



## Bereavement Policy

Policy Review Schedule			
Date Policy agreed by SLT	07/10/23	Date Policy Agreed by Governing Body	11/10/23
Policy Review Schedule	Annual	Date for Review	26/06/24
Signed by the Chair of Governors	Joseph Turner Wing		
Signed by Headteacher	Jon Kelly		

## Introduction

Newhaven School is Trauma Informed School that is committed to the emotional health and well-being of our staff, pupils and their families. We take a collective approach to bereavement and loss, and it is through our school community that strength and support can be harnessed.

It is almost inevitable that at some time all schools will have to deal with a death that affects the school community. As young people spend a large proportion of their time at school, teachers and staff members maybe the primary source of care and support. Bereaved pupils will see our school as a haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and will look to trusted staff members for help.

The purpose of this Bereavement Policy is to help Newhaven School staff to respond effectively and sensitively at a time when there may be upset and confusion. It aims to ensure that effective communication takes place, that disruption is minimised and that each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

## The Impact of death

The impact of death upon the school community and in particular the pupils, should not be underestimated. While it is true that an understanding of death develops over a prolonged period, it is known that the following reactions to bereavement include:

Withdrawal	Tears	Emotion Dysregulation	Aggression	Fear	Panic
Anxiety	Fretfulness	Fatigue	Poor sleep	Poor appetite	Hopelessness
low/sad	Poor motivation	Irritability	suicidal ideation	deliberate self-harm	shock

## An expected bereavement

The death of a terminally ill pupil or member of staff can be planned for with full support being given before the actual event. Often pupils will want to create a memory board to allow their emotions to be shared with others.

Open discussion and realistic language are often the best way to deal with issues that arise. Once the pupil or member of staff dies then it is important that all emotional support is given and the need to mourn is recognised.

## The death of a pupil: On school premises

If a child dies on school premises or on a school trip, then a nearest in proximity member of staff should:

- 1) Call the emergency services at once.
- 2) Summon Senior Leadership Team
- 3) Secure scene and SLT remain with the body until help arrives.
- 4) If necessary, the building is evacuated.
- 5) If necessary, a register is taken of all existing pupils and staff

## The death of a pupil: Off-site activity

If a child dies during off-site activities such as a school trip, it is the responsibility of the teacher/adult in charge of the group to undertake the following measures:

- 1) Ensure that all members of the group are accounted for and safe
- 2) If there are other injuries then immediately establish the extent and administer appropriate first aid
- 3) Call the Emergency Services
- 4) Ensure that the remainder of the group is adequately supervised throughout and make arrangements for their return to base.
- 5) Arrange for at least one adult to remain at the incident site to liaise with the emergency services
- 6) Contact the Senior Leadership Team immediately so that they can provide necessary support and guidance.
- 7) Senior Leadership Team to make contact with the parents/carers of the pupil.
- 8) The designated safeguarding lead to ensure the school records are updated and to inform all relevant statutory support services such as social services, police, CAMHS.

If a pupil dies whilst in the care of their parent/carer e.g., during the school holidays and away from school, it is likely that the senior leadership will be notified through statutory services or by the parent/carer. All members of the school community may need support so parents/carers of pupils in the same class/year group should be

contacted, especially any known close friends. A letter from the School to the rest of the school community should be sent as soon as possible (see template in Appendix XX).

### **The death of a staff member: On School premises**

- 1) Call the emergency services at once.
- 2) Summon Senior Leadership Team
- 3) Secure scene and SLT remain with the body until help arrives.
- 4) If necessary, the building is evacuated.
- 5) If necessary, a register is taken of all existing pupils and staff.

### **The death of a staff member: Off site**

The Head, Leadership Team and Governors should be informed immediately by a family/friend of the deceased. The Headteacher should liaise with the family of the deceased to ensure that their wishes are respected. Staff should be informed soon after and provided with facts about the death of the staff member.

They should also be offered school-based psychological support, the Employee Assistance Programme and support from their line managers.

### **Working with the police**

Very soon after the death is announced the Safer Schools Officer, or the police should visit as they have to carry out an investigation into the circumstances.

Clear rooms or spaces for them to work in. They may want to collect evidence. The police will normally tell the child's next of kin and will want to speak at once to the adults or pupils that witnessed the death. The police will tell you that you must not speculate on the cause of death. But remember that the media are under no such restriction.

### **Telling staff**

SLT will need to tell the adults who were nearest to what happened first. They will need some support offered to them so it would be advisable for senior/middle leaders, SENCO and school based psychology services to be available.

### **Telling pupils**

Where a pupil collapses during the school day when other pupils are present, is rushed to hospital and subsequently dies, those pupils will need to know what has happened before they leave at the end of the school day. The school will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the School community.

It is important to agree with the police the timing and content of the information that you give to pupils so as to meet the needs of the pupils whilst not impeding any police investigation.

Are there any siblings, close relatives, or boy/girl friend who need to know first? Advise them first, but only when parents are ready to collect them.

