



BEREAVEMENT POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2026

HEADTEACHER: MR K RONDEAU

LOVING, GROWING and SUCCEEDING TOGETHER

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

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** will provide strategic oversight of the school's response to bereavement, ensuring that the emotional wellbeing and safeguarding needs of children are considered and that appropriate support, referrals and information-sharing are coordinated where necessary. The **SENCO** will advise on the individual needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, recognising that bereavement may affect children differently and may require reasonable adjustments, additional pastoral support or targeted intervention. The **Community and Wellbeing Team** will provide day-to-day pastoral support to children and families affected by bereavement, working closely with class staff to identify changes in behaviour, emotional wellbeing or engagement and to provide appropriate support. The **Religious Leader from St Mark's Church** will provide spiritual and pastoral support where this is appropriate and welcomed by the child and family, including opportunities for prayer, reflection, remembrance and discussion around questions of faith, loss and grief. All staff have a responsibility to respond sensitively to bereavement, maintain appropriate confidentiality, share concerns with the DSL where necessary and work collaboratively to ensure that each child and family receives compassionate, appropriate and timely support.

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

The pastoral support team (Community & Wellbeing) 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 [insert how you'll do this, e.g. you may have a link governor/committee focusing on bereavement, who might have regular catch-ups with the headteacher or pastoral team]
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair
- 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

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

The school will ensure that staff supporting children and families experiencing bereavement have access to appropriate training and guidance to develop their confidence and understanding of bereavement and grief. The wellbeing of staff involved in supporting bereaved children will be monitored by school leaders, recognising the potential emotional impact of this work. Where appropriate, the school will provide opportunities for supervision, reflection and professional discussion, and will liaise with relevant external professionals or specialist bereavement services to ensure that staff receive appropriate advice, support and guidance.

4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying Information and the Wishes of the Family

The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Community & Wellbeing Leader will be responsible for making appropriate contact with the family to establish the circumstances of the death, where this is known, and to determine the family's wishes regarding what information may be shared with the school community and how this should be communicated. The school will seek to respect the family's wishes wherever possible, whilst also considering its safeguarding responsibilities and the wellbeing of pupils and staff. Where the family cannot be contacted, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will seek appropriate professional advice and, where necessary, use the emergency contact details held by the school to establish the appropriate course of action.

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 communication with staff takes place promptly and sensitively, using an appropriate method according to the circumstances. This may include calling a staff meeting, using a staff communication system or, where the school is closed, using appropriate remote communication arrangements to ensure that staff receive accurate information and guidance.

Staff will be reminded of the importance of maintaining appropriate confidentiality and of directing any questions or concerns to the Headteacher, DSL or other designated member of staff.

4.3 Sharing the News with Pupils

The Headteacher will oversee the sharing of information with pupils, working with the DSL, class teachers and other appropriate staff to ensure that the news is communicated sensitively and in an age-appropriate manner. The method used will depend upon the circumstances and may include a whole-school, phase, year-group or class assembly.

Pupils will be given clear and factual information, avoiding unnecessary detail, speculation or information that the family has not agreed can be shared. Staff will be alert to the different ways in which children may respond to bereavement and will ensure that appropriate pastoral and emotional support is available.

Where appropriate, parents and carers will be informed that pupils have been told about the death and signposted towards sources of further support.

4.4 Informing Parents/Carers and Families

The Headteacher will determine how and when parents and carers should be informed, taking account of the family's wishes and the circumstances of the death. Where appropriate, this will normally be communicated through a letter, email or other established school communication system.

Communication will explain, where appropriate, the steps the school has taken to support pupils and staff and identify where additional support and information can be accessed. The school will take care not to disclose personal or sensitive information about the bereaved family beyond what is necessary and appropriate.

Where the school is closed, appropriate established communication systems will be used to ensure that parents and carers can access important information and advice.

4.5 Responding to Specific Causes of Death

Some causes of death require additional consideration because of their potential to cause fear, distress, anger, stigma or imitation. The school will respond sensitively and in accordance with relevant safeguarding guidance and specialist advice.

