



Great Torrington School

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Approving Committee: **FGB (Resources in future)**

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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 .....	5
5. Follow-up actions and support following a death .....	6
6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement .....	6
7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement .....	7
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	8
9. Links with other policies.....	8
Appendix: useful contacts .....	8

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## 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.

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
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested – or delegate to Pastoral Team.
- 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 Team including Heads of Learning, Pupil Coaches, Hardy Centre Manager and DSL

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 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
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement

## 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.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through regular meetings between the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- 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.

- Those staff who line manage said staff will monitor their colleagues and ensure they have the support needed – contact the Educational Psychologist team/ Well-being at Work/HR
- Line managers to check in regularly with staff members
- GTS staff will complete the National College CPD on Bereavement/MMM/Pastoral team to lead CPD on how to support staff and pupils with bereavement. [The National College](#)

## 4. Immediate actions following a death which involves the whole school community

### 4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The head teacher 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. .
- In the highly unlikely event of news that a child has died and family being out of contact the school would make every effort to ascertain what has happened this could potentially include any of the following courses of action :-
  - Other known family members
  - Police
  - Hospital
  - GP
- In the event of news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made; all staff should be contacted/met with and given a script to say to the pupils. There should be a designated member of staff/place that pupils can go and advise against making comments on any social media platforms. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations

### 4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- The Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- Staff should be informed promptly. This would either be an emergency staff meeting at break/lunch or the end of the day in school, or in the event of this being when school is closed we would use our emergency notification systems in place.

### 4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- Pupils should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision should be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole school approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed.

### 4.4 Informing parents/carers

A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed. This will include explaining the steps you've 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.

- In the event of a suicide we would engage with Samaritans [step-by-step programme](#) which gives specific support to schools.
- In the event of a death due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', [Sudden death - including accidents, suicide and homicide | Child Bereavement UK](#))
- 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 headteacher will respond to requests from the media. Other staff members should not respond to any media requests but should refer enquiries to the headteacher.

## **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.

Pupils in school should continue to have a designated member of staff/place that pupils can go and signposted towards external support.

Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

### **5.2 Timetables**

The school will be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of pupils affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

### **5.3 Tributes and condolences**

GTS is a family orientated school and would want to memorialise the deceased, as long as the family were in agreement. The Pastoral Team would communicate with the family to find a way that would be appropriate and fitting to remember the person's life.

### **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:

Staff should request leave to attend. The headteacher and Governing Body will consider of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.

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

- Pupils' parents should call the school absence line in line with normal absence procedures; absence will be authorised.

## **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**

A member of the Pastoral Team who already has a good relationship with the family/pupil will call after a respectable time to offer their condolences.

Headteacher/AHT Pastoral and Behaviour/Head of Learning 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)
- When a child has been bereaved, it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss. Talking to the pupil about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- 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 – agree with parent/carer how to manage significant dates, Pastoral Team to take a lead on this to be aware and remind staff that this may be a challenging time for the pupil. Log on bereavement calendar
- The school will have a bereavement calendar for a bereaved child so that they can be supported throughout their time with us.
- The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new pupils that transition to GTS and for any pupils that move on to another school GTS will ensure that their Bereavement Calendar is passed on.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that the pupil has support from external agencies where necessary, work closely with the family. and ensure that all teaching staff are kept informed of expectations.
- 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

The Head teacher, (along with supportive colleague if needed) 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:

- A phased return/flexible working hours/reduced hours.
- Referral to OH for external support
- Extended leave without pay.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, or before as necessary, by AHT Behaviour and Pastoral. At every review, it will be approved by the full Governing Body Committee.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Behaviour policy
- Staff Leave and absence policy
- Emergency contact Protocol
- Attendance Policy
- Business Continuity Plan

## Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a>
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a>
FIG (Families in Grief)	<a href="#">Help for grieving children &amp; families   Families in Grief</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telephone: <a href="tel:01237479027">01237 479027</a></li><li>• Email: <a href="mailto:info@familiesingrief.org">info@familiesingrief.org</a></li></ul>