



# Bereavement Policy

## Document Owner and Approval

Owner – Rosie Loftus – Senior Mental Health Lead

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<b>Source:</b>	Halsford Park Primary School
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## Introduction - Halsford Park Primary School

Halsford Park Primary school is an inclusive school that strives to ensure that all children feel safe and have their voice heard. Our school Core values of Courage, Compassion, Respect and Responsibility focus on developing a positive attitude towards themselves and others now and in the future and aim to ensure that they achieve their best and Soar to Success.

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<sup>1</sup>.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children and adults 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 school community at any time.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff, children and wider community. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares children for coping with bereavement.

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

We recognise that members of the school community 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 a Pilot scheme supported by Jigsaw South East, a West Sussex based charity that have worked with the school and our community to provide bereavement support. It has included input from our staff, our governing body, parents and carers and learners and a representative from Jigsaw South East.

Appendix A outlines the Ages and Stages in understanding grief taken from Jigsaw SE.

### 1.2 Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding & Child protection policy
- Emergency Plan Policy (staff)
- Curriculum policy (including PSHE)
- Anti-bullying policy
- Educational visits & LOfC Policy
- Health and safety policy

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<sup>1</sup> Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

- Special Leave policy (staff)
- Attendance policy (learners)

### 1.3 Purpose of the policy

Within our school community, there will almost always be some children who are coping with bereavement. It may also be that the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a peer. 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](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) and through <https://www.jigsawsoutheast.org.uk/>

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to children and staff with the varying stages of grief including, Pre-Bereavement, Anticipated Grief and Bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

- Pre-Bereavement – When it is known that someone going to die, for example, from terminal illness.
- Anticipated grief - Anticipatory grief means feeling sad before the loss occurs. Rather than grieving for the person, who is still with you, you may feel grief for the things you won't get to do together in the future.
- Bereavement - Bereavement is the experience of losing someone important to us. It's characterised by grief, which is the process and the range of emotions we go through when we experience a loss.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- To support children and/or staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.
- To ensure effective communication, and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To make best use of the support available in school, and through external organisations and the wider community.

## 2 Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adapted a Charter originally developed by Winston's Wish to summarise the support we aim to provide to children and young people.

<b>B</b>	<b>Bereavement support</b>
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	Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. They will be supported by their trusted adults within school and we will signpost them to specialist support if needed through Jigsaw SE.
<b>E</b>	<b>Express feelings and thoughts</b> 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.
<b>R</b>	<b>Remember the person who has died</b> 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 giving space and time to talk.
<b>E</b>	<b>Education and information</b> 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. In discussion with their family, we will strive to deliver this in response to needs and questions. This will also be reflected in our PSHE curriculum.
<b>A</b>	<b>Appropriate response from school</b> Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training and support to ensure this happens and seek external advice to ensure we can fully support the child.
<b>V</b>	<b>Voice in important decisions</b> We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as funeral arrangements and remembering anniversaries as the family sees appropriate.
<b>E</b>	<b>Enjoyment</b> We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
<b>M</b>	<b>Meet others</b> We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences through outreach programmes through Jigsaw SE and Winston's Wish.
<b>E</b>	<b>Established routines</b> We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
<b>N</b>	<b>Not to blame</b> We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
<b>T</b>	<b>Tell the story</b> 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. A procedure aid for schools

This section outlines the order in which things will occur and offers a clear structure depending on the type of bereavement that has taken place, whether that is of a significant person, child or member of teaching staff. See Appendix B for some simple tips for speaking with young people about death.

Experience tells us that adults and children benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging, and can lead to the perception that death is not a topic that should be talked about. Young people have a natural, and healthy curiosity, and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions; their normal grief process can be obstructed.

**Below is outlined the following:**

<b>What the school will plan to do in the event of:</b>	<b>The order in which things will occur.</b>
Death of a significant person for a child such as a parent from long term illness.	A - Informing staff and governors when necessary B - Informing students C - Informing parents D - Supporting a student who has experienced a bereavement
Death of a member of the school community – a child from long term illness.	
Death of a member of the school community such as a member of staff from a long term illness.	

