



The Diocese of Ely

ACT Multi
Academy
Trust
**Agapé, Courage
Thankfulness**



**St. Michael's
Church School**

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Policy Review Schedule

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Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Roles and responsibilities	3
3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved.....	4
4. Immediate actions following a death.....	4
5. Follow-up actions and support following a death.....	5
6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement.....	6
7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement	6
8. Monitoring arrangements	7
9. Links with other policies	7
Appendix: useful contacts	7

1. 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
- › Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- › Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 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

2.2 Pastoral support staff (Family Support Team)

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

The pastoral support team will:

- › Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- › Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- › Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- › Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages

- 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

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the Headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through regular catch-ups with the Headteacher or pastoral team.
- Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through [insert how you'll do this, e.g. regular meetings between the Headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor if relevant]
- 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

2.4 Local Church clergy

Depending on the circumstances and wishes of the family, support may be sought from Local Clergy who support the school. This could be the Incumbent for the parish/school or a member from the Rural Deanery or a representative from the Family's own faith group as required.

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

- Use of external resources will be made available to support these staff members e.g. [Winston's wish](#) [Winston's Wish - Bereavement Support for Children](#)
- A weekly check-in will be offered by the Inclusion Lead/Headteacher to support staff who are supporting the bereaved children or adults.
- [Online bereavement training for schools | Winston's Wish](#) provides free online training for these staff members. This can be accessed for all staff involved or as a training opportunity for all staff.

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- A member of the Senior Leadership team will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how.
- If the family can't be immediately contacted, every endeavour will be made to contact any of the listed contacts on the school information system, before any news is communicated with the wider community.
- If news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made then a simple statement will be posted to the direct school community asking for sensitivity and compassion for the family concerned and a request to cease any speculation or rumours until all facts have been established and the family is made aware. Health, Social Care or Police partners may also be used to support the communication of unexpected death of a child or staff member.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- › The Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- › The Headteacher will ensure that staff will be informed promptly (e.g. calling a staff meeting, activating a phone tree or using staff emergency notification systems to bring staff together virtually if the school is closed)

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- › The Headteacher and |Senior Leadership team will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- › Pupils will be informed in a timely and appropriate way (e.g. calling a whole-school assembly, having year group leaders calling year groups together to share the news)

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- › Parents/carers will be notified of a death as soon as possible. This will be through the sending of a letter home with pupils explaining the steps we've taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where they can go for more help and information

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- › The death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)
- › The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which you can find at the bottom of [this page](#))
- › If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- › The Headteacher or Chair of Governors are responsible for responding to requests from the media. Advice will be sought from PCC media department and or ACT Academy Trustees. Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to this responsible person
- › Steps will be taken to respond to those requests. A written statement will be prepared to read/release to the Press. Where it is imperative that a live interview is given the Head/Chair will refer to the written statement which will offer condolences to the people affected and suggest that a full enquiry will be taking place supported by a range of services.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- › Support will be made available in school, e.g. pastoral care team, peer-to-peer support
- › Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities including [Winston's Wish - Bereavement Support for Children](#)

5.2 Timetables

- › It may be necessary to adjust the timetable for some or even all pupils and staff. This will be considered by the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Academy trustees. Any timetable changes will be communicated clearly with staff and parents.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

- › The school community will come together to memorialise the deceased. This will initially be through Collective Worship.

- › A book of condolences will be located in the Main School Entrance Hall.
- › Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate as well as the wishes of the family directly involved.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- › Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- › How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- › If the requests to attend are being made on an individual basis, staff should request leave to attend using the usual leave of absence request form.
- › Careful considerations will be made in granting permission, e.g. availability of cover

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- › Parents should request leave for their children to attend
- › Pupils who are planning to attend the funeral may require some support in advance so that their expectations are managed.

6. 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.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

The Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership/ Family support team and the child's classteacher 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

6.2 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. These dates will be discussed and recorded so that classteacher and school are fully aware and prepared for those dates. This information will also be passed to the child's next teacher when transitioning to a new year group/school.
- › We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will offer small group and 1:1 support to manage cognitive load and any support needed with behaviour changes.
- › 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

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member 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.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

The Headteacher will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

- Utilising internal and external sources of support
- Adjustments may be made, e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by the local governing board

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40• https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 08088 020 021• https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0808 808 1677• https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393• Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/

