

Prince of Wales Primary School

learning together, growing together



Bereavement Policy

All policies at Prince of Wales reflect our LEARNERS Values system and support our mission statement.

Learning together, growing together.

Reviewed: Autumn 2021

Date of next review: Autumn 2024

Intent:

At Prince of Wales Primary School, we understand that members of our school community face bereavement at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community. Statistics shared by Winston Wish that one child in every twenty nine will be bereaved of a parent. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, parents, governors and the wider school community during and after bereavement.

This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

NB. In this policy, all mentions of 'the family' refer to the family of the deceased individual. The wishes of the family will always be considered when carrying out any of the actions outlined in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2019) 'Keeping children safe in education'

This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

- Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'
- Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

In the event of bereavement within the school community, these are the key roles and responsibilities designated to ensure a clear pathway of support;

If a member of staff is aware of a bereavement they need to inform the head teacher or deputy head teacher if the head teacher is unavailable before sharing this information with other colleagues or community members.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

- act as Key coordinator
- responsible for liaising with all parties, including the Governing body and the LA, critical response from the Educational Psychology Service
- offer specific support to those key staff identified
- ensure implementation of policy

The Governing Body

- ensure all staff are supported
- approve policy and ensure its implementation

Key identified members of staff

- coordinate support and liaison with pupils, staff and families
- have received specific bereavement training and are able to cascade this to other staff
- these key member of staff are identified as the Assistant Head Teacher for Inclusion, Parent Support Adviser, Learning Mentor and the Nurture team

Administrative staff

- provide administration support such as preparation of appropriate documentation, updating of records, preparation of letters etc.
- ensure hands-on information to key members of staff – e.g. contact details, pupil records

Procedure and guidelines

In the event of bereavement within the school community, there are agreed procedures and protocols that have been put in place, which will act as guidelines to ensure that designated persons can act effectively to maintain support for pupils, staff and families in difficult circumstances.

These take the form of;

- steps to follow in the event of the death of a pupil, member of staff or a pupil's close family member
- guidelines for information sharing with pupils, staff and families
- exemplar letters for families

All of these can be found detail in the appendices at the end of this document.

Funerals and school closures

In the event of the death of a pupil or member of staff, the Head teacher may feel it appropriate to organise partial or full closure of the school.

This may be out of respect for the person who has died or in order to facilitate attendance by members of staff at a pupil or member of staff's funeral.

The wishes of the bereaved families will be taken into account when considering funeral attendance and school closure which may result in order to facilitate this. Families will be given as much notice as possible, if the school is to be closed. In the event of full or partial school closure, normal school policies on school closure will be followed.

Appendices

I. Steps to follow in the event of a death

a pupil

a member of staff

a pupil's close family member

II. Good practice and guidelines for information sharing and supporting families, staff and pupils

General guidelines

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Books about death and dying

Appendix I – Steps to follow in the event of a death

Steps to follow in the event of the death of a pupil;

Contact is made with the school from the family regarding the bereavement



Details of the bereavement/information known are reported immediately to Head teacher



Head teacher allocates key tasks ;
communication/liaison with family(ies) involved
sharing of information with staff
sharing of information with pupils
sharing of information with families and school community
support for staff
support for pupil
support for families and community
liaising with the press (if involved)



Contact made with the bereaved family – accurate information gained regarding the death



Plan and prepare information to be shared, including information for staff, telling pupils, letter for families and a press statement if necessary



Inform staff of the situation



Prepare staff for sharing of information with pupils and families



Prepare and send a letter of condolence/card to the bereaved family



Inform parents/carers within the school community of the death by letter



Inform pupils of the death



Ensure significant dates and details are recorded on pupils records/register



Make arrangements for ongoing support of the bereaved family

Consider referral to the additional services/Bereavement Service



Make arrangements for sustained and ongoing support of staff and pupils



Make arrangements for the funeral attendance, with the consideration of school closure depending on circumstances



Make arrangements for school assemblies and memorials

Steps to follow in the event of the death of a member of staff;

