

LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL

Bereavement Policy

Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school community.
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased.
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the Governing Board.
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement.

Roles and responsibilities

The Head teacher

The Head teacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Head teacher will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased.
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams.
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested.
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement.
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.

The Family Support Adviser

The Family Support Adviser will take on responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The Family Support Adviser will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff.
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff.
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages.
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted).
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days.
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school.

Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the Head teacher.

The Governing Board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through regular catch-ups with the Head teacher or Family Support Adviser.
- Monitor the Head teacher's and Family Support Adviser's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the Head teacher, Family Support Adviser and Chair, or another governor.
- Assist the Head teacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.

- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the Head teacher is not available to respond to a death immediately.

Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

All staff should be aware of colleagues and offer support on an individual basis where necessary and alert a member of the Leadership Team if they become concerned about a colleague's well-being.

Support for bereaved members of staff will be offered in line with their wishes and feelings and the agreed management of human resources policies and procedures. The Family Support Adviser will meet and ensure the staff member knows that support is available.

Immediate actions following a death

News of the death of a close member of a child's or staff's family, the death of a pupil or member of staff or a member of the school community will be passed to the Head teacher who will try to obtain information to avoid unnecessary rumour or assumption, which could lead to further distress.

Where possible the Head teacher will liaise directly with the family involved and agree exactly what information should be passed on to staff and pupils. The family's wishes will be considered before any information is given to the pupils.

Staff will be informed as soon as possible, ideally before the pupils, ensuring enough time is given to enable them to discuss what has happened, how they feel and what internal and external support is available. All this information will also be shared with part time staff, governors and those who may not be in school that day.

Where necessary a press statement will be prepared by the Head teacher and agreed with the Local Authority.

If pupils need to be told they will be told as soon as possible to avoid rumour and uncertainty. This will be done in familiar groups by someone they know, for example their class teacher, and the information will be shared in an age appropriate way. Opportunities will be given for pupils to ask questions and respond to the news. The bereaved child or member of staff may or may not wish to be present when the news is broken.

It may be appropriate for a letter to go home to all parents that same day, respecting the wishes of the family.

Children 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:

- Children that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
- Children with SEND
- Children who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour

Support for pupils and staff

In supporting both the bereaved child and the other pupils, staff will always act sensitively, seeking advice when necessary, from both the Head teacher and the families involved.

The class teacher will be the first line of support for the child but should the child need extra support away from the classroom, extra support will be provided. E.g. a child finds it difficult to stay in the classroom when they are upset, it may be necessary to identify with them a suitable place, where they can go for some quiet time with an adult they trust.

Both school and families need to work together to note changes in behaviour and if necessary counselling from outside agencies may be sought. Children and young people bereaved through suicide or violent death are likely to need skilled help and support but the informal support of familiar adults is still vital.

Supporting a bereaved child is very upsetting and emotionally demanding for staff and therefore, informal support between colleagues is vital. Opportunities to discuss feelings and reactions with colleagues are necessary and important. Support and counselling are available to any member of staff and can be arranged through the Head teacher.

All staff should be aware of colleagues and offer support on an individual basis where necessary and alert a member of the Leadership Team if they become concerned about a colleague's well-being. 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.

Support for bereaved members of staff will be offered in line with their wishes and feelings and the agreed management of human resources policies and procedures.

Timetables

These could and would be adjusted to help support the individuals involved, always to be mindful to keep a healthy school routine to aid recovery

Tributes and condolences

This is something that would be decided with the support of the family involved. Faith might be important to the individual or family and so it might be that a church service or service of remembrance be held if this was in line with the family's wishes. Books of condolence and any memorial would be decided in the light of the family's wishes.

Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service.
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute.

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so, then we would look to cover this if possible. If pupils wished to attend then this would be under the guidance of their parents and families and we would do all we could to support these family's wishes.

Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil 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.

Reintegration meeting

The Head teacher/Family Support Adviser/Class Teacher will meet with the bereaved pupil 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 pupil 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 pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school.
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant).
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed.
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support.
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability.

Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping

- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult, the Family Support Advisor will record this using Google Calendar so that dates may be easily shared with those who need to know.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will monitor and provide pastoral support where necessary.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

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.

Reintegration meeting

The Head teacher / Family Support Advisor 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 pupils 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.

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 can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work on an individual basis to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour for Learning and Positive Relationships policy
- Staff Wellbeing policy

Date: November 2024

Review Date: September 2025

Appendix: useful contacts

Child Bereavement UK: Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us>

Daisy's Dream: Helpline: 01189342604
<https://www.daisysdream.org.uk>

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/>