



Holte School

Bereavement Policy

Lead member of staff:	Lee Farmer (Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral)
Legislation Status: (Statutory/Non-Statutory)	Non-statutory
Local Authority Model Policy or School Written Policy:	School Written Policy
Required on school website:	Yes
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Date Ratified By Full Governing Body:	June 2023
Signed By Chair Of Governors: Ms C Hardy	C Hardy

1. Introduction

1.1 Our school values of collaboration, aspiration, responsibility, respect and equality provide us with the ambition that our pupils are equipped with high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for life in the twenty-first century, whilst simultaneously providing them with the traditional values of courtesy and self-discipline that have and always will be, important for success in life beyond school.

1.2 Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff, pupils and parents. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that supports the social, emotional and mental health of the whole school community. We treat all children with unconditional respect and have high expectations for both adults' and children's learning and social behaviours. Our school is calm and purposeful. It prides itself on excellent relationships and high level of care. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

1.3 At Holte School we are committed to creating a safe and inspiring place for all children to learn and develop, where children's rights are respected, their talents are nurtured and they are able to thrive as individuals and as a community. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is at the heart of our ethos and our curriculum. The four guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the child state that:

1. All children are entitled to the same rights without discrimination of any kind.
2. All actions concerning children will take into account the best interests of the individual child or group of children as the primary consideration.
3. All children have the right to survival and development.
4. Children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them.

Holte School is committed to the guiding principles of the Convention and is actively committed to promoting all articles of the convention in all areas of the school and its work. The following articles are protected and promoted through this policy – articles 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 24, 28, and 29.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Every twenty two minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some children who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these challenging situations.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

2.2 The core objectives of the bereavement policy are to:

- Support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- Enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- Identify key staff within school and the Local Authority and clarify the pathway of support.
- Ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm in accordance with the Children's Act 1989.
- Counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Governing body - The role of the governing body is to approve this policy and ensure its implementation as an active document. The governing body must reflect on the policy's effectiveness in practice and utilise the expertise within the school and share responsibilities.

3.2 Headteacher – The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the governing body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies. The Headteacher will:

- Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- Respond to media enquiries.
- Keep the governing body fully informed.
- Be first point of contact for family, child or staff concerned.
- Advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways.
- Help with the identification of more complex grief.

3.3 The pastoral team - It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils, supporting each other and implementing this policy. To this end it is desirable that the whole school staff have some awareness of bereavement through a whole school training if possible. Pastoral leaders will receive enhanced levels of training so that they are best placed to support pupils. In addition they will establish and coordinate links with external agencies and cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools.

3.4 All staff – all staff have a responsibility to provide for pupils who may be affected by bereavement. All staff will receive appropriate training on how to support pupils in such cases. Some staff will be asked to deliver lessons on bereavement and loss as part of the school's PSHE curriculum. Where appropriate such lessons will be delivered with the support of the school's counselling service, The Wellbeing Crew.

4. Procedures for dealing with bereavement

4.1 The following procedures will be followed when responding to incidents of bereavement or loss involving pupils, their families or members of staff.

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
NB: We need to be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time as rumour and gossip spread quickly.
- Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

- Pupils should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A *decision should be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole school approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed.*
- 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.
- The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
- Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate, either through the Employment Assistance Programme or through Wellbeing Crew counsellors.
- In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.
- School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. Pupils affected by bereavement will be identified as vulnerable and their progress will be monitored and supported by pastoral leaders.
- The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new pupils. To this end it is important to have effective communication with 'feeder' schools.

4.2 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. Bereavement and loss are addressed as part of the school's PSHE curriculum for Key Stage 3, 4 and 5.

4.3 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

4.4 All the same principles and procedures apply as they do for the death of a pupil, for a member of staff. In addition to the above the school will notify the LA as employer.