Where a death is the result of suicide, the school will seek appropriate specialist advice and support, including from relevant suicide bereavement and postvention services such as the Samaritans, where appropriate. The school will follow recognised guidance for responding to suicide in schools and will take particular care around language, communication, pupil support and the potential risk of suicide contagion or imitation.

Where a death is the result of homicide, murder or manslaughter, including family violence, the school will consider the particular safeguarding and emotional needs of affected children and will seek appropriate specialist advice, including guidance from Child Bereavement UK where appropriate.

Where the death is associated with an infectious or contagious disease, the school will follow advice and procedures provided by the relevant Local Authority and local health protection arrangements, including any advice provided by the UK Health Security Agency or other appropriate health professionals.

Each individual case will be treated sensitively and respectfully. Information about the circumstances of a death will be shared only where there is a legitimate need to know, taking account of the family's wishes, the wellbeing and safeguarding of pupils and staff, and any legal or professional requirements.

4.6 Responding to the Media

In the event that a death affecting the school generates media interest, the Headteacher will be responsible for responding to media enquiries on behalf of the school.

Staff and governors should not respond to media requests or provide comments on behalf of the school unless specifically authorised to do so. Any media enquiries should be directed to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will liaise with the Chair of Governors and the Local Authority, as appropriate, before responding to media enquiries. Where necessary, the school will also seek advice from the Local Authority's communications team and/or other relevant professional agencies.

The school will ensure that any public statement respects the privacy and wishes of the bereaved family and does not disclose confidential or sensitive information about pupils, families or staff.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for Pupils, Staff and Families

Pupils and staff may require different forms and levels of support in the days, weeks and months following a bereavement. The school will provide a compassionate and individualised response, recognising that grief affects everyone differently and that there is no single or predictable pattern of grieving.

Where appropriate, support may include an adapted timetable or workload, additional pastoral support, regular check-ins with a trusted adult, support from the Community and Wellbeing Team, access to counselling or other appropriate professional support, and opportunities for peer or group support. Support will be reviewed regularly and adapted according to the individual's changing needs.

Where a child has experienced the death of a parent, carer or other significant person, the school will work closely with the family to consider how the child's attendance, learning and wider wellbeing may be supported. The school recognises that children may require time to grieve, attend a funeral or memorial service, or during significant anniversaries and other particularly difficult periods.

Requests for absence will be considered sensitively and in accordance with the school's attendance policy and statutory attendance requirements. The school will use professional judgement and maintain appropriate communication with the family to ensure that bereavement-related absence is dealt with compassionately and that families are not subjected to inappropriate pressure during periods of significant grief. Where appropriate, the school may consider additional pastoral support or other arrangements to help the child maintain an appropriate connection with school.

Families should communicate significant dates, anniversaries or periods of particular difficulty with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Family Support Worker so that appropriate arrangements can be considered in advance. This may include adjustments to the school day, additional pastoral support, support within the home or a planned approach to the child's return to school.

Where appropriate, children and staff will be signposted or referred to external professionals, specialist bereavement services or relevant charitable organisations. Any referral will be based on individual need and made sensitively, with appropriate discussion with parents/carers where the child is involved, unless safeguarding circumstances require information to be shared without prior parental consent.

5.2 Timetables and Individual Arrangements

The school recognises that a bereaved pupil may temporarily require adjustments to their usual timetable, expectations or routines. The Headteacher, working with the DSL, SENCO, Community and Wellbeing Team and relevant staff, will consider whether an individual support plan or temporary timetable adjustments are appropriate.

The nature of any adjustment will depend upon the circumstances of the bereavement, the child's age and developmental needs, their relationship with the deceased, their emotional response and any other individual factors.

Adjustments may include:

- an adapted timetable for a temporary period;
- access to a quiet or safe space;
- regular check-ins with a trusted adult;
- additional pastoral or emotional support;
- flexibility around learning expectations;
- opportunities to talk, reflect or remember;
- support during particularly difficult times of the school day; and
- a planned and supported return to normal routines.

