



William Law C E Primary School

Bereavement Policy

Policy shared with staff on [by email/staff briefing]

Policy confirmed by the Governing Body of William Law CE Primary School on:

Date: 21st October 2020

Signature: *Anna Bertou (digitally signed due to virtual meeting)*

Policy to be reviewed on: October 2023

This policy is written in line with the Christian values and ethos of our school.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5
God of All Comfort

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.^[a]

Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a dependent aged child loses a parent or carer, this equates to approximately 41,000 bereaved children a year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friends or other significant person. It is thought that 92% of children in the UK will experience bereavement before the age of 16. Primary school staff are certain to encounter students who have been deeply affected by bereavement.

The death of any member of a school community is a tragedy. William Law CE Primary School is fully committed to supporting all those affected by loss and death in a caring, Christian environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances. The emotional health and well-being of our children and our staff is extremely important to us and we are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including times of bereavement.

Aims of this policy:

To support pupils, staff and members of the school community

1. To ensure that there are designated members of the school staff who will provide support to pupils and/or staff before (where applicable) during and after bereavement.
2. To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and the community.
3. To set out how to inform pupils about a death and what to do when you are required to tell a pupil that someone close to them has died.
4. To identify key staff within the school and outside agencies and clarify the pathway of support.
5. To discern what support will be offered to staff/children if they have been bereaved.
6. To ensure that key staff members are trained and are able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief.
7. To ensure that the contact details of local and national support agencies specialising in bereavement such as Cruse Bereavement Care and Child Bereavement UK are available.
8. To set out a procedure on how to deal with media interest surrounding a death and designating members of staff to act as media coordinators.
9. The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (www.careandthelaw.org). All intentions of this policy endorse this aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

The role of the Governing Body:

- approve the policy and ensure its implementation;
- engage with and support the school (the headteacher in particular) in appropriate and mutually agreed ways;
- ensure the policy is reviewed regularly, in line with the dates set out at the end of this policy.

The role of the Headteacher:

- to keep the Governing Body informed;
- to monitor progress and liaise with external agencies;
- to coordinate support throughout the school and wider community, where necessary;
- to respond to media enquiries;
- to empower staff members to be able to support bereaved children / families / colleagues by referring them to relevant training, books and online resources;
- to liaise with the Church as appropriate through the incumbent, key lay leaders or foundation governors;
- to be the first point of contact for the child/children/staff member/family concerned or to designate this role to another member of the SLT on a case by case basis;
- have concern for the wellbeing of pupils, staff and members of the school community affected by bereavement;
- to engage outside agencies
- oversee the long term, continued well-being of those involved in a bereavement.

The role of Staff:

- to offer appropriate support, under the guidance of the Headteacher;
- to engage with bereavement support training and reading, as required;
- to deal with all aspect of the grief journey sensitively and confidentially.

In the event of a death in the school community:

The death must be reported to the local authority as soon as possible to allow them to cascade in the information to the relevant departments in a controlled and sensitive process. This action is necessary to prevent any further distress to the family.

Their role is to:

- advise and support staff;
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief;
- To manage media enquiries through the press office.

Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of a staff member or child

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher or member of SLT and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
- Staff should be informed **before** pupils and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

- Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
- If it is appropriate, and with the agreement of the deceased's family, a letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
- If during term time, the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable, as this also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
- Staff affected by the death will be offered support and will also be signposted to Employee Assist.
- Where necessary, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will work with Education Personal Management and the local authority to prepare a press statement.

Further Guidance on Breaking the News to Staff, Children & Families

This is usually done when a member of staff or a child has died and would not usually be appropriate when a single child/family has experienced the death of a parent or close family member.

- Headteacher or member of the SLT will speak to the family to offer condolences and support and to ascertain what the family would like to happen. The family will be given details of a school contact.
- Headteacher or member of the SLT will prioritise the obtaining of factual information.
- Headteacher or members of the SLT will inform all staff immediately preferably in person or via phone (including lunch supervisors/peripatetic staff etc) ideally before children are told.
- SLT to decide how and when children will be told, having first identified any vulnerable children and considered what additional support they may need.
- Children should be told as soon as possible, ideally in familiar groups by an adult who is someone they know (staff may need guidance on words to use and approaches to take).
- If possible, send a letter to families on the same day.
- Consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter.

