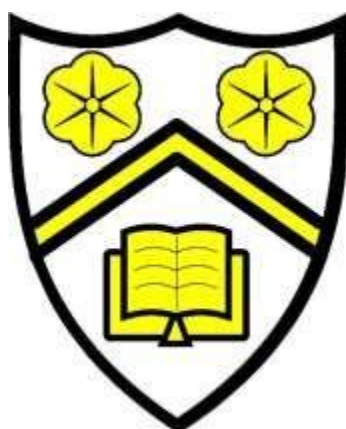


Whitehill Community Academy

Bereavement Policy 2022-2023



Name of Policy Writer/Amendments	Date Written/Amended	Next Review Date
J Roche	November 2016	November 2017
J Roche	November 2017	November 2018
J Roche	Amended May 2018	Annually
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J Roche	September 2019	Annually
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J Roche	October 2022	Annually

Whitehill Community Academy

Bereavement Policy

“Opening minds, unlocking potential, celebrating success together”

Whitehill is committed to enabling children to be **Ready** for a journey of lifelong learning, through an exciting, challenging and engaging school experience; developing **Respectful** children who embrace diversity and individuality; becoming **Responsible** members of society and being a positive influence on future generations.

Statement of Intent

The Academy is fully committed to supporting all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

We believe that the key to becoming a great school is to ensure that all pupils have access to a happy, challenging and safe learning environment. To achieve this we need to nurture a partnership with parents and pupils that is based upon openness, mutual respect and the highest expectations of all.

Our Academy is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of bereavement.

Aims and Objectives

This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances to include:

1. To ensure that there are designated, named members of the school staff who will provide support to pupils and/or staff before (where applicable) during and after bereavement.
2. To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and the community.
3. To set out how to inform pupils/colleagues about a death and what to do when you are required to tell a pupil that someone close to them has died.
4. To identify key staff within the school and clarify the pathway of support.
5. To determine what support will be offered to staff/pupils if they have been bereaved.
6. To set out clear procedures in respect of what do in the case of a crisis or disaster situation on school premises or on a school trip.
7. To ensure that all staff members are trained and are able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief.
8. To ensure that the contact details of local and national support agencies specialising in bereavement such as Cruse Bereavement Care, Child Bereavement UK, Acorn Hospice and Noah's Ark are available.
9. To set out a procedure on how to deal with media interest surrounding a death and designating two/three members of staff to act as media coordinators.

Links to other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding

- Equal Opportunities
- Behaviour
- PSHCE
- Healthy Schools
- Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Rationale

- Every 30 minutes in the UK a child loses a parent;
- 290 children a week are bereaved (approx. 41,000 bereaved children each year);
- Teachers in a Primary school are certain to encounter pupils who have been deeply affected by bereavement;
- 3% of 5-15 year olds have experienced the death of a parent or sibling and many others have lost grandparents;
- It is thought that 92% of children in the UK will experience bereavement before the age of 16;
- Close bereavements bring profound effects and changes to a child's life;
- There is no fixed pattern to how a child will grieve;
- The 'Five Stages of Grief' (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) can be used as a way of starting to understand what the child or young person may be experiencing.

Procedures

When the Academy is informed of bereavement or loss the following actions should be considered:

- Alert senior management.
- Alert class teacher and support staff.
- The family should be contacted for appropriate support if needed/wanted by the appropriate person.
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and how they have been involved.
- Class teacher to observe child.
- It should be explained to the family how the Academy can be involved to support the child and family.
- The importance of 'included care' will be explained – both parties assessing changes in behaviour. (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child may become withdrawn).
- Learning Mentors to employ understanding loss and bereavement resources
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse/Noah's Ark.
- A Senior Manager will act as a link to the family to ensure good communication and facilitate implementation of the bereavement policy.
- Where appropriate, the Principal will make the final decision where or not to inform the school community, however the family's wishes will be taken into consideration. Notifying the school community might be necessary in order to alleviate any risk of rumour circulating which may not be factual and could be upsetting for the family. In some circumstances it will not be appropriate to do this, for example if the death occurred in circumstances likely to stimulate rumour.
- If information is to be given to other parents formally, this will be done by a letter home to the children's parents in envelopes. For young children it would be preferable for this to be given to the parents at the end of the school day when they collect their children.

