



# Bereavement Policy

## Version Control

| Version | Date | Page Number | Section            | Amendment                                  |
|---------|------|-------------|--------------------|--|
|         |      | 2           | Insert 3 paragraph | Paragraph inserted 'Note: Previously.....' |
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## 1. Rationale

- I. At Ickburgh School we recognise that bereavement is an occurrence which could be experienced by members of our school community.
- II. Bereavement might be a more challenging experience when the loss is of a member of our school community, a pupil, a student, a member of the staff team, or a school governor as a result of a life limiting condition, terminal illness or by other causes.
- III. Special schools have a distinctive quality in the very close relationships formed with pupils, students, parents and carers over a long period of time, and so consequently the loss of a member of the school community whether in school, home or a hospice is felt profoundly.

## 2. Purpose

- I. The purpose of the policy is to give staff the confidence to put the school bereavement policy into practice.
- II. It is recognised that following agreed guidelines will help maintain a sense of order and structure at this time, and will enable everyone to feel more comfortable in dealing with death and bereavement.
- III. We recognise that grieving is an individual process and people respond to bereavement and express their grief in different ways.
- IV. This policy provides guidance for managing the aftermath of the death of a pupil, student, a member of the staff team, or a school Governor.
- V. It will address the procedures which should be followed, and ensure that the school can provide the appropriate resources which might be used to prepare for an event or support after it.
- VI. This policy is based on the experience of staff at Ickburgh School, and is seen to be helpful and supportive.

## 3. Informing the school community about a death

- i. Headteacher or representative to discuss the circumstances with the family concerned and take their wishes into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell pupils, students and staff in school.
- ii. Staff - School Day
  - i. In the event of hearing of a death during the school term, it is important that the school day carries on as normally as possible, because this will provide security and stability for all, at a very difficult time.
  - ii. If the news is received during a school day, the class team of the deceased will receive phone call from the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher if the Headteacher is unavailable) at 5.00pm to share the news in the hope that the team will be at home and in a safe and reassuring place to receive such difficult news.
  - iii. It is recognised that many staff and pupils in the school will have built a positive relationship with the recently deceased pupil or staff member, and, the remainder of the school will be informed by the following text message, which will be sent to all other staff members at 5.30pm in the hope that the majority of staff will be at home and in a safe and reassuring place to receive such difficult news.

*TRAGIC NEWS - On <insert date> at <home/hospital>, Ickburgh School and <insert class name> student <insert name> passed away. We have given our condolences to the family, and we will be sending a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the school community. Please remember that employees of Ickburgh School are bound by confidentiality rules and procedures. We know and understand that you might want to support each other by speaking to and messaging each other at this time, we only ask that you don't do so on social media which is a public forum. There will be support and counselling available to you when we return to school. Please take care of yourselves and each other. Ickburgh School*





- iv. Information about the death of a pupil should remain a confidential matter until senior leaders have had an opportunity to inform all staff.
- v. The following school day, the class team of the deceased pupil will be given time out of class the following morning to meet and support each other. There will be a whole school briefing at 3.40pm, to share some more information about the circumstances of the pupil's death (where appropriate), the bereavement support to be provided, and some photos and remembrances of the pupil, but attendance at this briefing will be entirely optional, recognising that some staff members will not be ready for this experience.

*Note: Previously, the news was first shared in a whole school briefing, but it is felt that this event has compounded the trauma of the news by demanding that staff members receive this news in a public forum. A text message, though it might appear to be less human, allows staff members to absorb this news in a private setting and to reach out for support as needed from their loved ones or colleagues.*

- iii. Staff - School Holiday
- iv. If the news is received during a school holiday, the text message above will be sent to all staff members by the safeguarding lead 'on duty'.
- v. Pupils – School Day
  - i. At an appropriate time of the day class teachers will talk to pupils and students and tell them of the death of a child or member of staff.
  - ii. A letter will be sent to parents and carers to inform them of the death, so that they have an opportunity to talk to their child further about this at home.
- vi. Pupils – School Holiday
  - i. If at all possible the school will inform families by post, however this may not be possible due to school closure. Should it not be possible to inform parents/ carers during the holidays a letter will be sent on return to the school.
- vii. School Transport
  - i. Transport Solutions will be informed as soon as possible to avoid the school bus arriving at the family's house to collect a child.
- viii. Hackney Learning Trust
  - i. City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Board - First Access and Screening Team (FAST) are to be informed by the designated safeguarding lead.
- ix. Educational Psychologist
  - i. The Educational Psychologist will be informed by the Headteacher. The school's educational psychologist will support the school in the event of a death and provide the following:
    - counselling for children, parents and staff, individually or in groups
    - psychological advice, for example, on bereavement and grieving processes in children, on post-traumatic stress reactions or on accessing other agencies
    - making resources available to schools that may be useful in supporting children, parents or staff
    - longer term follow up (see appendix)
- x. School Governors
  - i. The chair of Governors will be informed immediately.
  - ii. School Governors will be informed by the Headteacher / representative as soon as feasibly possible.
- xi. Visiting professionals (therapists, specialist teachers, school doctors, Nurse)



- xii. Visiting professionals will be informed by the Headteacher/ representative as soon as feasibly possible

#### **4. Confidentiality and Privacy**

- i. As a school community we show respect for each other and in accordance with school guidance we all endeavour not to announce or discuss the death of a pupil or member of staff on social media.

