



# Uplands Junior School

## Bereavement Policy

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February 2023

### **Policy Background**

It is a sad but necessary task for every school, at one time or another, to address the death of a member of the school community. Bereavement can have a varied effect on individuals and it is important to remember that both staff and pupils will react in very different ways. This policy has been created to establish a flexible structure for the handling of such an event and establishes how the school should respond when such a tragedy occurs.

**This policy has been written in line with the UN Conventions on the Right of the Child article 2 (non-discrimination), article 3 (best interest of the child) and article 13 (express their view and opinions).**

### **When a death occurs**

In the event of a death the Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher in their absence, will be the primary point of contact. Members of the teaching staff may be contacted to consult and help provide support.

### **Traumatic circumstances**

If the death occurs in particularly traumatic circumstances, such as suicide or murder, bereavement support specialists may be utilised such as:

- The Samaritans. <http://www.samaritans.org/>
- The Educational Psychology Service.
- Compassionate Friends. <http://www.tcf.org.uk/>
- Compton Hospice– Atlas Programme (Hannah Bridge)  
[hannahbridge@comptoncare.org.uk](mailto:hannahbridge@comptoncare.org.uk)
- WTON Education Psychology Team
- Believe to Achieve
- Art Therapy
- Winston's Wish – [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

### **Headteacher's role**

It is the role of the Headteacher to gather factual information regarding the death. They will consult the family of the deceased to ascertain their wishes regarding the sharing of information. This accurate information should be shared quickly so that rumours and assumptions do not spread and cause the family further distress.

The Headteacher is also responsible for preparing a letter to parents / carers explaining the event which should be distributed at the end of the school day.

The Headteacher will receive the appropriate CPD (Continued Professional Development) through the NSPCC Bereavement training.

## **Informing staff and pupils**

All staff should be informed straight away before pupils are told. As soon as staff have been told pupils should be immediately informed. This should be done in small groups by somebody they are familiar with. Staff will be given guidance on the approach to use.

Pupils who are particularly vulnerable, such as close friends of the victim or who witnessed the event, should be identified and offered additional support.

Staff members who are particularly vulnerable or who it is known may be alone that night should be offered help and support. This should include phone details being exchanged in order to provide a point of contact for the member of staff.

## **Social networking and the policy**

Uplands Junior School will make every effort to handle the event and the communication in a sensitive and efficient manner. It is the school's policy that no information be shared regarding the death using social media by staff or pupils until the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma.

## **The death of a pupil**

- Support should be provided for the whole school community through school's mental first aiders. Pastoral staff may be deployed in counseling roles to provide support and comfort.
- Designated areas may be established to provide pupils a place to reflect during the day.
- A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the school entrance hall.
- Staff should be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- The Headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school should the press be involved.
- Pupils with a particularly close relationship to the deceased should be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- Pupils should be encouraged to share their feelings and discuss the event and death.
- Staff should be honest and open about their feelings.
- Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure pupils are not overwhelmed. However pupils who feel too distressed to attend lessons should be allowed to go to the areas designated previously.

## **The death of a staff member**

- Support should be provided for the whole school community through school's mental first aiders. Pastoral staff may be deployed in counseling roles to provide support and comfort.
- Designated areas may be established to provide pupils a place to reflect during the day.

- A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location such as the school entrance hall.
- Services of remembrance may be offered.
- Staff should be provided the opportunity to meet as a group at the end of the school day to discuss any concerns and difficulties and for support.
- The Headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school should the press be involved.
- Staff members with a particularly close relationship to the deceased should be offered specialist support, including appropriate cover if applicable.
- Pupils should be informed.
- Pupils with a particularly close relationship to the deceased should be told one-to-one or in a separate group.
- Minimum disruption to the school timetable is ideal. Structure and regularity will ensure pupils are not overwhelmed. However, flexibility may be required and great sensitivity should be shown when determining how lessons will be covered following the death.

### **The death of a pupil's family member**

- If the death occurs while the pupil is at school, it is preferable for a family member of the pupil (preferably a parent) to come to the school and inform the child.
- If the above is not an option, arrangements should be made to transport the pupil to their home and family.
- In some circumstances it may be necessary for the pupil's teacher or the Headteacher to inform them.
- The school should liaise with the pupil's family to determine their wishes before notifying pupils.
- The pupil's peers should be informed as to how the pupil wishes to communicate / respond to the incident. This could be talking openly about the death or asking for respect and privacy, letting the pupil talk about it in their own time.
- The Headteacher will delegate a staff member to liaise with the family regarding their wishes for the funeral and/or the sending of flowers/cards.
- It can be expected that the bereaved pupil may have a reduced capacity for school work immediately following the death. They should be allowed time to recover and given any extra help and support necessary.

### **The death of a pupil or staff member on a school trip**

- In the event of a death during a school trip an emergency management team will be established by the Headteacher.
- Those who have witnessed the death will be the priority and they will be offered support.
- The Headteacher will consult with emergency personnel to determine the most timely and appropriate method for informing the deceased's family.
- A designated staff member will undertake the role of school liaison and if possible a designated phone line for enquiries should be established.
- The emergency management team will organize support and counseling as necessary.

### **Examinations / assessments**

Bereavement can have serious effects of a pupil's ability to study and undertake examinations and assessments. The school is mindful of this and the following considerations will be made to assist pupils.

## **Pupils currently taking examinations or assessments**

Pupils who are taking examinations during a time of bereavement are likely to be affected by the loss. The circumstances will be reported to the appropriate Examination Board and they will decide on where special considerations will be applied. A maximum of 5% consideration can be made to amend their result. The relationship between the pupil and the person concerned will be a determining factor in the Examination Board's decision as will the proximity to the exam from the death.

## **Pupils missing examinations or assessments**

This will be a very rare occurrence but provision should be in place should it occur. If a pupil misses an examination due to the death of a close family member or friend it will be reported to the appropriate Examination Board.

The Examination Board will then make a decision based on the information provided by the school, as to whether or not to apply special consideration and amend their result. This may mean the use of the pupil's predicted grade.

## **Funerals**

- The school should always abide by the family's wishes.
- The family will often welcome the involvement of the school community in the funeral but, there will be times where the family wishes to keep the proceedings private and this should be respected.
- If the family wishes the school to be represented at the funeral the Headteacher, in collaboration with the leadership team, should identify which staff and pupils may attend.
- Practicalities such as providing cover for teachers should also be arranged.
- The Headteacher will consult the family and in turn, staff and pupils in determining the appropriate sending of flowers, cards or the holding of a collection.
- A permanent form of remembrance may also be considered.

## **Review date**

**Next review date:** February - 2025