Contact is made with the school from the family regarding the bereavement



Details of the bereavement/information known are reported immediately to Head teacher



Head teacher allocates key tasks;

(depending on circumstances, the Governing Body may need to take more of a role in this in order to support the whole staff team)

communication/liaison with family involved

sharing of information with staff

sharing of information with pupils

sharing of information with families and school community

arrangements for class/group/children which the deceased member of staff worked with

support for staff

support for pupil

support for families and community

liaising with the press (if involved)



Contact made with the bereaved family – accurate information gained regarding the death



Plan and prepare information to be shared, including information for staff, telling pupils, letter for families and a press statement if necessary



Inform staff of the situation



Prepare staff for sharing of information with pupils and families



Prepare and send a letter of condolence/card to the bereaved family



Inform parents/carers within the school community of the death by letter



Inform pupils of the death



Ensure significant dates and details are recorded on staff records/register



Make arrangements for sustained and ongoing support of staff and pupils



Make arrangements for the funeral attendance, who will represent the school, with the consideration of school closure depending on circumstances



Make arrangements for school assemblies and memorials

Steps to follow in the event of the death of a pupil's close family member;

Contact is made with the school from the family regarding the bereavement



Details of the bereavement/information known are reported immediately to Head teacher



Head teacher allocates key tasks;
communication/liaison with family involved
sharing of information with staff
support for pupil(s) involved
liaising with the press (if involved)



Contact made with the bereaved family – accurate information gained regarding the death



Plan and prepare information to be shared and with whom, including information for staff and sharing of information with pupils and families, sharing information with those directly involved with bereaved pupil(s)



Inform identified members of staff of the situation



Prepare and send a letter of condolence/card to the bereaved family



Where appropriate, inform parents/carers within the school community of the death by letter and inform pupils of the death (again sharing information with those directly involved with bereaved pupil(s))



Ensure significant dates and details are recorded on pupils records/register



Make arrangements for sustained and ongoing support of the bereaved pupil(s)

Consider referral to other services/Bereavement Service



Maintain regular liaison with staff, to ensure level of support for the bereaved pupil(s), as well as the pupils peer group and staff as necessary



Make arrangements for the funeral attendance if appropriate, with the consideration of who will represent the school, support the family and pupil(s)



Makes arrangements for and maintain ongoing support for the bereaved family as necessary

Appendix II - Good practice and guidelines for information sharing and supporting families, staff and pupils

General guidelines

- ensure accurate details/factual information are recorded in order to avoid rumour and confusion, always obtain and impart factual information – never make assumptions or repeat what has been heard through rumour
- always be clear about terminology – using the word dead and died not passed away or lost and avoid euphemisms
- always used the deceased name when referring to them
- give news of a death sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways and where possible being cognisant of the relationships different people may have had with the deceased
- information sharing within the school community, should always take into the account the wishes of the family of the deceased
- always consider, be aware of and sensitive to religious and cultural beliefs and the implications of these, and seek advise if unsure
- assemblies or memorials are often seen as an appropriate way of saying goodbye or celebrating the life of the deceased, but should always be planned in consultation with bereaved families, respecting their wishes and decisions made together. This may take the form of an assembly, making memory boxes, planting a tree, releasing balloons etc
- be aware that empathetic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some pupils, staff and families require, though referral to or access to more specialist support (LEA Bereavement support service) should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex
- be aware that everyone copes with grief, feels grief and expresses grief in different ways and that grief is a process, it will be on-going and can re surface at any time

Supporting pupils

- the impact of a bereavement follows a child throughout their school life, it is essential therefore that information relating to any bereavement a child has suffered should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points
- when supporting a pupil with the bereavement of a close family member, ensure you have as much information as possible and that you are sympathetic to the beliefs of the family
- nurture intervention/advice/support should be considered for pupils whom are affected by bereavement or identified as needing ongoing support following a bereavement
- Elephant room is identified as a suitable place, for pupils who are particularly distressed, need somewhere quiet, would benefit from a higher level of support or may need time out of class following a bereavement
- a degree of flexibility within the school timetable should be ensured to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by bereavement, but being mindful that minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity
- pupils should always be allowed to ask questions, which should be answered honestly and factually, and to verbalise their feelings, discuss the situation and share their own experiences of death
- pupils should be supported to understand that death is nothing to do with anything

