



MICKLEOVER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of Policy: Bereavement Policy

Date of Policy: April 2020

Member of Staff responsible: Mrs L Gerver

Review date: April 2022

Signature: _____ **Chair of Governors**

Date Approved: _____

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BEREAVEMENT POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At Mickleover 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 acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally. 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.



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

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'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The local Governing Body will be responsible for:

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

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.



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The Inclusion Team will be responsible for:

- Sharing knowledge of any bereavement support training with other staff.
- 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 pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support.

The Local Authority media spokesperson 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.

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the Headteacher or pastoral staff.
- Seeking support from pastoral staff as appropriate.
- Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

THE INITIAL RESPONSE

- 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, the most senior member of staff available or the Inclusion Manager.
- 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.
- 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.
- If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the Headteacher will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The Headteacher will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police.
- The Headteacher will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.



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- In the event of the death of the Headteacher, the Assistant Head Teacher will be responsible for the duties outlined above.

INFORMING STAFF AND GOVERNORS

- Staff and governors will be informed of the death before pupils.
- 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.
- Any information provided to staff and governors during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.
- During the meeting, the Headteacher, with the support of pastoral staff, will:
 - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and events leading up to it.
 - Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
 - Communicate with the Local Authority media spokesperson, if necessary, who will be responsible for liaising with the media and advising school staff 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.

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.

INFORMING PUPILS

- The Headteacher will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.
- The Headteacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.
- 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.
- 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
- Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the 'script' provided to them.
- Pupils will be told about the death in an age-appropriate way.
- Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support. External support will only be arranged in communication with parents.
- Informing pupils in a large group



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- 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.
- 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.
- The Headteacher, with support from relevant senior leadership and inclusion staff, will deliver the information to pupils. After pupils have been informed, they will be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told.

INFORMING PARENTS

The Headteacher will have a discussion with the family about whether any or all parents need to be informed about the death.

A letter will be composed for parents containing 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.

FUNERALS

If appropriate, the Headteacher will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral.

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.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family. Only the Local Authority 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 unless deemed necessary and appropriate.

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.

If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Headteacher and Local Authority media spokesperson will release a statement, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.

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.

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 Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

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 Behavioural Policy.



SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

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. The Headteacher will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.

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

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

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. 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

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. Staff may take bereavement leave as either a single block of two weeks, or as two separate blocks of one week, each taken at different times across the first year after their child's death.

Any member of staff who loses a child under the age of 18, and has been employed at the school for six months or more, will be able to claim statutory pay for the period of bereavement leave. A 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.

All staff members will be directed to available external support. 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 the Headteacher.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

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

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. The Headteacher will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school. Any support put in place for a pupil will be based on their needs and wishes.

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:



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- 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, culture, 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.

The pupil will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate. 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.

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. The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence. 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.

If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam, the Headteacher will report the circumstances and will decide if special considerations apply. If a pupil misses an exam due to the death of a close family member or friend, the Headteacher will report this and make a decision as to whether special considerations can be applied.

Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Support for all pupils

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. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to the Inclusion Team where possible, or an external counsellor may be booked to come into school for sessions.

Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate language.

Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies. Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the Headteacher/Inclusion Team, who will assess what support might be required.

BEHAVIOUR AND MENTAL HEALTH

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

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- 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

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. Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the school's Behavioural Policy.

A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.

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.

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 pastoral staff who will put appropriate support in place.

SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

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 pupil is not expected to live

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.

A member of the Inclusion Team will meet with the pupil to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.

Pupils with a life-threatening illness

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. 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. Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.

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.

Suicide

The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.

The Headteacher, 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. If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the



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nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming. If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the Headteacher will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police. Staff will be told about the death first.

The 'script' that staff will use to inform pupils of the death will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the suicidal act itself. Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any pupils and staff who require it.

A designated room will be set up where pupils and staff can go to if they are struggling with the news.

Liaison with the media will be handled in line with the earlier section 'Media & Social Media' of this policy.

Any information distributed to the school community and media regarding the death will:

- Be factually correct but not include detail of the cause of death or method used.
- Not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death.
- Not include details of any suicide note.
- Not include speculation over the motivation for suicide.

Research indicates that pupils that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff will report any concerns about pupils to the Headteacher and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made.