**Please note, in the event of an unexpected death, not limited to but including murder, manslaughter or where a child or member of staff has possibly taken their own life, the school will refer to and follow the Emergency Plan Policy as outlined by West Sussex and therefore the order outlined above may be altered. This will also apply to any incidents which occur during an offsite visit for example, a residential visit.**

<b>Death of a significant person for a child such as a parent from a long term illness</b>
<p>A. Informing staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Headteacher or Deputy Head will act as the nominated point of contact for the family to liaise with.</li> <li>• Through discussions with the family, it will be agreed which members of staff will be notified to support the child and how and when they will return to school.</li> <li>• The Headteacher or Deputy Head will agree with the family what information has been shared with the child and what they would like us to share.</li> <li>• The Headteacher and/or Deputy Head will inform members of staff face to face and outline the plan that has agreed with the family. The Headteacher and Deputy Head may contact any members of staff that are not on site via telephone.</li> </ul> <p><b>For the funeral we will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)</li> <li>• Be sensitive to religious and cultural beliefs.</li> </ul>
<p>B. Informing students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through discussion with the child's family and/or child, it will be agreed which (if any) children will be informed of the death.</li> <li>• It will be agreed what will be shared, who will do this and when.</li> </ul>
<p>C. Informing parents and wider community</p>

- Through discussion with the family, it will be agreed if, how and when this may be communicated with the wider school community for example with parents/carers of the year group/s.
- This will be the decision of the family which school will support.

**D. Supporting a student that has experienced Pre bereavement, anticipated grief and bereavement**

- The nominated trusted adults for the child will be informed and available to speak with the child.
- We will agree with the family and child, how they would like check in's to occur and how frequently. This can be different for each individual and we will be led by the child.
- School will timetable opportunities for the child to meet with the Learning Mentor for 1:1 sessions and to work with any materials provided by Jigsaw SE or Winston's wish.
- In agreement with the family, the school may consider a referral for counselling through external agencies such as Your Space or refer to the West Sussex Single Point of Access for further support.
- In agreement with the family, the school will prepare and share condolences e.g class card of condolences to be created and shared.

**Death of a member of the school community – a child from a long term illness.**

**A. Informing staff**

- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will act as the nominated point of contact for the family to liaise with.
- Through discussions with the family, it will be agreed when staff will be notified.
- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will agree with the family what will be shared with the staff team.
- The Headteacher and/or Deputy Head will inform members of staff face to face and outline the plan that has agreed with the family. The Headteacher and Deputy Head may contact any members of staff that are not on site via telephone.

**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 (or not)
- Be sensitive to religious and cultural beliefs.

**B. Informing students**

- Through discussion with the child's family, it will be agreed when and how the children will be informed of the death.
- It will be agreed what will be shared, who will do this and when.

**C. Informing parents and wider community**

- Through discussion with the family, it will be agreed how and when this will be communicated with the wider school community for example with parents/carers of the year group/s.
- It will be agreed what will be shared, who will do this and when.

- We will provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a parent, if their child is finding the situation particularly hard.

**D. Supporting students that has experienced Pre bereavement, anticipated grief and bereavement**

- The nominated trusted adults for the children will be informed and available to speak with the child.
- School will contact local organisations to arrange counsellors to be available within school for children to speak to.
- For individual children, in agreement with their parents, the school may consider a referral for counselling through external agencies such as Your Space or refer to the West Sussex Single Point of Access for further support.
- In agreement with the family, the school will prepare and share condolences e.g class card of condolences to be created and shared.

**Death of a member of the school community such as a member of staff from a long term illness.**

**A. Informing staff**

- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will act as the nominated point of contact for the family to liaise with.
- Through discussions with the family, it will be agreed how and when the wider staff team will be informed.
- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will agree with the family what information will be shared.
- The Headteacher and/or Deputy Head will inform members of staff face to face and outline the plan that has been agreed with the family. The Headteacher and Deputy Head may contact any members of staff that are not on site via telephone.
- Staff will be given details for counselling services through SAS and Jigsaw South East.
- We will provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a member of staff, if they are finding the situation particularly hard.

**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 (or not)
- Be sensitive to religious and cultural beliefs.

**B. Informing students**

- Through discussion with the, it will be agreed which children will be informed of the death.
- It will be agreed what will be shared, who will do this and when.

