



HARROGATE  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

## Policy: Bereavement

**Member of Staff Responsible:** T Milburn

**Approved by Full Board on:** 29.11.2018

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## **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. Rationale

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 our 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. Additional information and resources can be accessed at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk).

## 3. Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance 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.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm ([http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b\\_section2](http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2) ). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

## 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.

## 5. The role of the headteacher

*The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the governing body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies.*

*The Headteacher will:*

- Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- Respond to media enquiries.
- Keep the governing body fully informed.
- Be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- Advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways and help with the identification of more complex grief.

## 6. The role of pastoral staff

*(including i.e. spiritual advisors, school counsellors and mentors).*

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.

*NB: It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for 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.*

- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools.

## 7. Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher 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 Head Teacher.
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.

*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.*