The first few days (if the bereavement takes place when schools are open)

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, SLT to consider what will happen to his/her class?

Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of a member of a pupil's family or the bereavement of a member of the community that has had strong links with William Law CE Primary School

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations

Funeral

Adhere to any Government guidelines imposed due to exceptional circumstances e.g. Covid-19.

Where no restrictions apply

- The Headteacher or member of the SLT to establish whether the family would welcome involvement of members of the school community or if they wish to keep it private.
- The Headteacher or staff member designated by the Headteacher to identify which members of staff and/or pupils may want to attend. Arrangements regarding the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport to be put in place.
- Decide if a card and / or flowers are to be sent.
- Take into account any cultural or religious implications.
- If necessary, a familiar member of staff (eg class teacher or learning mentors) could talk to the child regarding expectations of the funeral.

Support for a bereaved child following the death of a family member/person of significance to them

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

- Consider a home visit and return 'interviews', prior to the pupil returning to school.
- Ensure that the appropriate staff are aware and prepared.
- Where appropriate, inform peers and prepare them on how to support their classmate.
- Offer the child(ren) the opportunity to speak with a familiar and safe adult eg the learning mentors.
- If and when appropriate, learning mentors to begin working through William Law's 'Supporting Bereaved Children' pack.
- Keep a routine, providing a sense of normality.
- Offer a safe and neutral place, away from an emotionally intense atmosphere, allowing people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent).
- Allow children time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment).
- Engage in regular correspondence with home, providing assurance about behaviours and general well-being.
- In liaison with the parents/carers, consider whether access to appropriate external support would be beneficial (e.g bereavement counselling) at the appropriate time.
- Ensure that the information is passed to the next class/school as part of transition.

Long Term Support for Bereaved Children

- Continued support from the Learning Mentors for as long as deemed necessary.
- Staff will be aware of important dates which may need to be prepared for. E.g.: Birthdays, religious celebrations such as Christmas/Eid, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Anniversary of the death.
- Where appropriate TAC/EHA support for family.

Monitoring & Supporting Staff

We recognise that supporting bereaved children will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions.

- A list of outside agencies that may offer help, both in the short and long term will be shared with staff.
- We will give staff time to attend the funeral if appropriate.
- Staff will be made aware of available resources and time to become familiar with these.

Support for Bereaved Families of a Member of Staff or a Child who has Died

We will:

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer our support.
- Send a letter / card of condolence from the school.
- Share information with the local authority to trigger support and advice.
- Depending on the wishes of the family, share information with the appropriate people.
- Give the parents and/or family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who died or arrange to have them delivered.
- If in alignment with the families wishes, send a representative to the funeral unless Government guidelines do not permit this.
- Send flowers, as appropriate.
- Invite parents/carers/ 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 book, this will be returned to the parents at an appropriate time and the children informed where it has gone.

Please note that the Clergy of the Parish can also be called upon to support families in times of bereavement.

Cruse Bereavement Care has published a helpful range of booklets for children young people and their carers that can be found here: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/parents/free-booklets-children-young-people-and-their-carers>

Organisations offering bereavement support and advice include the following:

For Children and Young People:

Winston's Wish www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus 0808 802 0021

Helpful guidance specific to coronavirus:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Seesaw www.facebook.com/SeeSawCharity 01865 744768

Child Bereavement UK www.childbereavementuk.org 0800 028 8840

For Adults:

Bereavement Care www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk 0208 427 5720 Cruse

Bereavement Counselling www.cruse.org.uk 0808 808 1677

For School:

Supporting a Bereaved Pupil

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

Bereavement and Loss

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/bereavement-and-loss/>

Lesson Plans and Ideas for Supporting a Bereaved Pupil

[https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/Whole_School_Approach_to_LossAndBereavement\).pdf](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/Whole_School_Approach_to_LossAndBereavement).pdf)

Note: as the situation and sources of information are developing, the above guidance may be updated.

Lamentations 3:31-33

³¹ For no one is cast off by the Lord forever.

³² Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.

³³ For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.