- If a child has not attended school for a period following bereavement, plans for the child to return to school should be agreed and reassurance given that the family will be contacted if the child is distressed. It may be desirable to include a visit to the child at home by the child's class teacher prior to the return.
- Outside agencies should be contacted if appropriate or if in doubt.

If the death of a pupil or member of staff occurs, this is likely to cause considerable distress to everyone in the organisation and the following additional actions should be taken:-

- Discussions will take place with the family and their wishes taken into account on how and what to tell the school community.
- Arrangements will be made for counselling to be available if necessary. This is more likely in cases of unexpected or violent death. Appropriate agencies outside school will need to be contacted.
- In some circumstances it may be desirable for the Academy to be closed so that as many people as possible can be released to attend the funeral or memorial service if they so wish.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period. There should be systematic observation and monitoring with any signs of complex grieving brought to the attention of the appropriate professional agencies.
- The Academy is also aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information will be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

Common reactions in adults and children

Adults and children can respond in broadly similar ways to loss and bereavement. Reactions will depend on the nature of the incident, their degree of involvement with it and their own personality and coping skills. Reactions may be manifest behaviourally or physically by such symptoms as:

- Tiredness
- Sleep disturbance
- Tension
- Menstrual irregularity
- Difficulty concentrating
- Intolerance
- Shaking
- Tearfulness
- Becoming withdrawn
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Nausea
- Memory difficulties
- Increased sensitivity

The Overall Message in helping bereaved children

- Try to maintain feelings of security, of being cared for, of being loved.
- Maintain all the necessary practical care, focussing on the child's need and routine.
- Be honest and factually correct at the child's level of understanding, do not rush the conversation; pick up on non-verbal clues.
- Continue to talk and communicate honestly and realistically, listen and hear what is being said.
- Remember there are others who can help.
- Don't be afraid to admit to colleagues, family and managers that you can't cope at any particular time.
- It is important to stress the importance of communication between school and home. Without it ultimately both parties could fail the child.
- The Academy also have a clear pastoral system for supporting pupils to achieve their potential.

Child new to the school

The Academy works in partnership with parents/carers. Before children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents should be asked about any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving house etc, new additions to the family) should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

Significant Changes

There are significant changes which can have an effect on pupils. Many people tend to associate bereavement with a permanent deprivation of a loved one through their death. However, it is worthwhile remembering that for many children there are other losses which may be experienced as though it were bereavement. The emotional and behavioural outcomes can be similar to those in the bereavement process. Examples could include the following:

- Divorce
- Death of a pet
- Disabled or seriously ill parent
- Parent in prison
- Changing school
- Hospital stay
- Children in care

These situations may not affect the whole of the class but it may, to a large extent, affect individual pupils. School will develop an action plan to support the individual child. The school should seek assistance from agencies such as educational psychologists, school nurses if a child is struggling to come to terms with a situation that has not been dealt with in school etc.

Traumatic Death

Children, who have witnessed a dramatic death or been involved in a disaster or other trauma, may need specialised treatment. Parents and schools may also need help. These experiences are often too shocking and disruptive to be absorbed and worked through over time.

Procedures in Emergency

An immediate action plan should include:

- The development of routines which ensure that the Principal is informed by parents or other authorities (e.g. police, hospital, social services).
- The Principal verifies information about the child's death before informing teachers and classmates. The Principal gathers as many facts as possible about the event from parents and others.
- The Principal takes responsibility for informing:
Teachers/staff and pupils (assisted by teachers).
- A plan for the rest of the day is activated to include support in the classroom.

Transition

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

Useful Websites

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.cruse.org.uk

www.noahsarkcentre.org.uk

Bereavement Support

Being cut off from family, friends and communities because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is difficult for everyone, but especially for those who are grieving for a loved one. Within this section you'll find information, advice and guidance to help support you at this very difficult time.

