



# Bereavement Policy

## **Important coronavirus (COVID-19) update**

[Appendix A](#) to this policy provides details on how school will support pupils, staff and the wider community during and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **Bereavement Policy (Including EYFS)**

Policy Review Date: June 2020

Reviewed By: J Callaway & SLT

Next Review: June 2021 (or following incident, legislation or interim guidance)

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## Statement of intent

At Avalon, 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.

**NB.** In this policy, all mentions of 'the family' refer to the family of the deceased individual. The wishes of the family will always be considered when carrying out any of the actions outlined in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

Signed by:

_____	Headteacher	Date:	_____
_____	Chair of governors	Date:	_____

## 1. Legal farmework

1.1. 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

1.2. 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'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy found in the Staff Handbook

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. The governing board will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy.
- Reviewing this policy with the headteacher on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness.

2.2. The headteacher will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate.
- 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. Staff will be responsible for:
- Supporting the headteacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.
  - Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as directed by the headteacher.
  - 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. The Headteacher will be responsible for:
- Liaising with the media as required.
  - Monitoring media and social media activity regarding the death.
  - Respecting the family's wishes in relation to what information can be provided to the media.
- 2.5. All staff members will be responsible for:
- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the headteacher.
  - Seeking support from Senior leaders as appropriate.
  - Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

### **3. The 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 headteacher or 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 headteacher will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.
- 3.3. The headteacher 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 headteacher will inform the family, with their agreement, 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 headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police.
- 3.9. The headteacher 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 headteacher, the deputy headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher, with the support of the Senior Leadership team will:
  - Explain what happened leading up to the death.
  - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred, if possible and known..
  - Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.

- 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.
- 4.6. Staff members that will be responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions.
- 4.7. The headteacher and relevant staff will create the script, with input from the family.

## 5. Informing pupils

- 5.1. The headteacher will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.
- 5.2. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the headteacher will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of pupils.
- 5.3. The headteacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.
- 5.4. 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, e.g. during form time.
- 5.5. 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
- 5.6. Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the script provided to them.
- 5.7. To ensure all pupils are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which script to use for which year group.
- 5.8. Where possible, a member of Senior Leadership team will be present when pupils are told about a death so they can help with answering any questions.
- 5.9. Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- 5.10. Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.

- 5.11. Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

#### **Informing pupils in a large group**

- 5.12. If it is not possible to inform pupils about a death in small groups, the headteacher, in communication with the family, will decide if it would be appropriate to inform pupils in a large group, e.g. during an assembly.
- 5.13. Where an individual pupil has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to attend the assembly and, if they do not want to be involved, appropriate support will be arranged for the pupil during and after the assembly.
- 5.14. The headteacher will tell the family and, where relevant, the bereaved pupil exactly what they will say and to whom.
- 5.15. The headteacher, with support from relevant staff, will deliver the information to pupils.
- 5.16. After pupils have been informed, they will go to their form rooms and be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told.

### **6. Informing parents**

- 6.1. The headteacher 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 headteacher 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. The Headteacher 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 headteacher 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 headteacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.
- 7.3. The headteacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- 7.4. 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.
- 8.2. Only the appointed media spokesperson will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.
- 8.3. Staff, governors and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the headteacher.
- 8.4. If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the headteacher and media spokesperson will release a statement on the school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.
- 8.5. Comments and other activity on school-posted social media statements will be monitored and moderated by the Headteacher.
- 8.6. If staff, governors or pupils find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the headteacher.
- 8.7. If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the school's Disciplinary Policy
- 8.8. If a pupil is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Behaviour and Sanctions Policy.

