



## **Eastington Primary School**

# **Bereavement Policy**



Reviewed Sept 2023

To be reviewed Sept 2026

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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 (staff member/child) and a personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member).
- › 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 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

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 The headteacher

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. The headteacher will delegate responsibilities in this policy to other members of the SLT/staff team as needed.

The headteacher will:

- › Liaise with the family of the deceased. Signpost to external agencies who can support
- › Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy
- › Respond/not respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- › Represent the school at funerals if the family wishes a member of staff to attend
- › Participate in multi-agency reviews as requested, wherever practical
- › Organise memorials if appropriate, e.g. books of condolences
- › Discuss support/reintegration for staff returning to school after a bereavement: quiet space for time out when needed, OH support, signposting external agencies who can support
- › Support the SLT developing skills and their well-being through offering training on bereavement through Winstone's Wish, signposting external agencies who can support (Occupational Health, Winstone's Wish, other online support)

### 2.2 SLT, teachers and TAs.

The SLT monitors and arranges support for bereaved pupils (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness). The class teacher and TA are likely to support the child day to day.

The SLT will:

- › Provide support to bereaved pupils (this is likely to be through the class T/TA/ELSA trained TA, signposting to external agencies who support bereaved pupils)
- › Provide additional support during significant transitions if needed e.g. when transitioning to a new school
- › Support individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils through checking and signposting external agencies who can support (Occupational Health, Winstone's Wish, Online support)

## **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 a link governor catch-ups with the headteacher or the SLT.
- › Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair
- › 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 (usually a member of the SLT) 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 work will be monitored and supported.

- › The school has undertaken bereavement awareness training (through Winstone's Wish online in 2021). This is still available for staff who are asked to support children with a bereavement
- › The SLT/HT will monitor staff through asking about their wellbeing/reminding staff she has time to listen if wanted.
- › The HT can refer staff to OH for support if wanted/needed
- › Signposting resources/ external agencies such as Winstone's Wish

## **4. Immediate actions following a death**

### **4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family**

- › The headteacher 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
- › The headteacher will make a choice on whether to share the news of a death with children/staff/parents if the family cannot be contacted to confirm the death. In this case the minimum factual information will be shared. The aim of doing this would be to reduce social speculation/social media speculation.

### **4.2 Sharing the news with staff**

- › To share information of a death in the school community, the Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- › To share information of a death in the school community, school e-mail addresses will be used to ensure staff are informed. Impromptu short Staff Meetings may also be called at lunchtime/after school if needed. In holiday times, staff maybe contacted by text.
- › Sharing a personal bereavement is the choice of the staff member. We are a small and strong team and it is likely that staff will want to share personal bereavement with colleagues. The Headteacher/staff member will share this information if asked to do so.

### **4.3 Sharing the news with pupils**

- › Information of a death in the community will typically be shared by class teachers. They will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. If a teacher finds this difficult, another teacher/headteacher will undertake this.
- › Information of a death in the school community could also be shared in a whole-school assembly by the headteacher (SLT in their absence).

### **4.4 Informing parents/carers**

- › Notification of a death in the community will be through a letter/e-mail. The letter will include explaining the steps taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, the support made available for children and 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 the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow additional procedures as determined by our local health protection team
- › If the death is the result of suicide we will seek support from Winstone’s Wish or Samaritans [step-by-step programme](#).
- › If the death is due to homicide or family violence we will seek support from Child Bereavement UK (guide to ‘Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter’ -see bottom of [this page](#))

### **4.6 Responding to the media**

If a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- › The headteacher is responsible for responding to requests from the media. Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should refer enquiries to the headteacher
- › It is likely that the headteacher will be busy gathering information to support the immediate school community. A response will not be rushed in relation to media requests. Advice will be sought. A written response created and shared – ideally after advice has been sought/gained.

## **5. Follow-up actions and support following a death**

### **5.1 Support for pupils and staff**

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

- › Parents of pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities.
- › In school, T/TA will support children in their class. If children are struggling, the TA may offer time to talk, the ELSA trained TA may undertake a support work too.

- › School staff will have access to OH support if wanted.

## **5.2 Tributes and condolences**

- › In the case of a death within the school community, the school community may come together to memorialise the deceased
- › A physical memorial may be engaged (e.g. a book of condolences)
- › Religious/cultural considerations of the deceased will be taken into account as appropriate

## **5.3 Funerals**

The headteacher will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- › Whether a school representative is wanted to attend the funeral or memorial service
- › How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are wanted to attend the funeral by the family this will usually be the headteacher.

If staff are welcomed to attend the funeral by the family and wish to do so:

- › Staff should request leave to attend in writing.
- › Considerations will be made in granting permission based on availability of cover/the need to maintain continuity for children in school.

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

Whether a pupil 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.

### **6.1 Reintegration meeting**

The Headteacher/SLT/Class teacher will meet with the bereaved pupil 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 pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom
- › Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- › Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death
- › Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- › Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers
- › Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

### **6.2 Ongoing support**

- › Class teacher's will maintain contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- › We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, class teachers will monitor the child and communicate with parents regarding changes/concerns. Advice form

the SLT will be sought which may include signposting parents to external agencies who can support bereaved children.

- › We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. These may be added to the school calendar to support staff sensitivity.
- › We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them (where possible) 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 through checking on their well-being, offering offering OH/online support.

### 7.1 Reintegration meeting

The 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 temporary change in duties that may be particularly difficult in light of their bereavement)
- › Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- › Discuss with the staff member about how or even if they want their colleagues to know of the death
- › Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and the headteacher: the headteacher will check the staff member, staff member can initiate a conversation with the headteacher too.

### 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 cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with the individual to offer support through well-being checks, referring to OH, signposting online support as wanted.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed in 2026 by the headteacher and Governors.

### Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Cruse Bereavement Care	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>
Mind	Infoline (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/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a>