



HARROGATE  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

## Policy: Bereavement

**Member of Staff Responsible:** K Smith

**Approved by Full Board on:** 28 11 24

**Review date:** 2026

## **Bereavement**

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## **1. Introduction**

Our school values provide us with the ambition that all youngsters in our care are equipped with high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

We believe that the key to becoming a great school is to ensure that all students have access to a happy, challenging and safe learning environment. To achieve this, we need to nurture a partnership with parents and students that is based upon openness, mutual respect and the highest expectations of all.

Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

## **2. Aims**

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school community
- 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 best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement
- To identify key staff within school and the Local Authority and clarify the pathway of support.

## **4. The role of the Governing Body**

- To approve this policy and ensure its implementation as an active document. To be reviewed every three years.

This includes:

- Reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Utilising the expertise within the school and sharing responsibilities.
- 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 to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair of governors.

## **5. The role of the Headteacher**

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Headteacher will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased

- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages

## **6. The role of pastoral staff**

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff where appropriate
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved pupils to take a short time out
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school
- Putting in referrals to external agencies where needed to support the child/family

## **7. Procedures**

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher or pastoral staff depending on the circumstances, 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

7. 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.

8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.

9. 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. 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.

10. Ongoing support - School should liaise with the family/carers about support from external services such as Just B. There should also be consideration made for upcoming anniversaries, birthday or significant days e.g. Mothers/Father's Day. There may also be a need to consider the delivery of elements of the curriculum so this is delivered sensitively.

NB: 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.

## **8. 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 and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### **8.1 Reintegration meeting**

A member of the Pastoral team or the Headteacher 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 either full time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- 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 (where relevant)
- 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 to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

### **8.2 Ongoing support**

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will offer support to the pupil if they feel they want this.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will work with the pupil and family through referrals to services such as Just B as well as access to reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

#### Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a></li> </ul>
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 08088 020 021</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a></li> </ul>
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 0808 808 1677</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a></li> </ul>
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393</li> <li>• 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></li> </ul>
Just B Bereavement Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (01423) 814 480 – <a href="mailto:justbadults@justb.org.uk">justbadults@justb.org.uk</a></li> <li>• (01423) 856 790 – <a href="mailto:justbcyp@justb.org.uk">justbcyp@justb.org.uk</a></li> </ul>
Hear to Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By phone (leaving a voicemail): 01423 856 799*</li> <li>• By text (sending a text message): 01423 200118*</li> <li>• By email: <a href="mailto:helplines@justb.org.uk">helplines@justb.org.uk</a></li> </ul>