Gather the year group or class of the pupil together at an appropriate time to inform them that the pupil has died. If the pupil has died as the result of an accident you may want to ask them not to speculate about the causes of the accident and not to spread rumours. Getting them to hear this is very difficult. Allow them some time to be together as a class or year group. It is possible that some pupils will contact the local press despite instructions not to.

Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class or tutor groups. Pastoral Managers can identify those pupils who had a long term and/or close relationship with the pupil who has died so they can be told separately. If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died. Allow the pupils to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand. It is also important to allow them to share their experiences of death as previous memories of previous losses will be triggered. It is important to also put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.

During exam periods, completion of a special arrangements form for those pupils closely connected to the pupil who died could be completed if deemed necessary.

Make sure that pupils are given an opportunity to discuss their feelings of bereavement with an adult that feels confident in this area and is able to give each child space for their different and normal feelings. Most young people welcome the opportunity to talk privately to an adult about their loss. Even if the pupil cannot verbalise his or her feelings, it is helpful for a trusted adult to show empathy/sympathy and to 'name the pain' using words like sad, lonely, upset, afraid, so that the pupil realises the school knows about the death. The family may be so overwhelmed by the trauma that little individual acknowledgement is given to the child's feelings when they are at home.

Some pupils need a retreat when grief overtakes them, and it helps if the school accepts a pupil's need to express their grief, providing a 'safe place' and a trusted adult to be with them. Once the bereaved pupil returns to school routine, it is helpful to share concerns with parents so that they know how he or she is coping in school.

Over time, memory books/boxes and memory boards can be created as a way of processing the loss of a pupil. Memorial services and other religious rituals can also be provided in the school and invitations to the family can be offered. Books, stories, music and art can be very helpful in exploring loss. There are many excellent books written on bereavement for different ages of children, both in the fact and fiction sections, now available from shops, libraries or the web. Sensitivity about timing and content of material is needed so that raw grief feelings are not triggered at an inappropriate time. For example, a school assembly using literature on the subject might help the school to explore grief and loss, but not when a newly- bereaved child is present.

The grief caused by the death will be long-lasting, and schools need to recognise that anniversaries and celebrations will be difficult – especially the first birthday and Christmas or other religious festivals. It will help if key dates and times are noted and passed on to mentors/pastoral staff. As young people mature, the death is felt and questioned at new levels, both emotionally and intellectually, often causing renewed grief and distress.

The whole school community is likely to take time to recover and it is a long term issue that impacts on the morale and dynamics within the school community. Memorials, access to school-based psychological support,

Employee Assistance programmes and signposting to local bereavement services and statutory services can be useful. Recognise that those who are not accessing the support provided may be in greatest need.

### **Telling parents/carers**

The police will tell the parents of the child. Getting a letter to other parents, which both expresses sympathy and gives factual information about the death, is very important. It saves rumours, which can be intensely hurtful to pupils, parents and teachers. See appendix XX for a template.

Parent support sessions by school based psychology services, bereavement charities, CAMHS should be offered, to help parents/carers process the loss.

### **Dealing with the media**

The Royal Borough of Greenwich press officer should be notified so they can field enquiries and advise on how to manage intrusions from the media.

Contact details for the RBG press office:

### **Dealing with the post-mortem**

If there is a post-mortem, this may happen very quickly, possibly within 24 hours of the death. Ensure SLT are advised of the results of any post-mortem as soon as possible. The best way to stop speculation is to give facts.

### **Notifying the management committee / governors**

The Head Teacher should ensure the Chair of the Management Committee or Governors should be notified as soon as possible and it is their role to inform other members of the committee.

### **Notifying and seeking assistance from the local authority**

The Director for Children's Services should be notified and who will provide support to the school from the local authority.

Contact details for Director of Children's Services: [florence.kroll@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:florence.kroll@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) 020 8921 8230

## **Attendance to funerals and religious ceremonies**

It would be important for SLT to decide which staff will attend the funeral or other religious ceremonies and inform the family accordingly. SLT to provide cover for those staff that attend the funeral and consider possible closure of the site. Notify the staff group, pupils and families in advance if this is the case.

## **Appendix 1: Template letter informing parents/carers of the death of a staff member**

Newhaven School

<Date>

Dear Parents / Carers

NAME of MEMBER OF STAFF

I have had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher/TA/ADMIN at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name .....>'s family at this time. All the pupils have been informed. Many will have known <Name....> for many years and have been taught by him / her. They will have different memories, but will share the common bond that one of their teachers/TA/Admin has passed away. He / she has given so much to the school and will be sadly missed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings such as sadness, anger and confusion, and young people can sometimes become quiet or withdrawn, angry, seek the company of their immediate friends, or ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life, and the nature of death.

The pupils have been told that support will be provided if they wish to discuss their feelings. We will of course keep you informed as to the funeral arrangements and the date and time of any memorial service. I am very sorry to have to write to you in this way.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## **Appendix 2: Resources and support**

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) - Bereavement

Information on the way bereavement affects children

[ACAS – Bereavement in the Workplace](#)

A guide to dealing with bereavement in the workplace.

Winstons Wish: Support for schools providing bereavement support

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

Child Bereavement UK

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

CRUSE (Bereavement Charity)

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/organisations/schools/children-bereaved-suicide/>