

# Park End Primary School



Approved By: *D. Jackson*  
Date: 14.3.22

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# Bereavement Policy

January 2022

Review Date	Type of Review	Comments	Initials
29.06.20		New policy	JR
Sept 2020	General	Review	JR
January 2022	General	Review	KR

# **Bereavement Policy**

## **Introduction**

At Park End Primary school, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors and the wider school community during and after bereavement.

This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

## **1. Legal Framework**

- This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Children Act 1989

Employment Rights Act 1996

Equality Act 2010

DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'

DfE (2019) 'Keeping children safe in education'

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 'Good Work Plan'

The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018

- 1.1. This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'

Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death'

Samaritans (2017) 'Help When We Needed it Most'

Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools' Information Pack'

Middlesbrough Psychological Service (2020) 'Dealing with critical incidents'

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

- 2.1. The governing body will be responsible for:

Overseeing the implementation of this policy.

Reviewing this policy with the head teacher on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness.

2.2. The head teacher will be responsible for:

The overall implementation of this policy.

Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.

Informing governors and staff when a death occurs and arranging for pupils to be informed, as appropriate and with approval from the family.

Being the first point of contact for staff, pupils and parents directly involved in a death, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.

Responding to any enquiries from the media or the wider school community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.

Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.

2.3. Pastoral staff will be responsible for:

Undertaking bereavement support training and conducting in-school training to share their knowledge with other staff.

Supporting the head teacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.

Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as directed by the head teacher.

Supporting other staff members with communicating the news of a death.

Making referrals for pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support.

2.4. All staff members will be responsible for:

Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the head teacher or pastoral staff.

Seeking support from pastoral staff as appropriate.

Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

### **3. Initial response**

- 3.1. If the family or member of staff contacts the school to inform them of a death, the member of staff that answers the phone will transfer the call to the most senior member of staff available.
- 3.2. If the school is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the head teacher will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.
- 3.3. The head teacher will gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information will be communicated to the school community and how.
- 3.4. If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the head teacher will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible.
- 3.5. If the death affects an individual member of staff, e.g. the death of a relative, the head teacher will ask the member of staff if they would like this to be communicated to any of their colleagues. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the head teacher will discuss with the staff member what information will be communicated and how they would like it to be delivered.
- 3.6. If a death affects an individual pupil, e.g. the death of a parent, the head teacher will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the head teacher will discuss with the family, and the pupil if possible, what information will be communicated and how the family would like it to be delivered.
- 3.7. If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to the school to inform the pupil of what has happened and to take them home. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for a member of staff to take the pupil home.
- 3.8. The head teacher will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police.
- 3.9. The head teacher will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.
- 3.10. In the event of the death of the head teacher, the deputy head teacher will be responsible for the duties outlined above.

#### **4. Informing staff and governors**

- 4.1. Staff and governors will be informed of the death before pupils.

- 4.2. All staff and governors will be invited to a meeting by the head teacher as soon as practicable.
- 4.3. Absent staff and governors, including part-time and peripatetic staff, will be identified so they can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged.
- 4.4. Any information provided to staff and governors during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.
- 4.5. During the meeting, the head teacher, with the support of pastoral staff, will:
  - Explain what happened leading up to the death.
  - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
  - Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
  - Designate a member of staff as media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media as required.
  - Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and governors.
  - Discuss the arrangements for informing pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.

## **5. Informing pupils**

- 5.1. The head teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.
- 5.2. The head teacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.
- 5.3. Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff that is familiar to them at the same time
- 5.4. Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs include the following:
  - Pupils that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
  - Pupils with a history of loss
  - Pupils with SEND
  - Pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour

- 5.5. Where possible, a member of pastoral staff will be present when pupils are told about a death so they can help with answering any questions.
- 5.6. Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- 5.7. Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- 5.8. Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

## **6. Informing parents**

- 6.1. The head teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.
- 6.2. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the head teacher will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.
- 6.3. A nominated member of staff will compose a letter to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to.

## **7. Funerals**

- 7.1. If appropriate, the head teacher will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral.
- 7.2. With the family's approval, the head teacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.
- 7.3. The head teacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- 7.4. Transportation to and from the funeral will be arranged for staff and pupils, as appropriate.
- 7.5. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

## **8. The media and social media**

8.1. Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.

## **9. Support for the family**

9.1. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.

## **10. Support for staff**

10.1. Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend of the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place.

## **11. Support for pupils**

11.1. A member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be made aware of who the staff member is.

11.2. Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes.

11.3. If a pupil chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and staff members will be made aware that the pupil may not be able to work to their usual capacity. The designated staff member will keep in communication with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is doing.