**C. Informing parents and wider community**

- Through discussion with the family, it will be agreed if, how and when this may be communicated with the wider school community for example with parents/carers.
- We will provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a parent, if their child is finding the situation particularly hard.

- D. Supporting a student that has experienced Pre bereavement, anticipated grief and bereavement
- The nominated trusted adults for the child will be informed and available to speak with the child.
  - The nominated trusted adults for the children will be informed and available to speak with the child.
  - School will contact local organisations to arrange counsellors to be available within school for children to speak to.
  - For individual children, in agreement with their parents, the school may consider a referral for counselling through external agencies such as Your Space or refer to the West Sussex Single Point of Access for further support.
  - In agreement with the family, the school will prepare and share condolences e.g class card of condolences to be created and shared.

**Examples of wording which may be used to inform the school community can be seen in Appendix C and D. These would be agreed with the family.**

### **3 Safeguarding**

#### **3.1 Safeguarding and confidentiality**

We follow safeguarding procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm. The school Safeguarding & Child Protection policy can be found on the school website within the policies section -

<https://halsfordparkprimaryschool.co.uk/policies/>

We are aware that grief has no time limit and bereavement can impact on mental health and wellbeing particularly where a child has an existing mental health issue.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, children will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in order to safeguard them.

Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation. If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the detail of their experience

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

#### **3.3 Attendance**

There are many reasons why a bereaved pupil may struggle to attend school ranging from their own anxieties to the mental health of their parent/carers. We will handle these sensitively, working with the family and keeping in mind the best interests of the child and referring them to support when needed.



## Appendix A – [Ages and stages in understanding grief](#)

Age	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions	Interventions
0–3 years			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cry</li> <li>■ Cling</li> <li>■ Exhibit regressive behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hold the child</li> <li>■ Reassure calmly</li> </ul>
3–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Loved one will return; loved one is just away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Confused</li> <li>■ Anxious</li> <li>■ Fearful</li> <li>■ Separation anxiety</li> <li>■ Sad</li> <li>■ Angry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cry</li> <li>■ Temper tantrum</li> <li>■ Nightmares</li> <li>■ Regress</li> <li>■ Cling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provide extra attention</li> <li>■ Reassure calmly</li> </ul>
6–9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wonder if loved one can return</li> <li>■ Believe deceased can still function</li> <li>■ Believe their actions or words caused the death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Confused</li> <li>■ Anxious</li> <li>■ Fearful</li> <li>■ Separation anxiety</li> <li>■ Sad or angry</li> <li>■ Fearful they might die too</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cry</li> <li>■ Temper tantrum</li> <li>■ Nightmares</li> <li>■ Regress</li> <li>■ Cling</li> <li>■ Difficulty in concentrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provide extra attention</li> <li>■ Tell the truth appropriately</li> <li>■ Reassure (not responsible for death)</li> <li>■ Encourage physical or artistic expression of grief</li> </ul>
9–12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Understand finality and irreversibility of death</li> <li>■ Believe their actions or words caused the death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sad</li> <li>■ Confused</li> <li>■ Anxious</li> <li>■ Withdrawn</li> <li>■ Lonely</li> <li>■ Guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Exhibit aggressive or impulsive behavior</li> <li>■ Engage in risky or dangerous behavior</li> <li>■ Obtain worse grades at school</li> <li>■ Have difficulty concentrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provide extra attention</li> <li>■ Tell the truth appropriately</li> <li>■ Reassure (not responsible for death)</li> <li>■ Encourage physical or artistic expression of grief</li> <li>■ Maintain structure, limits, and rules</li> </ul>
12–18 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Understand finality, irreversibility, nonfunctionality of death</li> <li>■ Believe their actions or words caused the death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sad</li> <li>■ Confused</li> <li>■ Anxious</li> <li>■ Withdrawn</li> <li>■ Lonely</li> <li>■ Guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Exhibit aggressive or impulsive behavior</li> <li>■ Engage in risky or dangerous behavior</li> <li>■ Obtain worse grades at school</li> <li>■ Have difficulty concentrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Seek community and school support</li> <li>■ Maintain structure, limits, and rules</li> <li>■ Encourage physical or artistic expressions of grief</li> </ul>

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## Appendix B

Following are some simple tips for speaking with young people about death.

