



# Bereavement Policy





# West SILC - Bereavement Policy

## Rationale

In the event of a sudden or unexpected bereavement school staff may feel considerable anxiety about knowing how to best respond. This is understandable in a culture where death is seldom openly discussed.

Every 22 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 the 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.

## Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- **To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.**
- **To ensure effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.**
- **To identify key staff within school and the Local Authority, and clarify the pathway of support.**





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## The Role of the Headteacher

- Has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation
- Liaising with the named person, Parent Council, Local Authority, psychological services and other relevant outside agencies
- The Head Teacher in collaboration with the Local Authority must decide whether the school will manage an incident or if it should be dealt with as a **critical incident (see page 4 )**
  - In all cases the crisis line must be informed (01133783645)

## The Head teacher in collaboration with the named person will:

- Be first point of contact for family/child concerned
- Keep staff and Parent Council informed
- Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- Respond to media enquiries

## The role of Guidance/Pastoral Care Staff (including i.e. psychological services, spiritual advisors, school counsellors, mentors and support for pupils staff)

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff
- Transition liaison with other schools
- To advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways and help with the identification of more complex grief.
- Ongoing help and support for children, parents

**NB – it is important that all staff feel confident in supporting 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.**





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## Critical Incidents

### Critical incidents can include:

- Death of a child or young person due to an accident, serious illness, suicide or murder
- Death of a child or young person's sibling or parent due to an accident, serious illness, suicide or murder
- Children witnessing accidental deaths of others
- Death of a member of staff
- Death during a school journey or school trip

### Critical Incident Management Team

In the event of a critical Incident, the SILC will establish a Critical Incident Management team, of a size and composition appropriate to the incident.

### The functions of the team will include:

- Liaison with the Emergency Services and Education Services
- Logging all relevant calls
- Opening and maintaining a chronology
- Information gathering
- Communicating links with authority press officer and education services
- Liaison with named person/parents and chair of the Parent Council
- Care and welfare of children, staff and visitors

## Procedures





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## Short Term:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. There must be clarification about what facts the family are happy to be shared. 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. All staff should be informed of the family's wishes about communication at the earliest possible opportunity so that they are prepared to respond appropriately to children and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance. Ensure all staff have the same version of events/information.
3. A letter should be sent to all families at the earliest opportunity after consultation with the deceased's family. The letter should contain signposting for support for parents and children and useful downloadable information (see appendices i and ii).
4. Staff, children and parents or carers affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
5. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance clarified.
6. School website and social media should be reviewed to ensure sensitivity.
7. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher/Press Officer.

## Medium term

1. 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. Schools should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new children. To this end it is important to have effective communication at all levels.
2. Monitor the emotional needs of staff and children, including behaviour change. Ensure support – discussion, listening, answering questions – is available, and staff and pupils know clearly how to access that support.
3. Staff should respond to questions in an age-appropriate way and in line with the family's wishes.
4. School website and social media should be reviewed to ensure sensitivity taking note of the family's wishes.
5. Consider if and how to celebrate the deceased persons' life. Ensure this is consistent with the family's wishes.





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## Longer term

1. Curriculum approaches to consider mortality and bereavement may be helpful– see Whole School Approach to Supporting Loss and Bereavement document. Aspect of the Health & Wellbeing Curriculum can be adapted.
2. Be aware of special dates which may evoke memories (e.g. Mothers Day/Christmas) particularly for siblings or close friends.
3. The impact of loss and bereavement can be felt over a long period of time, it is important to be aware of the impact of this over time.

**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, or another staff member.

Perhaps a more common experience for staff is that of a child experiencing the loss of a parent/carer. Whole school or class activities will not always be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual child 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. If appropriate, talk to the child about their preferred way of doing things.

This policy has been compiled and will be reviewed, to ensure that it is fair, does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupils.

This policy will be approved by the SILC's Governing Body

This policy will be reviewed in September 2024 and bi- annually thereafter.

This policy should be read in conjunction with

Equality ACT 2010

West SILC Teaching and Learning Policy

West SILC Behaviour Policy

West SILC Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

John Mace, Vice Principal – September 2023





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## Bereavement Support Checklist

<b>Suggested Procedures</b>	
<b>Immediate (First Day)</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>
Contact family or emergency contact to express sympathy and gather information. Give contact name/number so that family know who will support	
Inform all school staff with priority given to Guidance/Pastoral care team.	
Inform any relevant agencies working with family – Social Work Services, CAMHS, Young Carers etc	
<b>Short Term</b>	
Contact family to signpost support available	
Update all school records to reflect the change in circumstances	
Funeral Attendance clarified/organized	
Pupil does not return – contact family and discuss possible return	
Pupil returns to school – meet with pupil, offer support	
Monitor pupil, ask staff and peer group about pupil	
<b>Longer Term</b>	
Liaise with family as necessary	
Continue to monitor pupil	
Meet with pupil	
Offer support	
Deceased person’s life celebrated	
Special dates noted – pupil/s supported at these times	
Curricular adaptation considered	





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## Appendix i

### Sample 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 deceased child's parents.

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

Template below:

Dear Parents

Staff had the sad task today of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year >.

<Name> died from 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 staff are willing to try to answer their questions but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the office and we would be more than happy to help you. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

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







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<Name> Head Teacher

Appendix i

## Sample of a letter to bereaved parents

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of *Andrew's* death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through. Clearly, as a school community, we will miss *him* very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to *his* friends and classmates. *He* was a much loved member of our school/nursery family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan *Andrew's* funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of *Andrew's* that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Headteacher





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## Appendix i

### Sample of a letter on death of a member of staff

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff, [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age- appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at:

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours.....