- they have said or done and it is in no way their fault
- pupils should be reassured that not all people who are ill/have an accident will die and many people do get better
- when sharing news of a death within school, pupils should be told as soon as possible – ensuring age appropriateness and with careful consideration as to which pupils need to know, how they will be told, when they will be told, who will tell them etc
- pupils are best told in small and familiar groups by someone they know and trust
- pupils who are particularly affected e.g. in the class of the deceased or whom have had a long term/close relationship with the deceased, who may have been witness to something in the community, should be informed in a smaller group, with a trusted member of staff and highlighted for ongoing support as needed

Supporting staff

- it is essential, in the event of bereavement, that staff are informed as soon as possible and always before the pupils
- the best way to share information should be agreed, this may be in a staff meeting or in smaller groups, whatever is decided, it should take place as soon as possible
- ensure that information reaches **all** members of staff, including those who are part time, off site, peripatetic staff, staff on leave/maternity leave etc - create a list to ensure information is given to **all** staff and plan how staff who are absent from school will be told e.g. phone call, email, text
- ensure a degree of flexibility within the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of staff affected by the situation, but being mindful that minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity for all
- identify/allocate a place where staff can go to have some quiet time if needed
- staff should always be given guidance on words to use and the approach to take when talking with children and families about a bereavement - a pre-prepared script could be used if appropriate – it's hard to find the right words when emotional and in shock
- guidelines on how to talk to pupils about grief should be disseminated, identified members of staff should be given responsibility for supporting other staff and no member of staff should feel at pressure to give support to pupils or other staff if they feel unable to so
- identify individual members of staff who are/feel able to support other staff – identify members of staff who may be more vulnerable e.g. those who live alone, may have worked more closely with the deceased, have been recently bereaved in addition to this bereavement
- make arrangements for sustained and ongoing support of staff – supporting bereaved pupils is very stressful and staff will be managing this alongside their own feelings and emotions
- make available necessary support, including that from outside agencies but also plan in times for checking in with staff regarding well being and welfare of themselves - offering time to share feelings and to talk things through
- if members of staff are attending a funeral, consideration will be given to the support offered afterwards

Supporting families

- ensure when speaking to families, the appropriate person is spoken to – agree a named contact and number to call on – do not leave messages via answer phone or text – just leave brief contact details and ask them to return the call/get in touch, bear in mind that contact with those directly involved can be difficult
- arrange to see the family at home or school, to offer and decide on the level of support needed, including referral to other agencies – identify the member of staff who will offer on-going support to the family where appropriate
- consider with sensitivity religious and cultural beliefs and ensure that the family's wishes are respected with regards to sharing of information within the school community, the attendance of members of the school community at the funeral, possible closure of the school, sending flowers or making collections, the planning of any form of memorial
- contact should be maintained with the family of the deceased, if they would like and for as long as they would like/need

Supporting parents/carers – the school community

- parents/carers being told of a death within the school community should coincide with the pupils being told so that families can support one another and their children
- guidelines for parents/carers on supporting children with bereavement, should be sent with any letters sent home or made available for parent to access at school
- be prepared to not only to offer parents support and guidance on supporting their children with bereavement but to also offer support to them as well

Appendix III - Exemplar letters

Letter for death of pupil

Dear Parents/Carers

Today, your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Class> in <Year group>.

<Name> sadly died from/as a result of *<brief and accurate details as agreed with the family of the deceased child>*. Of course, our condolences are with the <Name> family.

<Name> was a very popular member of the class and will be sadly missed by everyone in school.