#### **5. The nature of support offered to staff and the school response to personal bereavement**

- I. Staff will be affected in some way. Each person's experiences and responses will be personal and with this in mind a range of support is offered:
- II. SLT and staff to take time to talk to individuals closely associated with the deceased on a regular basis, and offering support sensitive to the individual's needs.
- III. A space provided designated for the bereaved to sit quietly at lunch and break time.
- IV. A space provided / designated to give staff an opportunity to talk to each other in a confidential manner.
- V. Opportunity to speak to the Educational Psychologist, as part of a group or individually.
- VI. Staff to be supportive of each other at all times.
- VII. A trained member of staff in bereavement counselling to be assigned to provide support or 'look out for' a bereaved member of staff.
- VIII. Three members of staff who are representative of the school community, will be elected to take part in a course on bereavement to support pupils and staff in the event of a death.

#### **6. Support to Pupils and students**

- I. Pupils understanding of death will be closely linked to their cognitive ability. It is important that this is kept in mind when supporting pupils and interaction and support is differentiated.
- II. Create a social story, differentiated and closely linked to children's cognitive understanding of death.
- III. Social play differentiated and closely linked to children's cognitive understanding of death.
- IV. Establish Remembrance table (Reflection Room)
- V. As soon as is practicable create a remembrance table acknowledging the pupil.
- VI. The table provides a focal point for pupils to remember pupil / member of staff.
- VII. Place – items or artefacts the pupil liked on the table
- VIII. Place - a photograph of the pupil on the table
- IX. Place - a memory book for staff and pupils to write messages, poems, or handprints in. Interactive board presentation, Draw or paint/ make pictures and cards to add to the table.
- X. A Class group, staff and family of the deceased are invited to visit and spend time in the reflection room.
- XI. Use resources from Cruise Charity guide to 'Children's Understanding of Death'. (see Appendix)

#### **7. Support to the parents/carers and family members of the deceased**

The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will ensure the parents/carers and family members of the deceased are given information about bereavement support services who might help the family:

<http://www.beh-mht.nhs.uk/patients-and-carers/bereavement-support-organisations.htm>

#### **8. Keeping the school community informed about a wake ceremony, funeral service, and memorial service**

- I. In keeping with the wishes of the family of the deceased the school community, will be notified of the arrangements and family requests, as appropriate.





- II. Staff are strongly advised to adhere to the wishes of the family and be mindful of cultural and religious traditions.

### **9. Making arrangements for the funeral**

- I. In the event of the death of a member of the school community, it is recognised that staff may want to attend the funeral.
- II. At this difficult time, it is important that the school remains open and runs as usual.
- III. If more than three members of staff express a wish to attend the funeral taking place during the school day, a meeting of those staff will take place to nominate the three who will attend.
- IV. The maximum of two members of staff from one class team will be allowed to attend a funeral for the purposes of continuity, and the health, safety and wellbeing of the pupils and staff remaining.
- V. If an agreement is not made, one or two members of the group will discuss the matter with the Headteacher who will make the final decision.
- VI. In this context the representative will review the connection of interested staff to the recently deceased child, or member of staff.
- VII. Staff chosen to attend the funeral do so representing the school.
- VIII. Attendees will pass on their condolences, to the family on behalf of those staff who could not attend due to school commitments.
- IX. Staff who are elected to attend on behalf of the school will take regard for parent's, carers and family wishes and adhere to the customs of the deceased relatives, including wearing appropriate clothes. Staff must remember they are representing the school.

### **10. Making arrangements for a memorial service in school**

- I. Invite parents/ carers / family, friends and visiting professionals of the deceased, who have known the pupil, student, member of staff.
- II. Consider a permanent memorial in school.

### **11. How to deal with media interest in the event of a critical incident**

- I. In the event of a critical incident (tragedy) which gives rise to media interest, for example, death on a school trip, the Headteacher is to seek advice from Hackney Learning Trust press office.
- II. Staff are advised of confidentiality guidance and should not to speak to the press or others outside the school, other than to say, 'no comment!'
- III. Staff may be subject to disciplinary action if it is found that confidential or personal information about the deceased, the family of the deceased, or the circumstances surrounding the death is disclosed.

### **12. What to do if a child or adult dies in school**

- I. If a child or adult dies in school:
  - I. Notify a senior leader immediately, who will remain available to coordinate staff and emergency services.
  - II. Then call the emergency services (ambulance and the police service) so that time of death can be recorded and extenuating circumstances established.
  - III. Then call the next of kin identified on a member of staff's personal records. The caller should only say an incident has occurred with (adults name), and let the person on the line know where they should attend.
  - IV. Then call the FAST team to report a child's death, local authority (SEND Team) and educational psychology service.



- II. On arrival of the ambulance service
  - I. Provide ambulance service with pupils personal details/ or careplan, or member of staff emergency contact.
- III. Scene of incident
  - I. Remove staff and pupil's from the scene of incident and leave untouched (i.e. do not remove equipment, clothing, resources etc.).
  - II. Staff who were in the presence/ hearing distance of a child or member of staff are witnesses to the event.
  - III. Staff who are witnesses may be asked to give a statement to the police and provide a written statement for the school. In view of this all witnesses must remain in school and be willing to cooperate with the police investigation.
  - IV. Witnesses should not discuss the matter with anyone until the police arrive.
  - V. All witnesses are bound by and are obliged to follow the school's confidentiality procedures.

Other related Guidance / Policies

Managing Traumatic Incidents (Hackney Learning Trust)

Guide to death in Service

Leave Entitlement and Arrangements Policy

'Children's Understanding of Death'. CRUISE

### **Process of consultation**

Discussed and coproduced with school union representatives who felt the March 2021 revisions were supportive to staff welfare.

Discussed with staff welfare committee chair and secretary who felt the March 2021 revisions were supportive to staff welfare (not possible to convene with whole committee due to COVID-19 restrictions).

Policy Reviewed by: Joseph Sieber

Designation: Head Teacher

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Adopted by: Pupil, Parent and Curriculum Committee

Chair of Committee: Pat Corrigan .....

Signature: .....

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021