



Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

Bereavement Policy

Date issued: February 2023
Review Date: February 2024

Other related academy policies that support this Bereavement Policy include, Critical Incident Plan, Data Protection, First Aid, Health and Safety and Supporting Children with Medical Needs,

Ethos

A death within any school environment can cause an unbalanced feeling. However, our Academy Trust will show that we are a strong 'family' in bringing people together in times of grief.

Aims

The school's aim to provide support to pupils who experience bereavement within their families, and support to pupils and staff on the death of a member of the school community, whether it be an adult or a child. The way in which children and young people are treated when someone important in their lives dies has a profound effect on their future ability to manage their own lives. The caring and supportive school environment has a key role to play and we recognise that every situation is unique and demands careful handling, with the wishes of the pupil or family being of paramount importance.

This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. 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.

The policy is based on practice that has grown over time as the school has previously experienced bereavements and provides a resource as a working document to support our community.

Following a Bereavement:

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

- be given space and time to grieve
- 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.
- differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- 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.

The management of bereavement in school

A universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is the Headteacher. If this person is absent, then another Senior Leader will take responsibility.

Death of a pupil

The school may be notified in several ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil swift action will be taken by the school, in conjunction with the Trust.

Support will be provided for the whole school community and if necessary, Pastoral staff will be deployed, from across the Trust, to provide additional capacity and support.

If appropriate, a designated areas will be established to provide a place to reflect and a book of remembrance will be opened for pupils, staff and the wider school community.

Staff will be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support. Staff should be honest and open about their feelings.

Pupils with a particularly close relationship to the deceased will be told one-to-one or in a separate group and additional pastoral support will be provided, if required. In addition, it may be necessary to seek specialist external services and support, especially if children have witnessed the death. Pupils will be encouraged to share their feelings and discuss the event and death via class circles or reflective discussions.

The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital, we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

Structure and regularity will ensure children are not overwhelmed; however, pupils who feel too distressed to attend lessons will be allowed to go to the area designated previously.

Sharing information

It is important to agree, with the parent/carers, before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community. Evidence from many schools has shown that parents are often happy to have this burden taken away from them, as they have many people unconnected with the school to contact. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner.

The following people, or services should be notified:

- The local authority (Child's Social Care or SEND Team, if applicable)
- CEO and Chair of the Trust
- Current school staff not in school that day
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children. See Appendix B.

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.
- The Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not, consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.

- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed. Past experience has shown that this can be helpful in their grieving.

Memory Assemblies

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

The death of a young person or staff member on a school trip

In the event of a death during a school trip an emergency team will be established by the Headteacher, and the Critical Incident Policy will be initiated.

Those who have witnessed the death will be the priority and they will be offered immediate support. The Headteacher will consult with emergency services personnel to determine the most timely and appropriate method for informing the deceased's family. A designated staff member will undertake the role of school liaison, and if possible, a designated phone line for enquiries will be established. The emergency team will organise support and counselling, as necessary. The emergency team will be offered debriefing and support following the event, as necessary.

On-going Support for the family:

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- 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.

Support for Staff

As a school we recognise that being alongside anyone experiencing a loss can be emotionally draining. We understand and appreciate that it is normal to be emotionally affected. If staff feel that the situation is too close to home, then they should do not be afraid to say so. It is important that staff speak to colleagues about how they are feeling, and opportunities should be created for members of staff to get together, as knowing there are others who are affected can help individual feel less alone and better-able to cope. The school, and Trust can offer additional support for any member of staff who are emotionally affected by the loss of a child or colleague.

Informing the Health and Safety Executives (HSE)

Only in very limited circumstances will an incident need to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR.

Injuries that result in the death of a pupil, staff member or visitor who are involved in an accident at school, or an activity organised by the school are reportable to RIDDOR, if it arose out of connection with a work activity.

RIDDOR only applies to activities taking place in Britain. Any incidents overseas are not reportable to the HSE.

Responding to the press or media

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to the press or media and to refer all enquiries to the

Headteacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Trust's Central Team.

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.

The death of a staff member

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member.

It is imperative that HR are notified of the death at the earliest opportunity, in order that they can support with payroll/pensions processes and prevent any additional distress that could occur as a result of late notification.

Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Headteacher will seek permission from the CEO and/or Chair of the Trust to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.

