

The Priory School

Bereavement policy



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Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Roles and responsibilities	3
3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved	4
4. Immediate actions following a death	4
5. Follow-up actions and support following a death	6
6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement	7
7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement	7
8. Monitoring arrangements	8
9. Links with other policies	8
Appendix: useful contacts	8

1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the 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

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 The headteacher

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff. In the absence of the headteacher the responsibility will lie with the deputy headteacher

The headteacher 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
 - Arrange a representative to participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
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- Assign members of staff to 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

2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support team has 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 business manager will be responsible for liaising with members of staff. The relevant HoY will take responsibility for students.

The Chaplaincy Team are an additional support if required.

The pastoral support team 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 if required
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (if necessary)
- Check in during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through the link governor focusing on child protection, who might have regular catch-ups with the headteacher or pastoral team]
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor
- Assist the headteacher, 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 headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

3. 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.

- Our pastoral teams, ELSA and Chaplaincy team are most likely to be involved in supporting bereaved pupils. Externally resources from Surrey County Council would be arranged if necessary.
- The Business manager would coordinate the support for the staff supporting students.

4. Immediate actions following a death

A death that affects the whole school community (such as that of a pupil or staff member):

The head teacher will hold a staff meeting to inform staff.

Assemblies will be held in Year groups to inform pupils.

Parents will be informed through letters if necessary.

Provision for help will then be signposted to students this may include members of staff on call, chaplaincy space open with chaplains present and ELSA trained staff being made available.

When dealing with personal bereavement (such as the death of a pupil's close family member):

The DSL will liaise with the family and make a plan to respect the families wishes.

This may include arranging support in school; working out reintegration back to a normal school timetable;

The members of staff who will be informed; Agreeing a mentor for the bereavement period and understanding arrangements for funerals.

When dealing with a 'sudden or unexpected death' of a student:

The school will be notified via the Surrey or Sussex Child Death Nursing Team

A member of staff (most likely the head teacher or DSL) will complete form B to be returned to the Child Death Nursing Team

A member of staff (most likely the head teacher or DSL) will act as point of contact for the Child Death Nursing Team and liaise with the Joint Agency Review (JAR) team

NB: This process may be triggered if a student is still alive but is expected to die imminently (e.g. in the case of a RTA)

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The headteacher or DSL will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how
- If the family can't be immediately contacted, news of the death would be confirmed using a call to the police or children's services / Surrey Safeguarding for assistance.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- The head teacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- Staff will be informed promptly by calling a staff meeting or using staff emergency notification systems to bring staff together virtually if the school is closed.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- Heads of Year or the head teacher will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- Pupils will be informed in a timely and appropriate way. Most likely this will be by calling a whole-school assembly. If necessary the year group leaders may call identified groups together to share the news before a whole year assembly. We will use school emergency notification systems to alert parents of where to find important news online if your school is closed

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- Parents/carers will be notified of a death by sending a letter home with pupils explaining the steps taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- If the death is the result of suicide the school will seek advice and support from the Child Death Nursing Team.
- If the death is due to homicide or family violence the school will again seek advice and support from the Child Death Nursing Team..
- If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The Head Teacher will be responsible for responding to requests from the media.
All other staff should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the Head Teacher.
- Requests will be dealt with on a case by case basis and in line with Surrey County Councils advice.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- The support in school will be coordinated by the DSL this could be meetings with the pastoral team, ELSA , chaplains or peer-to-peer support
- Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support by the DSL e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

5.2 Timetables

- Any adjustments to the timetable for some or even all pupils will be agreed by the DSL, Deputy Head in charge of curriculum and Assistant Head in charge of behaviour.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

- The school community will come together to memorialise the deceased by being allowed to attend any services permitted by the family. In some circumstances a whole school assembly may be called in addition or a time for reflection.
- The expected physical memorial will be a book of condolences and the adding of a plaque to the memorial garden. The school community may also request additional memorials depending on the case.
- Religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate bearing in mind the aided nature of the school.

5.4 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:

- This should be done through the existing request for cover form.

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- This should be done in advance to the Attendance Officer
- In most situations the students will be required to make their own way to the funeral.

6. 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.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

The DSL, Attendance Officer or Head of Year 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

6.2 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. These will be identified as part of the reintegration meeting and passed to the Head of Year and tutor. These dates will be input into the Head of Years and the tutors calendar for the coming year.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will consider the mitigating circumstances when considering sanctions and focus on supporting the student to resolve their emotions and the impact the bereavement may have had on the student.
- 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

7. 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.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

Business manager 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

7.2 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 with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

- Regular meetings with line manager
- Meetings with ELSA or chaplain support if required
- Individual plans being made with the Business manager
- Where appropriate adaptations and amendments can be made to a member of staff's timetable to support a transition back to work.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years by DSL. At every review, it will be approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
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Child Bereavement UK	<p>Helpline: 0800 02 888 40</p> <p>https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</p>
Winston's Wish	<p>Helpline: 08088 020 021</p> <p>https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</p>
Cruse Bereavement Care	<p>Helpline: 0808 808 1677</p> <p>https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</p>
Mind	<p>Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393</p> <p>Further contacts:</p> <p>https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</p>
<i>The Lucy Rayner Foundation</i>	<p>https://thelucyraynerfoundation.com/</p>