Local counselling services for children and young people:

- **The Noah's Ark Centre**: Rainbows is a structured programme for children aged 4-10 to help them talk through their feelings with other children who are experiencing loss such as death or divorce in their family. The Rainbows programme helps by providing a safe setting with adult facilitators and materials, journals, storybooks, games and creative activities to help lead them gently through the grieving process. **Phone: 01422 300 457.**
- **The Samaritans**: whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will talk through it with you. The service is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can ring them on **116 123** or e-mail jo@samaritans.org.
- **Kooth**: a free, safe anonymous mental health community for children and young people aged 10 to 25. It's open until 10pm every evening, 365 days a year. Young people can access Kooth's counselling service, self help resources, peer to peer forums and interesting articles written by young people for young people.
- **Open Minds (CAMHS)**: If you feel you need help and support around your mental health you can contact Open Minds in Calderdale who provide specialist emotional support for children and young people. **Phone: 01422 300 001.**
- **Overgate Hospice**: the new "Hear for you" service provides telephone advice and support for relatives of patients being cared for in any health and social care setting in relation to COVID-19. Relatives and friends of patients experiencing COVID-19, bereaved relatives and friends and health and social care professionals providing a frontline service in response to COVID-19 can all call the support line on **01422 378172**. The support line is open 7 days a week from **10am-6pm**.

National support websites for children and young people suffering loss:

- **Winston's Wish**: information, advice and guidance on supporting bereaved children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak.
- **Childline**: When someone dies, there's no right or wrong way to feel. Everyone experiences loss or bereavement differently. But you don't have to cope on your own. We're always here for you.
- **Hope Again**: is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care. It is a safe place where you can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief, and feel less alone.
- **YoungMinds**: When you lose someone close to you, it's natural to feel sad, depressed, worried or angry. Everyone reacts in their own way. If you're finding it hard to cope, YoungMinds can help you find support.
- **Child Bereavement UK**: They support children and young people up to the age of 25 who are facing bereavement.
- **The Coat I Wear**: Mel Maxwell's comforting book helps children deal with their grief after the loss of a loved one.

National support websites for adults suffering loss

- **CRUSE Bereavement Care**: offers support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Its helpline **0808 808 1677** is open from 9.30am to 5pm Mondays to Friday, with extended opening hours till 8pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. You can also e-mail helpline@cruse.org.uk.
- **Mind**: Provides information on bereavement, where to go for support, and suggestions for helping yourself and others through grief.
- **The Compassionate Friends**: Supporting grieving parents after the loss of a child during the coronavirus pandemic. The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national charity whose members have experienced the loss of a child.

Additional guides for dealing with a death due to Coronavirus

Guidance for helping a child when someone they care about has a very serious Coronavirus illness or has died:

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/belswains-primary-school/UploadedDocument/9258247a6b654c4786df300dfddb46fd/coronavirus-bereavement-and-childrne-guide-for-parents-and-carers.pdf>

Guidance for young people:

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/belswains-primary-school/UploadedDocument/a54369ec1abc45639c011cebad472f78/coronavirus-bereavement-a-guide-for-young-people.pdf>

LETTER TEMPLATE:

(DATE)

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sorry to inform you that a child's parent in (ADD KEY STAGE / YEAR GROUP), at Whitehill Community Academy has recently died.

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. We may feel a variety of emotions: shock, sadness, or confusion. What is most important is that we care for and support each other.

The Pastoral Team at Whitehill Community Academy have made plans to respond to the emotional needs of all pupils, such as classroom debriefing, targeted circle time and (ADD ADDITIONAL INFORMATION). This week the (ADD KEY STAGE) children will be informed and staff members will be available to provide support as needed

If your family has experienced a death or similar loss recently, the death of a parent may bring up feelings about that death. While this may be a normal experience, we want to provide assistance if needed. Please let the Safeguarding and Pastoral team know if there is any additional information the Academy should be aware of so we can provide the support your child needs.

This difficult time can be stressful and confusing. A sudden death may be disturbing to you as well as to your child. It is for this reason that we especially want you to know of our care and support.

Yours Sincerely

Mr Sayles
Principal