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| **Dale Community Primary**  **and**  **Stonehill Nursery Federation**  **Bereavement Policy** |



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**Chair of Governors: Russell Langley**

**Policy Approved by: Governors Behaviour and Safety Committee**

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Safety Committee

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Safety Committee

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Safety Committee

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Safety Committee

**Bereavement Policy**

Bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. It is important that within our whole school setting, we provide learning opportunities for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. The ethos of our school is based upon openness and mutual support and provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in a supportive manner.

Bereavement impacts everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we understand that we have a duty of care to help support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs. By adopting a planned, open and considered approach the school can support the emotional well-being of the child, family and staff.

We acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one.  An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.

**Aims of a Bereavement Policy**

* To identify key staff within the school, resources and further support services to help the whole school community work together
* To provide a framework for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances
* To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all
* To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
* To meet the needs of all its children and staff and to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain much needed support
* For children to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by trained staff
* To understand what different religions believe about death, which is especially important within our diverse school community (see Appendix A)

**Procedures to be followed in the event of a death within the school community:**

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

Should we receive the news of a death, in ALL cases the person receiving the news will:

* Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again.  (It is essential to have the facts confirmed)
* Talk to the person reporting the news, including what they would like to be shared and with whom
* Reassure the person that their child will be safe whilst they are in school and they will be contacted if there are any concerns
* Share the news as soon as possible with the Head Teacher or, in her absence, the Deputy Head Teacher or Assistant Head Teacher

The senior member of staff will:

* Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance and examples and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community
* A MyConcern will be recorded:
  + Key worker allocated
  + Category identified as ‘bereavement’
  + Assign notifications including adding class teachers as wider team members
  + Tasks will be set by the Key Worker e.g. notify class teachers/wider staff, notify pupils, set interventions with support for pupil and wider family

**The death of a pupil**

Should we receive the news of a pupil’s death, we will call appropriate colleagues together having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes,

We will:

* Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students
* Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school, e.g. year groups, or class by class
* Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements
* Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks
* Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available
* Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, letter, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances, following the wishes of the family
* Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened

**The death of a member of staff**

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff, we will use the guidance notes below:

* Gather together the staff and inform them of the news
* Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and identify a space where staff and children can go to for time, space, support
* Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death
* Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened
* Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes
* Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.  Guidance will be written to support staff when they make this announcement.  Staff can request an additional member of staff to be present to support them
* Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made e.g. year groups, or a class
* It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way

**Communication**

Whilst recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school website, text, telephone, email, or social media sites. If applicable, this communication may be dictated by outside agencies such as the Police.

**Memorials and funeral services**

Where appropriate, following the family’s wishes, a member of staff will attend the memorial/funeral service and support will be provided to the member of staff following attendance at a service.

**Return to school**

We acknowledge our responsibility to ‘keep a special watch’ on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and moving forward for example, at times of transition/change. That child would be considered to have vulnerabilities and therefore supported appropriately. The number of days of absence for a pupil would be negotiated with the family. For details relating to staff absence see the ‘Staff attendance and leave of absence’ policy.

We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns.

**Managing anticipated death and the terminally ill**

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, working closely with the family where possible we will:

* Confirm the facts concerning the pupil’s sick relative or friend
* Communicate the information as appropriate in line with the family’s wishes
* Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
* Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
* Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
* If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
* Never give false hope to the child or young person
* Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so

**Long term support for those who grieve**

We will offer pupils access to a range of age-related peer support programmes which have been discussed with all staff through CPD.

**Support for staff who support bereaved pupils and colleagues**

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

*This policy has been based upon guidance from ‘Derby City Council (date unknown) Supporting children, young people and school through bereavement and loss’*

***Appendix A***

*Taken directly from ‘Derby City Council (date unknown) Supporting children, young people and school through bereavement and loss’ with amendments made to Islam.*

**Religions and bereavement**

This table does not list all religions. For more information on death in different religions please see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>

The information present here on religions and bereavement, including the perspective of non-theistic belief systems such as Humanism, provides a general overview of traditional beliefs and practices. With all faith traditions there will be considerable variation to the general views provided here.

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| **Buddhism** | | |
| Main Beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Buddhists believe death of the physical body is certain, but only a part of an on-going process of reincarnation until one receives enlightenment. After death, it is believed that the dead person goes through a transformation in which they discover death, and prepare for their rebirth. | In early times and commonly today, Buddhists cremate the bodies of their dead. The first seven days after death are the most important for final and funeral prayer. | Prayers are said weekly, during a 49-day funeral period. It is during this period that the prayers of the mourners are believed to help the deceased during the post-death transformation and awaken their spirit to the true nature of death. |
| **Christianity** | | |
| Main Beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Christians believe that when someone dies, they are judged by God. The righteous go to Heaven and the sinners go to Hell.  Christians believe that Hell is the separation from the love of God.  Catholics believe in Heaven and Hell, but some also believe in Purgatory. This is a place for those who have died in a ‘state of grace’ (that is, they have committed ‘venial’ or forgivable sins) and may not go straight to Heaven. | When a Christian dies, it is seen as the end of his/her life on earth. A funeral is held for friends and family to grieve for the person who has died and give thanks for their life.  The funeral is held about a week after death. It can either take place in a church or at a crematorium.  A Catholic funeral can be with or without Mass. Prayers are said by the final resting place, at the graveside for burial and before the curtains close for cremation. | Varies from family to family and country to country. No set mourning period.  Mourning rituals vary from country to country. |