<p>Be honest. It is not an easy subject for anyone. If you are upset too – do not be afraid to admit it. Model the fact that difficult feelings are ok, and totally normal.</p>	
<p>Use clear language. Trying to avoid the death by using phrases such as “your loss” and “gone to a better place” can frustrate older children and confuse younger ones.</p> <p>A six-year-old who hears that her Dad has been lost will try to find him, because that is what you do when someone is lost.</p> <p>Simply use language which is real and clear; “I was really sorry to hear that your Dad died last week, how are you feeling?”</p>	
<p>Expect questions, but don't feel pressured to provide immediate answers.</p> <p>Death often throws up many questions for us all. Some of these may seem straightforward and obvious under the circumstances, such as ‘How does smoking cause cancer?’ to the more complex ‘Why do some people die so young without warning?’</p> <p>If there are questions that you are unable to answer, feel able to say so, and assure them you will look into providing an answer at a later point. There may be other questions where you have to admit total defeat...this is ok too.</p>	<p>Recognise that every death and every reaction to it is unique.</p> <p>The way in which a child reacts to a death is dependent on their relationship with the person who died, the time of death in that child's development, the nature of the death (was it expected after a long fight against an illness or was it sudden?), the child's understanding of death, their support network and many other factors.</p> <p>See Appendix A for an outline of Ages and Stages in understanding Grief.</p>
<p>Don't assume anything. Ask the student how they feel, rather than projecting feelings that you might expect them to have.</p> <p>Also, expect that other children in a class might be affected by a death in an immediate family other than their own.</p>	<p>Allow time and space for students to digest the news, find out the facts and discover exactly how they feel.</p> <p>For some, this may be their first experience of someone they know dying.</p>
<p>Moving on - expect children (especially younger ones) to ‘move on’ fairly quickly. As adults we tend to remain in a feeling or thought for a lot longer than children. If we are sad and reflective, we may be so for many hours.</p> <p>Children may be distraught one moment and then the next, need to ask what is for lunch,</p>	<p>Act early to prevent rumours from spreading, or gossip being spread around the school.</p> <p>Our response to death is often something that we mask when in public. Some people mask it with humour.</p> <p>Among children this humour can be less tempered by social graces and so can be very hurtful, as can rumours about a death or</p>

<p>or express annoyance that it is raining outside.</p> <p>Although this sometimes shocks us, this is completely normal, so try not to punish it.</p>	<p>an individual. Try to prevent these at all times, but remember that nasty words are sometimes born out of fear. This does not, and should not excuse them, but may help us deal better with the students concerned.</p>
<p>Try to normalise the feelings that a bereaved young person shares with you. They are probably very worried that they are the only person who has ever felt this way.</p> <p>Assure them that feelings of anger, fatigue, fear, worry, stress, sadness, exhaustion, guilt, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, lack of focus etc are all a normal reaction to grief.</p>	<p>Acknowledge that some days will be better than others. A bereaved student may arrive for registration one morning and seem totally fine.</p> <p>The next day, for an obvious reason, or for no apparent reason at all, they may seem completely different. Following are some simple tips for speaking with young people about death.</p>

## **Appendix C – Example letter of informing parents/Carers about a death at the school (member of staff)**

These are two examples of a letter to parents. Please feel free to change them according to the needs of the

situation.

<Date>

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

We have had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, who has been a teacher at this school for <number> years.

Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time.

The students were told that <Name> died from ..... on <Date>. When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from the school office.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church.

Yours sincerely,

<Name>

Headteacher

## **Appendix D – Example letter of Informing parents/Carers about a death at the school ()**

Dear Parent(s)/ Carer(s),

We have had the sad task of informing students of the death of <Name>, a student in <Year>

They were sensitively told that <name> died from ( Insert ).

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion - these are all normal. The students have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise.

You can obtain this from the school office.

The family have respectfully asked that this will be a private ceremony with family and close friends in attendance.

Yours sincerely,

<Name>

Headteacher

## Appendix E - National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for learners and adults in the school community.

**Child Bereavement UK:** [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) Support and resources for all those affected both when a child dies and when a child is bereaved.

**Cruse Bereavement Care:** [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

**Child Bereavement Network:** [cbn@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cbn@ncb.org.uk)

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

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

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

**Winston's Wish:** [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.