4.5 The school will implement a programme of support where pupils have experienced bereavement. This may include a referral to the school's counselling service, the School Nurse or external agencies, including Forward Thinking Birmingham. In some circumstances Learning Support Mentors may support bereaved pupils using the Thrive Approach.

Appendix One – List of useful resources

- www.winstonswish.org.uk – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.
- 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 term with loss using carton creatures.
- www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml Information on the way bereavement affects children
- <http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/> An organisation offering bereavement support
- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> federation of organisations

Appendix

Bereavement, grief and loss

The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on schools, families and communities. There was little time to prepare for the lockdown, and this, alongside the uncertainty of how Covid-19 may affect people, has led to increased levels of anxiety.

Staff, students and parents have had to adjust very quickly to school closures. This has meant that familiar structures and routines have stopped, and our daily lives have changed dramatically. There is an increased risk of unexpected bereavement, and the feelings of loss and insecurity which this can generate. In normal circumstances schools would come together physically to support anyone in the community who was bereaved. This is clearly impossible while schools are only open to a very few, and whilst social distancing needs to be observed.

General Bereavement Guidance

- Remember that help and support for those are best provided by a trusted, familiar adult.
- Be as honest and open as you can with children, appropriate to their age and developmental level.
- Remember that children are all different and they will all react to the loss and bereavement in their own unique way. The differences in their levels of awareness, understanding, age, emotional maturity, security and not least, their relationship with the deceased, will also have significant effects.
- For further information on children's developmental understanding of death go to <https://www.winstonswish.org/>
- When someone dies, use the words dead or died, not euphemisms like "passed away".
- Be guided by what a bereaved child or adult is prepared to share.
- The DSL and Mental Health Leads will take responsibility for sharing key messages with staff about how to support children with loss and grief, and can coordinate responses to bereavements, e.g. supporting members of staff who are acting as key adults when contacting bereaved families. This means there will always be a nominated lead available to oversee bereavement support work for families and staff. In the first instance the year team will support the family to make decisions about how best to support their child, including how to talk to them about the loss and mourning processes.
- The DSL will encourage school staff to familiarise themselves with the information, advice and guidance provided on the Winston's Wish website: (<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>).
- Ensure that all stakeholders, including parents are aware that the school has a bereavement policy. This policy includes signposting to parents' agencies which provide counselling and support. These are listed in the appendix. It also offers support the family to talk to their child about loss and mourning processes.
- Pastoral leaders will check-in with the family/child by phone. They will also be alert and sensitive to whether children have received any negative/abusive comments on social media.
- The DSL will ensure that class teachers are made aware of children impacted by a loss so they can welcome them back to school appropriately when the time comes. Pastoral leaders will consider how, in the longer term, events such as assemblies can be used to help and support children.
- The SENCo, in conjunction with the Mental Health Leads and DSL will coordinate support for pupils with SEND and their families. The SEND Gateway has helpful resources: <https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/r/bereavement-plan.html>

Sources of support and guidance for professionals

- Winston's Wish 08088 020 021
- Child Bereavement UK 0800 02 888 40
- Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-youngpeople/>

- Coronavirus: information and guidance for supporting bereaved children and young people. <https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/> Information and scripts to use if someone the child knows has died from Covid-19.
- <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/> Saying goodbye when children cannot attend the funeral. Grief Encounter
- <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/professionals-schools/> Support for bereaved children and their families. Includes downloadable documents at the bottom of the webpage on the following: Children's concepts of death by age; supporting a grieving child in the classroom; informing the school community of a death; download grief talk posters; preparing students for the return of grieving classmate.
- Child Bereavement UK
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bc9f3d7d7b43-421a-8ed4-4335f9c23b35> Downloadable information sheet with tips for supporting bereaved children through difficult times.
- CRUSE <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools> Support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. There's a section for schools
- British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy www.bcap.org.uk. A directory of registered counsellors and some advice on coping with the coronavirus epidemic.
- Not Too Young to Grieve is a film created with Childhood Bereavement Network and explores how very young people respond to loss
<https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/15>