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

- 9.1. The headteacher will be the main point of contact between the school and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary.
- 9.2. The headteacher will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them.
- 9.3. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.
- 9.4. Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support could include the following:
  - Sending a letter of condolence
  - Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died

- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school

## 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.
- 10.2. The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the headteacher, and may include the following:
  - Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own
  - Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered
  - Organising bereavement leave
- 10.3. Staff who lose a child under the age of 18, or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy, irrespective of how long they have worked at the school, will be given a minimum of two weeks' paid bereavement leave.
- 10.4. Any member of staff who loses a child under the age of 18 or suffers a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy, and has been employed at the school for at least 26 weeks up to the end of the 'relevant week' (i.e. the week, ending with a Saturday, immediately before the week of the death or stillbirth), will be able to claim Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (SPBP). To be eligible, the staff member must also:
  - Continue to be employed up to the day the child dies or is stillborn.
  - Give the school the correct notice and information for SPBP.
- 10.5. Staff members will be eligible for SPBP if they meet the government's eligibility criteria in its '[Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and Leave](#)' guidance.
- 10.6. The government's [tables](#) showing relevant weeks and start dates for SPBP will be used to check staff members' entitlement to SPBP, and when it should be paid.
- 10.7. Full details regarding bereavement leave and SPBP can be found in the school's Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy, within the staff handbook.
- 10.8. Any member of staff who loses a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or during maternity leave, will not lose their entitlement to maternity leave and pay.
- 10.9. All staff members will be offered the opportunity to speak to a member of the Senior Leadership team one-to-one.
- 10.10. Staff members will be given information about the in-school and external support they can access.

- 10.11. Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or make a referral to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## **11. Support for pupils**

### **Pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member**

- 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. The headteacher will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school.
- 11.3. Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes.
- 11.4. When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:
- The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
  - The relationship between the pupil and the person who has died.
  - The ability of the pupil's family to support them following the death, e.g. if a pupil's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the pupil?
  - Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
  - The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
  - Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.
- 11.5. If a parent chooses for the pupil 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. A designated staff member will keep in communication with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is doing.
- 11.6. If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told.
- 11.7. The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence.

- 11.8. The headteacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.
- 11.9. If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam (11+ or secondary school entrance assessments), the headteacher will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations
- 11.10. If a pupil misses an exam (11+ or secondary school entrance assessments), due to the death of a close family member or friend, the headteacher will report this to the appropriate exam board who will then make a decision as to whether special considerations can be applied.
- 11.11. Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### **Support for all pupils**

- 11.12. 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.
- 11.13. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of staff for support.
- 11.14. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.
- 11.15. Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies.
- 11.16. Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the headteacher who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with Senior Leaders and other staff.

## **12. Behaviour and Emotional Support issues**

- 12.1. Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:
  - Inability to concentrate
  - Lack of motivation
  - Tiredness and irritability
  - Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks
  - Inability to take others' feelings into account
  - Anger, frustration or aggression
  - A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
  - Anxiety
  - Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them

- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness
- 12.2. The pupil's designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home.
  - 12.3. Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behaviour Policy.
  - 12.4. A record will be made on the pupil pastoral file of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
  - 12.5. Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the Anti-bullying Policy, taking into account the pupil's needs and circumstances.
  - 12.6. All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to Senior Leaders who will put appropriate support in place.

### **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 designated member of staff (usually form teacher) will meet with the pupil fortnightly 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 Senior Leaders 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 headteacher, the pupil and their family, and other relevant staff members 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 headteacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

#### **Cultural and religious behaviours**

- 13.9. 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.

### **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. Managing transitions**

- 15.1. Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded.
- 15.2. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:
  - If the pupil moves school
  - When the pupil moves to secondary school
  - When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

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

- 16.1. 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.
- 16.2. 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.

- 16.3. Bereaved pupils and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required.
- 16.4. 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.
- 16.5. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

## **17. Staff training**

- 17.1. The Head teacher will organise whole-school training sessions to share their knowledge with all staff members, including support staff.
- 17.2. 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 headteacher who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.