Religious and Cultural consideration

HCAAT is a multi-cultural community, which takes into account the differing needs, rituals and practices of all faiths.

Our school's approaches will always be undertaken with the dignity and respect of individual beliefs.

Removal of records

The school should amend the status of the pupil to 'deceased' in all electronic recording systems eg SIMS, CPOMS etc, plus also their name should be removed from any other general school data or distribution lists. Other pupil records must be kept for 7 years from the date of their death. Following this period, the records must be confidentially destroyed.

In relation to staff records, again personnel files should be held for 7 years from the date of their death, and destroyed securely after this period.

NB: If the school holds child protection information, they cannot be destroyed, as they are on a disposal held nationally due to the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse.

Bereavement with the curriculum

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During November each year we will hold a special assembly/acts of remembrance as appropriate, to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died.

We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement within the curriculum. This will take place within the PSHE and RE areas of the curriculum.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy in the event of a bereavement.

Appendix A - List of Online Resources and Information

www.winstonswish.org.uk A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

www.keech.org.uk The website of Keech Hospice Care, our local Children's Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers.

www.chums.info A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

www.childbereavement.org.uk A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

www.juliesplace.com A support resource for bereaved siblings

www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature British Heart Foundation site to help children come to terms with loss using cartoon creatures. An animated film and we have a printed pack to go with it.

www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml

Information on the way bereavement affects children

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk> An organisation offering local bereavement support to both adults and children

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> Federation of organisations

Appendix B

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

<Address> <Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

(<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.)

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

(We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..'s> life.)

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

<Address> <Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

Appendix D

Supporting pupils

The following guidelines are taken from CRUSE bereavement care website. They are general principles, and need to be thought about whatever the needs of the child are. Adapt and aid communication as appropriate.

Loss from a child's perspective

For many children and young people, the death of a parent, caregiver, sibling or grandparent is an experience they are faced with early in life. It is sometimes incorrectly assumed that a child or young person who is bereaved by the death of someone close at a young age will not be greatly affected as they are too young to understand the full implications of death.

This is untrue and unhelpful.

Accepting the child's experience

Children and young people need to be given the opportunity to grieve as any adult would. Trying to ignore or avert the child's grief is not protective, in fact it can prove to be extremely damaging as the child enters adulthood. Children and young people regardless of their age need to be encouraged to talk about how they are feeling and supported to understand their emotions. It is also important to remember that children and young people grieve in different ways. Grief is unique and therefore it is not wise to assume that all children and young people will experience the same emotions, enact the same behaviour or respond similarly to other grieving children and young people. A child or young person's grief differs from that of an adult's grief because it alters as they develop.

Time to grieve

Children and young people often revisit the death and review their emotions and feelings about their bereavement as they move through their stages of development. Children and young people do not have the emotional capacity to focus on their grief for long periods of time and therefore it is not uncommon for grieving children and young people to become distracted by play. This is a protective mechanism which allows the child or young person to be temporarily diverted from the bereavement.

Bereaved children and young people need time to grieve and in order for them to address the bereavement they need to be given the facts regarding the death in language appropriate to their age or level of comprehension. Avoid using metaphors for death such as, "Daddy has gone to sleep", this will make the child or young person believe that Daddy will come back to them and may constantly ask when he is going to wake up. Similarly, the child or young person might encounter problems with bedtime and not wanting to sleep for fear of not waking up.

Talking to children

It is understandable that many caregivers are reluctant to talk to the child or young person about the death as they do not want to cause distress or fear. Children and young people who are bereaved need to know that their loved one has died, how they died and where they are now. Failure to be honest with the grieving child or young person means that their grief is not being acknowledged and this can cause problems later on.

If the bereaved child or young person wants to ask questions about death and what dying means, answer them truthfully and if you do not know the answer to a specific question don't be tempted to make the answer up. Assure the child or young person that although you do not know the answer to their question you will find out for them.

Key points to remember

- Be honest with the bereaved child or young person
- Avoid using metaphors for death
- Every child and young person's grief is unique
- Encourage the child or young person to talk about the death and how they feel
- Children and young people may 'revisit' the death and review their feelings about the bereavement as they develop.

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/Children/loss-from-childs-perspective>

Table of changes

Date	Change or inclusion
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informing Health & Safety Executives (HSE)• Responding to the press or media• Informing HR following the death of a staff member• Review period.