Any significant changes will be discussed with parents/carers and reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain appropriate and proportionate.

5.3 Tributes and Condolences

The school community may wish to come together to remember and celebrate the life of someone who has died. The school will consult with the bereaved family, wherever appropriate, before arranging significant tributes or memorial activities.

Depending on the circumstances and the wishes of the family, this may include a memory book, photographs, artwork, a period of reflection, a prayer or special assembly, planting or caring for a memorial, or another appropriate activity.

The school will take account of the **religious, cultural and personal beliefs and wishes of the bereaved family**, recognising that attitudes and practices surrounding death and remembrance vary considerably.

Any physical memorial will be considered carefully to ensure that it is appropriate, sustainable and sensitive to the needs of the wider school community.

5.4 Funerals and Memorial Services

The school will consult with the bereaved family, where appropriate, to establish:

- whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service;
- whether the family has particular wishes regarding condolences;
- whether pupils or staff are invited to contribute to the service or other arrangements; and
- whether there are any religious, cultural or other considerations that the school should understand.

The Headteacher, or another appropriate senior member of staff where the Headteacher is unable to attend, will seek to attend the funeral or memorial service of a member of the school community where this is appropriate and practicable, as a mark of respect and support for the bereaved family.

Where a child wishes to attend the funeral of a parent, carer or significant person, the school will work closely with the family to support the child before, during and after the funeral. This may include preparing the child for what to expect, identifying a trusted adult to support them and providing appropriate support when they return to school.

Attendance relating to a funeral or bereavement will be managed sensitively and in accordance with statutory attendance requirements and the school's attendance policy.

Where staff members wish to attend a funeral or memorial service, the Headteacher will consider requests sensitively, taking account of the individual's relationship with the deceased and their need to grieve, alongside the school's responsibility to maintain safe and effective staffing arrangements.

Where it is not possible for all staff who wish to attend to do so because this would compromise the safe operation of the school, the Headteacher will make proportionate decisions, taking account of the individual's connection to the bereaved child, family or member of staff and the circumstances of the bereavement.

The school will recognise that staff may also require time and space to grieve and will consider appropriate support and arrangements for staff affected by the death of a member of the school community.

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a child has been absent from school following a personal bereavement or following a death affecting the wider school community, the school will provide sensitive and individualised support to help them return to school and re-establish familiar routines. The school recognises that returning to school can be both reassuring and challenging for a bereaved child and that their needs may change over time. Support will therefore be reviewed regularly and adapted according to the child's individual circumstances and wellbeing. Attendance will be considered sensitively and in accordance with the school's attendance policy and statutory requirements.

6.1 Reintegration Meeting

Where appropriate, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, Family Support Worker and relevant member of the Community and Wellbeing Team will meet with the bereaved child and their parents/carers or family to discuss how best to support their return to school. The DSL and/or SENCO will be involved where safeguarding, special educational needs or other additional vulnerabilities require consideration.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- consider whether the child is ready to return to school and whether any temporary adjustments to their timetable or routines would be beneficial;
- consider whether a phased or supported return is appropriate;
- identify and address any concerns the child or their parents/carers or family may have about returning to school;
- provide the child with an opportunity to express their wishes about how information concerning the death is shared with classmates and other members of the school community, where relevant;
- identify a trusted adult or adults whom the child can approach if they feel overwhelmed, upset or unable to manage during the school day;
- establish clear lines of communication between the child, school staff and parents/carers or family;
- consider any additional support required because of the child's age, developmental needs, SEND, disability, existing vulnerabilities or other circumstances; and
- agree how the child's support will be monitored and reviewed.

The school will recognise that the child may not wish to talk about their bereavement at school and will respect this wherever possible. Equally, children will be provided with appropriate opportunities to talk, reflect or seek support if they choose to do so.

6.2 Ongoing Support

The school will maintain appropriate and proportionate communication with the child's parents/carers or family to monitor how the child is coping and to review the effectiveness of the support provided. The frequency and nature of communication will be agreed with the family and may change over time.