## **18. Monitoring and review**

- 18.1. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the governing board and headteacher.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Considerations in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

**This appendix is created in accordance with government guidance and advice from bereavement organisations such as Winston's Wish and Cruse Bereavement Care.**

The school will act in accordance with the Bereavement Policy as set out above as much as possible; however, we recognise the unprecedented nature of the coronavirus pandemic and that we may need to support the school community using some different approaches. This appendix sets out what additional actions the school will take to support pupils, staff and the wider school community during and after the coronavirus pandemic

#### **1. Support for pupils**

- 1.1. Support for pupils will continue to be implemented in line with [section 11](#) of this policy as far as possible; however, other measures will be implemented to account for the partial closure of the school.
- 1.2. The headteacher will inform pupils and their parents via letter of the support available, both from the school and externally.
- 1.3. The headteacher will arrange for links to resources that can support pupils with bereavement during the coronavirus to be hosted on the school website.
- 1.4. Form Teachers will arrange sessions throughout the week where pupils are able to get in touch with a member of staff to discuss any concerns or questions they have related to bereavement and the pandemic. Other staff members will assist Form teachers in speaking to pupils during these contact points as required.
- 1.5. Pupils who are known to be vulnerable will be identified and a designated key member of staff will be responsible for keeping in touch with this pupil and their parents.

#### **2. Support for staff**

- 2.1. Senior Leadership staff will advise other members of staff of how to support pupils during partial school closure.
- 2.2. Support for staff will continue to be implemented in line with [section 10](#) of this policy as far as possible.
- 2.3. The headteacher will inform staff via email of the support available to them both in school and externally.
- 2.4. Line managers will arrange catch ups with the members of staff in their team, where they can discuss any questions or concerns relating to bereavement and the coronavirus pandemic. These conversations will be held face-to-face,



if both staff members are working in school, or via telephone or video call if one or more staff members are working remotely.

- 2.5. The headteacher will identify staff members who are known to be vulnerable and will arrange for Senior Leaders / Line Managers to contact these members of staff to identify any additional support that is required.

### **3. Supporting those who have experienced the death of someone close to them**

- 3.1. If the school learns that a pupil or member of staff has experienced the death of someone close to them, the following process will be followed:

- The headteacher will contact the family via telephone to:
  - Acknowledge what has happened.
  - Express their support and the support of the school community.
  - Discuss how the family would like the news to be shared with the rest of the school community, bearing in mind that not all staff and pupils will be present on the school premises at this time.
  - Check whether the family want their contact information to be shared.
  - Agree on one or two contacts who will liaise with the family and, where a pupil is bereaved, the child.
  - Direct the family towards additional support they can access, e.g. bereavement charities such as Winston's Wish.
- The headteacher will share the information with staff members. Those staff members that are on the school premises will be told during a staff briefing and staff members that are at home will be contacted by the headteacher via telephone or by email.
- The headteacher will inform the governing board of what has happened via telephone or email.
- The Headteacher will contact the pupil or staff member to acknowledge what has happened and express their support.
- The information is shared with the wider school community, as agreed with the family and taking into consideration that not all pupils and parents are able to come to the school premises.
- The headteacher and Senior Leaders will identify pupils and staff members who may be particularly vulnerable (i.e. those who have been bereaved or who have a seriously ill relative). Senior Leaders will arrange to speak to these pupils and staff members individually, either face-to-face or via telephone depending on whether they are on the school premises.

### **4. Remembrance activities**

- 4.1. During partial school closure and while social distancing measures remain in place, the school will not hold group remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies.

- 4.2. Other remembrance activities will be undertaken as appropriate, e.g. compiling condolences from the school community and sending these to the family.
- 4.3. Where a death has affected the whole school community, e.g. the death of a pupil or staff member, the headteacher will decide whether a memorial service will be held at a later date.

## **5. Support for the school community during the recovery phase**

- 5.1. When the school reopens, Senior Leaders will speak to pupils and staff members who have experienced the death of someone close to them and ensure the appropriate support remains in place.
- 5.2. The headteacher and Senior Leaders will discuss whether it would be appropriate for certain pupils and staff that have been affected to have a phased return to school.