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| **Hinduism** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Hindus believe death is part of the continuing cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The soul of the dead transfers to another body after death. | Hindus generally cremate their dead. In preparation for cremation, the body is bathed, laid in a coffin, adorned with sandalwood paste and garlands, and wrapped in white cloth. In the cremation ceremony, the body is carried three times counter clockwise around the pyre and then placed upon it. | The days of mourning are considered a time of ritual impurity. Mourners cover all religious pictures in the house and do not attend festivals or take part in marriage ceremonies. Mourning period length varies, though Hindu scriptures caution against excessive mourning. |
| **Humanist** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| We only live this life - there is no after-life, and no such thing as reincarnation. | A Humanist funeral remembers the life of the person who has died, and reflects on their contribution to the world and to others. The ceremony is likely to include some or all of the following: music, a non- religious reflection on death, readings of poetry and prose, reminiscences about the dead person, a eulogy, and ritual actions for example, candle lighting, sharing reminiscences with the people alongside you, moments of silence and reflection and formal words of goodbye. | No set mourning period |

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| **Islam – Information provided by A. Mahmood** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Muslims believe that after death they will be resurrected on Judgment Day. The Scales are brought forward and good deeds along with bad deeds are weighed. Muslims believe anybody may go to hell; it may not be for eternity however those entering Heaven will abide eternally. | The corpse is bathed and wrapped in a plain cloth (called a kafan). The deceased has a funeral prayer read over them by a congregation. They then proceed to the graveyard and burial takes place as soon as possible. Only burial in the ground is allowed according to Shari’ ah (Islamic law). A final prayer of forgiveness is usually offered by family and close ones. | The mourning period is 3 days for everybody apart from widows who can mourn for months. During the first 3 days people come (usually hundreds) to congregate and offer condolence, help and seek forgiveness for the deceased as well as remembering the loved one and their life. The 3 days are concluded by a final prayer for forgiveness and usually a meal for all attending. |
| **Judaism** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Jews believe death in this life will eventually lead to resurrection in a world to come. | The dead are buried as soon as possible. The body is washed to purify it, dressed in a plain linen shroud. The casket, a plain wooden coffin, remains closed after the  body is dressed. The body is watched over from time of death till burial, as a sign of  respect. The kaddish, a prayer in honour of the dead, is said. | There is an intense seven- day mourning period, called shiva. Mourners traditionally rent (tear) their garments as a symbol of grief. Today, people often wear a black ribbon instead of tearing their clothes. Mourners also cover mirrors, sit on low stools, and avoid wearing leather. The full mourning period lasts a year, after which mourners observe the dead’s Yahrzeit, or yearly anniversary of the death. |

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| **Pagan** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| Pagans believe that physical death is not the end of life. The dead become unborn, and enter into a state where they may find temporary rest, after which healing and renewing energy for rebirth into a new life occur. | Believers in the pagan traditions wash the dead body with a mixture consisting of spring water, a few drops of ocean water (or water from another special place), scented oil, and the herb rosemary for purity and protection. While washing, a special blessing is usually said. Then, the body is smudged (or censed) with an appropriate incense for the cleansing. Finally, the body is wrapped or dressed in simple cloth or clothing. Pagans hold funerals and memorial services, during which, special prayers are said to help guide the dead to healing in their afterlife journey to rebirth. Rituals include offerings to nature and the ancestors, invoking spirits, music, chanting, sharing stories and more. | No set mourning period |
| **Sikhism** | | |
| Main beliefs about death | Funeral | Mourning period |
| In Sikhism death is considered a natural process and God’s will. | Cremation is preferred although if it is not possible any other method such as burial or submergence at sea are acceptable. The body is usually bathed and clothed by family members and taken to the cremation grounds. Hymns which induce feelings of detachment are recited by the congregation. As the body is being cremated, Kirtan Sohila, the night time prayer is recited and Ardas, a prayer or request to a superior being, is offered.  The ashes are disposed of by immersing them in the nearest river. Any public displays of grief at the funeral such as wailing or crying out loud are discouraged. | A non-continuous reading of the entire Sri Guru Granth Sahib is undertaken and timed to conclude on the tenth day. This may be undertaken at home or in the Gurdwara. The conclusion of this ceremony marks the end of the mourning period. |