



Samuel Barlow Primary Academy

Bereavement Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Winston's Wish, a national children's bereavement charity, states that around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our academy community at any time.

Samuel Barlow Primary Academy is committed to the emotional health and well-being of our staff and students. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of academy life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares students for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, students, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the academy. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in our community.

We recognise that members of the academy will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by Winston's Wish.

1.2 Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to students and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of our academy may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between our academy, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available both in the academy and the wider community.

2 Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#).

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their academy and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

3 Safeguarding

We will follow our academy's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the academy community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

4 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

4.1 The role of the governing body is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

4.2 The role of the Principal and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies IF NEEDED
- keep the governing body appropriately informed
- deal with media enquiries, with the support of colleagues from Diverse Academies Trust.

4.3 The role of the Family Support Advisor is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- provide individual support as and when needed

4.4 The role of all academy staff is to:

- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and ask the Family Support Advisor to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- inform the Principal / SLT at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

5 Procedures

5.1 Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the Principal in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the child(ren) involved
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- signpost to specialist support / organisations if appropriate
- explore what support for the students affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support students
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community

5.2 Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the academy is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the academy
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- prepare a press statement if required and with due regard to the family affected
- inform staff of the death before students are informed, recognising that some students may have found out through other means.
- inform students who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and students
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- discuss with the family whether it is appropriate to visit the child at home and plan a return to school. Ask the child and family how they would like the academy to respond to their needs during the initial transition back into the academy.
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time

- monitor the emotional needs of staff and students and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.
- be mindful of the fact that that grieving can be physically and emotionally exhausting.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. We will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- engage with the family prior to significant dates to determine how the academy can best support the family and child or young person, and respond to their needs as appropriate.
- signpost families to bereavement support .
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

6 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support all students.

7 Supporting staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

8 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

9 Additional support and links

9.1 National support services and support resources

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.

9.2 Local support services

The Children's Bereavement Centre: <http://www.childrensbereavementcentre.co.uk>
Bereavement centre for children aged 3-18 in Newark.