Many of the children may have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see the children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure many of the parents/families within our school community will also be saddened by the news.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger or confusion. Children respond in different ways so may experience different feelings, have questions they want to ask whilst alternatively wanting to play or participate in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

The school is offering the relevant support needed for your child and the children have been told that their teachers and adults are willing to try and answer their questions. However, if there is anything more that you or your child needs support with or if you would like to talk to someone regarding this matter, please not hesitate to contact the school and we will be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial in school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name's> life and will keep you informed of the arrangements for this.

Yours sincerely

Letter for death of member of staff

Dear Parents/Carers

Today, we have had the very sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, who has been a <position/job role> at the school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with the <name> family at this sad time.

<Name> was a very popular and much valued member of our school and will be sadly missed by everyone.

Many of the children may have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see the children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure many of the parents/families within our school community will also be saddened by the news.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger or confusion. Children respond in different ways so may experience different feelings, have questions they want to ask whilst alternatively wanting to play or participate in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

The school is offering the relevant support needed for your child and the children have been told that their teachers and adults are willing to try and answer their questions. However, if there is anything more that you or your child needs support with or if you would like to talk to someone regarding this matter, please not hesitate to contact the school and we will be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial in school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name's> life and will keep you informed of the arrangements for this.

Yours sincerely

Letter for the family of a deceased pupil

Dear

We are very sorry to hear of <Name> death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our very best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and teachers. He/She was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help you plan <Name's> funeral or other memorial arrangements, please let us know. In time, we will ensure that anything of <Name's> that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that our thoughts are with you at are this very sad time and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy

Appendix IV - Specialist support services

Enfield Specialist Bereavement Support Service

Enfield Community Services

Cedar House

St Michaels Primary Care Centre

Gater Drive

Enfield

EN2 0JB

Tel: 0208 702 5620

lisa.dodd4@nhs.net

Appendix V - Useful organisations

Winston's wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Child Bereavement Trust

www.childbereavement.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org

Grief Encounters

www.griefencounters.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

www.cruse.org.uk

Birmingham Children's Hospital

rbr@bch.nhs.uk

Childhood Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Children of Jannah (Muslim specific support)

www.childrenofjannah.com

Sands (still birth and neo natal death)

www.uk-sands.org

The Compassionate Friends

www.tcf.org.uk

The child death helpline

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Appendix VI - Professional information and resources

Information packs held in school

- Winstons's Wish - Schools Information Pack
- Winston's Wish - Positive Responses to Death - A Strategy for Schools

Reading list for adults

- A gift for the bereaved parent – Zamir Hussain
- Counselling children; a practical introduction – Kathryn and David Geldard
- Healing children's grief – Grace Hyslop Christ
- Continuing bonds; new understandings of grief – Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silerman and Steven Nickman
- Then, now and always – Julie Stokes

Appendix VII - Resources for children

Books about death and dying

- 'I miss you – a first look at death' - Pat Thomas
- 'Badger's parting gifts' – Susan Varley
- 'My book about a baby who died' – Lynn Weiss
- 'Muddles, puddles and sunshine (Winston's Wish) – Diana Crossley and Kate Sheppard
- 'Water buds and dragonflies' – Doris Stickley
- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst
- 'The lonely tree' – Nicholas Halliday

Supporting Staff, Families and Community during COVID-19 March 2020

We are aware at this difficult time, that our families are more likely to be affected by bereavement.

In light of this affecting our school community, we would contact and liaise with the following:

Director of Education Direct line: 020 83795492 (Peter Nathan)

The EPS Critical Incident Support Service 0208 379 2000 (Suzy Francis)

As well as the Governing Body, staff and pupils as appropriate.

Support for staff:

- Supporting children through illness and bereavement training delivered by Enfield Educational Psychology Service (EPS)
- Access to the Educational Staff Support Helpline run by the EPS

Support for children and their families:

- Access to the Family Support Helpline run by the EPS before school returns

Once school is open:

- Opportunities to talk through Place2Talk, Place2Be or Music Therapy