11.4. The head teacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.

11.5. All pupils, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g. the death of a staff member.

11.6. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of pastoral staff.

11.7. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.

11.8. Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies.

11.9. Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the head teacher who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with pastoral staff.

## **12. Middlesbrough Critical Incident response**

12.1. Middlesbrough psychological services have produced guidance on 'dealing with Critical Incidents' (April 2020)

12.2. A 'critical incident' is defined as 'Any event outside the usual realm of human experience that is markedly distressing and evokes a reaction of intense fear and helplessness'

12.3. Critical incidents can be classified as the following:

### **Level 1**

- Accident, illness or death of a pupil/member of staff/parent
- Event is sad/distressing, but not traumatic
- School is able to cope and support strategies are in place
- Low impact/awareness for majority of pupils/staff
- Advice needed for all staff about coping with bereavement and loss: normal grieving process

### **Level 2**

- Accident, illness or death of a pupil/member of staff/parent, at or near school, or on a school trip, or in unusual and/or suspicious circumstances
- Event is sudden and traumatic
- Extensive media coverage is possible/likely
- Significant impact on large numbers of pupils and staff
- School needs on-site support to manage situation

### **Level 3**

- Large scale disaster/event affecting the school and the local community
- Local authority's emergency response procedure is being followed
- National as well as local impact
- High level of media interest
- School(s) need intensive support



12.4. For most level 1 and 2 incidents, good quality interventions within the familiar setting of a supportive school, and involving friends and family, can allow the events of a critical incident to be processed emotionally, long-term impact mitigated, and crucial life lessons learnt

12.5. Middlesbrough Educational Psychology team consist of 8 psychologists, who have experience of supporting schools with bereavement and loss. The service can offer support in the form of:

- Immediate advice over the phone or via email to the head teacher or another key member of staff
- A visit to the school that day or the following day from up to two members of the team, to provide further advice and support to staff, parents and carers, deliver face-to-face support groups to staff or, if appropriate, work with pupils who knew the deceased and are experience distress in the aftermath of the incident

12.6. The procedure to access support from Middlesbrough Educational Psychology Service is:

1. Call or email of initial notification is received by a local authority officer or a headteacher
2. The above person phones the SEND Single Point of Contact on **01642 201831** and gives brief details to a SEND business support officer.
3. The officer records the details and passes them to a senior member of Middlesbrough Psychology Service.
4. The psychologist contacts the school to obtain further information, ascertain school's immediate support needs, give initial advice and agree upon next steps

12.7. See appendix A for further guidance

### **13. Specific circumstances**

13.1. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the school community and individual pupils; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.

#### **Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live**

13.2. If a pupil has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place.

- 13.3. A member of pastoral staff will meet with the pupil to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.
- 13.4. All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to pastoral staff who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

### **Pupils with a life-threatening illness**

- 13.5. Pupils with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.
- 13.6. The head teacher, the pupil and their family, and other relevant staff members (e.g. a member of pastoral staff) will decide how to share the news that a pupil is terminally ill with the school community.
- 13.7. Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.
- 13.8. If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the pupil will be identified and the head teacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

### **Suicide**

- 13.9. The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.
- 13.10. The head teacher, or other appointed member of staff, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.
- 13.11. If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.
- 13.12. If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the head teacher will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- 13.13. Staff will be told about the death first, in line with section 4 of this policy.

- 13.14. Liaison with the media will be handled in line with section 8 of this policy.

### **Cultural and religious behaviours**

- 13.15. The school will keep in mind the cultural attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will make sure these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected, including the length of bereavement leave for members of staff.

### **Forces' families**

- 13.16. The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.
- 13.17. Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change.
- 13.18. Bereaved forces' pupils will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated area in school that the pupil can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

### **A death involving murder or manslaughter**

- 13.19. The head teacher will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.
- 13.20. A designated staff member will be available to talk to the pupil to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.
- 13.21. Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

## **14. Remembrance activities**

- 14.1. Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly.

- 14.2. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.
- 14.3. All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities.
- 14.4. All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

## **15. Teaching about bereavement and grief**

- 15.1. Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death.
- 15.2. Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching.
- 15.3. Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.
- 15.4. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

## **16. Staff training**

- 16.1. All staff will receive training in bereavement support.
- 16.2. Pastoral staff will organise whole-school training sessions to share their knowledge with all staff members, including support staff, annually.
- 16.3. If any members of staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to pupils or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will speak to the head teacher who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training or seek external training for staff.

## **17. Monitoring and review**

- 17.1. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the governing board and head teacher.
- 17.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2022.

17.3. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff members.

## Appendix A