The school recognises that grief can be particularly difficult at significant times, including birthdays, anniversaries, religious festivals, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas and other occasions associated with the person who has died. Where the family wishes to share this information, significant dates may be recorded appropriately by the Community and Wellbeing Team and/or Family Support Worker so that staff can anticipate periods when additional support may be beneficial.

The school recognises that bereavement can affect a child's:

- emotional wellbeing;
- behaviour and relationships;
- concentration and engagement;
- attendance;
- confidence and sense of security; and
- progress and attainment.

Where appropriate, the child may receive additional pastoral support, including sessions with a member of the Community and Wellbeing Team or other trusted adult, providing an opportunity to talk, reflect or simply spend time with someone they trust. The school will not assume that a child needs to talk about their bereavement and will respect their individual coping style.

Staff will take care when managing changes, transitions and potentially difficult situations for bereaved pupils. Wherever possible, children will be prepared in advance for changes to routines, staffing, lessons, special events or other circumstances that may trigger difficult emotions.

The child's support will be reviewed regularly, with adjustments made where necessary. Where concerns about a child's emotional wellbeing, behaviour, attendance or safeguarding emerge or persist, the school will consider whether additional support or advice from the SENCO, DSL, Local Authority or appropriate external professionals is required.

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a member of staff has been absent from school following a personal bereavement or following a death affecting the wider school community, the school will provide compassionate, sensitive and individualised support to help them return to work and re-establish their usual routines. The school recognises that grief is highly personal and that individuals will respond to bereavement in different ways. Support will therefore be tailored to individual circumstances and reviewed regularly rather than being based on a one-size-fits-all approach.

7.1 Reintegration Meeting

The Headteacher or appropriate line manager will meet with the bereaved staff member, where appropriate, to discuss how best to support their return to work. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the individual's wellbeing, any concerns they may have and any reasonable or temporary adjustments that may support their return.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- consider whether the staff member feels ready to return to work and whether a phased or supported return may be appropriate;
- consider any temporary adjustments to duties, responsibilities or working arrangements that may assist the staff member;
- discuss any concerns the staff member may have about returning to school;
- establish the staff member's wishes regarding what, if anything, is shared with pupils, colleagues and the wider school community;
- identify any particular situations, duties, times of day or school events that may be particularly difficult;
- agree appropriate communication between the staff member and their line manager;
- identify sources of support available within school and through external services; and
- agree when the arrangements will be reviewed.

Where appropriate, the school may seek advice from its Local Authority HR service, Occupational Health or other relevant professional services to ensure that appropriate support and adjustments are considered.

7.2 Ongoing Support

The school recognises that bereavement can affect an individual's emotional wellbeing, physical health, concentration, relationships and ability to manage their usual responsibilities. It also recognises that grief does not follow a fixed timetable and that an individual's needs may change over time.

The school will work with each bereaved staff member to establish an appropriate system of support and review. This may include:

- regular informal check-ins with the line manager;
- agreed meetings to review wellbeing and how the staff member is managing their return;
- temporary adjustments to duties or responsibilities;
- flexible working arrangements where appropriate and in accordance with the school's policies and employment arrangements;
- a phased return to work where appropriate;
- temporary adjustments to working patterns or timetables;
- access to the school's employee wellbeing support or Employee Assistance Programme, where available;
- signposting or referral to Occupational Health or other appropriate professional support; and
- opportunities for supervision, reflection and professional discussion where the staff member is supporting other bereaved children or families.

The school will respect the staff member's privacy and will share information about their bereavement only where there is a legitimate reason to do so and, wherever possible, with their knowledge.

Each case will be considered individually and sensitively, taking account of the individual's circumstances, wishes, role and wellbeing. Support arrangements will be reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary. Where a staff member's health or wellbeing gives rise to concerns, the school will follow its appropriate sickness absence, wellbeing, HR and safeguarding procedures and seek professional advice where necessary.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Policy

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 • https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	• Helpline: 08088 020 021 • https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	• Helpline: 0808 808 1677 • https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	• 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/