Any memorial activities conducted by the school will be held within two weeks of the death; following this, any memorial material will be given to the family.

Permanent memorials will not be held at the school; however, the school may set up a memorial on the website that will be moderated by a designated member of staff and removed after an agreed time.

Pupils and staff will be warned about the risks of un-moderated online memorials (e.g. those on social media), such as their comments becoming public without their permission and online memorials attracting negative comments.

Cultural and religious behaviours

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

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. Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change.

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

The Headteacher will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened. 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.



Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

REMEMBRANCE ACTIVITIES

Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities. All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities.

All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded on their personal and social record.

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
- If the pupil moves class
- When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

TEACHING ABOUT BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

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.

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.

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.

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. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

STAFF TRAINING

Whole-school training sessions to share knowledge on how to deal with bereavement will be built in to the professional development timeline.

Appendix 1 lists websites and helplines that can help in the event of a bereavement.

Appendix 2 gives staff a short list of 'do's and don't's' when dealing with bereavement.



APPENDIX 1

Here is a list of help lines and websites available to help pupils/staff coping with loss:

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Offering practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.
Telephone: Family Line 08088 020 021

National services include:

- national helpline for all those caring for a child or young person who has been bereaved
- website with activities for children and young people and facility to ask questions of a trained clinician
- programme of direct support for families bereaved through suicide, murder or manslaughter
- resources including books and memory boxes

Grief Encounter

www.griefencounter.org.uk

Helping children through bereavement. Support services range from a supportive voice at the end of a phone, Grief Groups and Remembrance Days, to long-term one-to-one counselling.
Telephone: 0808 802 0111

National services include:

- GriefTalk call, email or instant chat support for bereaved children and young people and those caring for them 9am-9pm Monday to Friday
- resources for bereaved children and young people, families and professionals
- training courses and bespoke training including Good Grief training course.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email, or chat online about any problem big or small.
Freephone 24h helpline: 0800 1111

National services include:

- free national helpline for children and young people on any issue or problem 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
- freepost service
- schools outreach programme.

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

National services include:

- confidential information and support line for families and professionals when a child has died and when a child is bereaved



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- web discussion for families and for professionals
- resources for bereaved children and young people, families and all professionals
- training courses on bereavement for health care and other professionals

Cruse Bereavement Care

Freephone National Helpline: 0808 808 1766

Administration: 020 8939 9530

Website: www.cruse.org.uk www.hopeagain.org.uk

Many local branches of Cruse offer individual or group support for bereaved children. Those that are members of the Childhood Bereavement Network are listed in the map above: others can be accessed by ringing the helpline or visiting the Cruse website.

Cruse has a special website for young people. A special feature of this site is a message board where young people can share their experiences and receive replies from trained young supporters.



APPENDIX 2

Do's and don'ts to help someone who is suffering from loss:

Do:

- Recognise that reactions to loss are different in individuals and be prepared to accept conflicting emotions.
- Let your genuine concern and caring show.
- Provide clear information at a level appropriate to the child's age; say you do not know if that is the case.
- Be available to listen or to help with whatever else seems needed at the time.
- Ask what support they would like.
- Say you are sorry about what happened and about their pain.
- Recognise that you cannot take the grief away, or 'make things better'. You can only help the child through the grieving process.
- Allow them to express as much unhappiness as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share; allow them to have 'normal' feelings.
- Recognise that children may feel guilt about what has happened.
- Encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose "shoulds" on themselves.
- Allow them to talk about their loss as much and as often as they want to.
- Be sensitive to special occasions eg birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and recognise that rituals can be helpful.
- Reassure them that they did everything that they could.
- Find someone you can talk to, to support you.

Don't:

- Let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out.
- Avoid them because you are uncomfortable.
- Say you know how they are feeling.
- Say, "You ought to be feeling better by now," "Don't worry," or anything else which implies a judgment about their feelings.
- Tell them what they should feel or do.
- Change the subject when they mention their loss.
- Avoid mentioning their loss out of fear of reminding them of their pain.
- Try to find something positive about their loss.
- Point out at least they have their other.....
- Say that they can have another.....
- Suggest that they should be grateful for their.....
- Make any comments which in any way suggest that their loss was their fault.
- Make the loss the 'focus' for everything – do try to keep a sense of normality.
- Use trite sayings.
- Compare one loss to another.