school office		

This document is a statement of the aims and principles of the School, for ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive information relating to staff, pupils, parents and governors.

Death is a subject that nobody ever wants to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point in every teacher's career the school community will be affected by a death in some way or another. This might include the death of a pupil, the death of a staff member, the death of a pupil's family member, or the death of a key member in the school community such as a governor or popular visitor to the school.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. Our school is well-placed to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as to support those personally affected by it. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

This school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school'. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or divorce.

We are committed to involving the whole school community in the ongoing development of our bereavement policy. This policy was formulated with input from members of staff, representatives from the governing body, our School Nurse, the Local Authority/Healthy Schools Advisor, parents and pupils.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents/carers, prospective parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school.

This policy will be available in the school's policy file. A reference copy is located in the Head Teacher's office.

## Aims

At Farndon School our aim is to support all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances.

## Roles and Responsibilities

**The Head Teacher** has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

There needs to be a **designated person** within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that this person is absent then another named person will take responsibility.

His/Her responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
- Co-ordinating the planned action to manage school-related incidents in and beyond the school; decide who will be responsible for communicating with the family directly involved, decide who gives news to the school community and if necessary who will communicate with the press.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary school.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

The nominated **Governor** with responsibility for bereavement issues is Carol Weaver. Her responsibilities are:

- To contribute to generating and updating the policy.
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

## Staff support and training

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and mutual support for each other and in implementing this policy. Bereavement awareness training will be provided for all staff, including site managers and lunch time supervisors, and for relevant governors. We will ensure that members of staff are regularly consulted as to their training needs and training is provided as appropriate to keep up to date with developments.

## Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the PSHE curriculum. In our school this is taught as part of the 'Relationships' theme using the SEAL materials. It is also addressed through cross curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy and Religious Education. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death e.g. Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way.

Children are given the opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death as well as being encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

## Teaching and Learning

Our teaching will be based on an understanding of the principles stated above and that a variety of approaches should be used to meet the needs of our pupils and show sensitivity to their age and experience.

Teaching methods adopted in the classroom include:

- A range of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama.
- Introducing supporting resources – photographs, mementoes, stories, poetry and music.
- Giving clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to soften the blow with ambiguous language which does not tell the truth.
- Practising the collaborative social skills necessary to help cope with the feelings of loss.
- Giving relevant and appropriate advice and support.
- Providing continuity and progression by visiting and revisiting issues as pupils develop and their needs and understanding change.
- Considering the attitudes and values of pupils and a range of other significant groups in their locality.

## Procedures

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 pupil or another staff member.

Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a pupil experiencing the death of a parent. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual pupil should still be given careful consideration.

If a child has been bereaved it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss. Talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.

### Breaking news to staff, pupils and families

This is usually done when a student or staff member has died. Publicly talking about a single student who has experienced the death of a parent or family member may not be the best thing to do.

- Speak to the family if possible, offer them condolences and support before ascertaining what they would like to happen. Give them a direct telephone number for someone they can contact in school.
- Obtaining factual information should be made a priority. Think through how this might be done, remembering that contact with those directly involved may be difficult. It is vitally important not to make assumptions or repeat what has been heard through rumour. This will only add to distress. It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before pupils.
- Identify ways of doing this sensitively. Don't forget part-time and peripatetic staff. See suggested list of people/agencies to contact.
- Decisions need to be made about where pupils will be told if this is necessary. Identify the most vulnerable pupils and what support they might need.
- Pupils should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. A large school assembly is usually not ideal. Staff may well need guidance on words to use and the approach to take. Have something pre-prepared. See 'Helpful Hints' sheets.
- If necessary send a letter to families the same day if possible. A pre-prepared script will be very helpful; it is difficult to find the right words when emotional and in shock.
- Consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter.

## The first few days.

- 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?

## The funeral

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- Identify which staff and pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not. Clear guidance on this in the policy will be helpful.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.
- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.

## Support

### Support for bereaved children

Not all children and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners; they need familiar people who care.

Schools can offer children and young people:

- A routine, providing a sense of normality
- Some space, away from an emotional 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 of the home environment).
- Regular correspondence with home, providing reassurance about behaviours and general well-being, will ensure the child or young person is managing their grief.
- Access to appropriate resources via Healthy Schools, resources libraries, and Spiral or other support agencies. (see contact details in pack)
- Preparation time for children and young people to discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved child or young person returns to school. This can help young people to see death as a common experience for us all at different times and places.
- Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be related to the death.

- An individual link person to support the pupils when necessary.
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.
- Reach out to HealthBox for one to one counselling should it be deemed necessary.

## Support for pupils generally

- It is important to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example anyone who witnessed the death.
- Compile and keep updated a list of outside professionals and agencies who can come into the school in the event of a traumatic death to counsel pupils. Make sure that the help offered from outside agencies is appropriate before accepting. Pupils may find it difficult to be receptive to support or counselling from families of fellow pupils.
- Remembering/commemoration: this is difficult to plan in advance, but careful thought is required. The dead person's family and the young person need to be consulted. Schools often find that an assembly that takes the form of a celebration of life is appropriate.

## Support for staff

- Supporting bereaved pupils will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. See list of outside agencies, including professionals from Children and Young People's Services that may offer help, both short and long term.
- Plan for some sort of informal mutual support, for example in the staffroom at the end of the school day, to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.
- Give people time to attend the funeral if appropriate.
- Training before events happen – general for all staff and specific to bereaved children and young people.
- Awareness of available resources and time to become familiar with what is available.

## Support for Parents

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people.
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection /flowers to be sent 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 wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.

## **Transition**

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

## **Confidentiality**

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure, pupils will be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This will help in retaining the trust of pupils and parents/carers and will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information is only disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals.

When the child returns to school it is important to discuss with them whether they want certain people with whom they come into contact to be informed, such as extended school club leaders.

## **Inclusion and Equality**

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures concerning death and that there may be different expectations of the bereaved child and family. Some of these may affect matters of school organisation.

We try to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Children will be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

## **Responding to the media**

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff have been advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the head teacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority Press Office; numbers can be found in the critical incident plan.

## Reference documents used in the drafting of this policy

Schools Information Pack, Childhood Bereavement Charity  
Winston's Wish online support materials  
'Dignity and Respect, Cultural Awareness: Religion and Belief' NHS  
'Childhood Bereavement' National Children's Bureau 2004

### Useful Websites:

[www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk)  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)  
[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)  
[www.thelauracentre.org.uk](http://www.thelauracentre.org.uk)  
[www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk)  
[www.rip.rap.org.uk](http://www.rip.rap.org.uk)  
[www.penthaligonsfriends.org.uk](http://www.penthaligonsfriends.org.uk)