KINGSBURY SCHOOL

Bereavement Policy

LOCAL LEVEL POLICY

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Policy compiled by Martin Clarke		Approved by the Local Governing Body: Signed: E Hart Date: 2nd March 2023	
Signed: *Martin Clarke* On behalf of the Senior Leadership Team			
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: February 2025			

Date	Notes
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CONTENTS **Page**

Introduction	1
Rationale	1
Objectives	2
The Role of the Governing Body	2
The Role of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team	2
The Role of Pastoral Staff and Designated Safeguarding Lead	2
Procedures	3
Support for students returning to school after bereavement	4
Support for staff returning to school after bereavement	4
Support and Resources	5

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 21st century, whilst simultaneously providing them with the traditional values of respect and ambition 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 United Kingdom, 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 student. 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.

3. Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support students 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, Trust 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). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain students' 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 and Senior Leadership Team

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 and/or Senior Leadership Team 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 and Designated Safeguarding Lead

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
  NB: It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for students, 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.
- Provide direct support to bereaved students
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved students
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of students at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved students and ensure they are supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

7. Procedures

a. 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: The school will be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time.

b. Staff should be informed before students and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

c. Students 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 students need to be informed.

d. 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. The letter should explain the steps taken during the day to inform students of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

e. 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.

f. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

g. 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.

h. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.

i. 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 students. To this end it is important to have effective communication with 'feeder' schools.

j. **Ongoing support:** School should liaise with the family/carers about support from external services such as Just B. There should also be consideration made for upcoming anniversaries, birthday or significant days e.g. Mothers/Fathers Day. There may also be need to consider the delivery of elements of the curriculum so this is delivered sensitively.

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 student or another staff member.

Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a student 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 student 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.

8. Support for students returning to school after bereavement

Whether a student 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.

8.1 Reintegration meeting

A member of the Pastoral Team will meet with the bereaved student 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 student 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 student and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the student about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the student and relevant staff to ensure support should the student feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the student's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a student who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

8.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the student's parents/carers to monitor how the student is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult.
- We know that grief may impact a student's progress and affect their behaviour.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved students by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions.

9. 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.

9.1 Reintegration meeting

The Headteacher or Deputy 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 students 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

9.2 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 cannot 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.

10. Additional Support and Resources

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/
NHS	Grief after bereavement or loss Get help with grief after bereavement or loss - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
The Childhood Bereavement Network	The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is the hub for those working with bereaved children, young people and their families across the UK. Childhood Bereavement Network
Mind	Provides information on bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief. Support and self-care for grief | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems
Care for the family – Bereavement Support	Bereavement support - Care for the Family