



Denefield School

Bereavement Policy

Date of next review	July 2025
Review cycle	Annual
Policy control sheet updated	Yes
Type of policy	Non-Statutory
Policy owner	Headteacher/DSL
Location of policy	School Website

Bereavement policy

1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our 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 students and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the board of trustees
- Provide a roadmap and framework for students 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:

- Consult with members of the senior leadership team with responsibility for welfare, safeguarding and SEND, delegating actions as appropriate
- Liaise with the family of the deceased
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to students 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
- Lead reintegration meetings for students 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 students or staff

2.2 Pastoral support staff: welfare team and house teams

The welfare team work together with heads of houses and have responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved students and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The welfare team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved students
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved students and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of students at funerals (where permitted)

- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved students or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Board of trustees

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

The board of trustees will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through a designated board member conducting regular check-ins with the headteacher or pastoral team. bereavement, 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
- 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. Actions following a death

The school is required to notify the local authority where the child was resident of a child death. This enables support and reviews to take place. Notification is likely to be done by the DSL or a deputy DSL. [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101311/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance.pdf) states:

394. Practitioners in all agencies should notify the child death review partners, via the local CDOP administrator (or equivalent) of the death of any child of which they become aware by using the child death notification form.

In the event of a death of a more personal bereavement (e.g. a member of the student's close family):

- The family will be contacted by pastoral staff or a senior leader to offer support and plan the student's or member of staff's attendance and support at school – these conversations are likely to be over time and as appropriate for the individual circumstances
- Appropriate staff will be informed by pastoral staff or a senior leader, such as the student's teachers and any member of staff who works with the student
- Specific support will be offered by the welfare team, such as a referral to Daisy's Dream, adaptations to the school day or regular check ins with an agreed member of staff

In the event of a death that affects the whole community:

- The headteacher will meet with key staff and create a timeline of action and statements to staff, students and parents and carers. Where possible, the family will be involved in making decisions about communication
- The headteacher will inform school staff via face-to-face staff briefing where possible. This will be communicated to staff via email or text message. If the school is closed an emergency message may be sent to all staff and an online meeting held.

- Communication to students will be either in the form of assemblies (face to face or online), or to individual tutor groups or classes, as most appropriate. If the school is closed, a message may be sent out via email or text message and an online meeting held as appropriate
- Communication to parents and carers will generally be by email. They may be directed to the school website for further information or to other organisations for additional support. Parents and carers will be informed how communication has been with students and what support is available
- A statement will be placed on the homepage of the school website if appropriate
- Only the chair of trustees or the headteacher will respond to media requests
- Consideration of the format of the school day(s) may be made in order to appropriately share information and allow time for students and staff to process and understand the situation
- Students will be informed how they can receive support should they need it, both in the immediate aftermath and the longer term. This may include referrals to the Emotional Health Academy, Daisy's Dream or a counselling service
- A longer-term plan will be created to support members of the school community, for example, Success for Life lessons, assemblies, welfare checks, memorials and events.

In the event of multiple deaths that impact the school community

- Procedures for a death that affects the whole community will be followed, as above
- The local authority will be contacted to request support, such as additional counselling for students and staff
- The headteacher will work with the local authority on a plan for managing media interest

3.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- A member of the senior leadership team will contact the family in the first instance where the family have not reported the death of a student directly. They will confirm the death and offer condolences and support. As appropriate, they will discuss what information should be shared. The family's wishes
- Should parents not be immediately available, the school will attempt to contact another family member where details are available
- Should information be spreading among students or on social media before confirmation of a death can be established, the school will issue a statement to say that they are aware of rumours, are working to understand the situation and will update the community as and when it is appropriate to do so.

3.2 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 refer to the Samaritans [step-by-step programme](#) for schools in conjunction with the procedures within this policy
- If the death is due to homicide or family violence Child Bereavement UK guidance and advice will be sought: [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

3.3 Responding to the media

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

- Only the chair of trustees, the headteacher or a senior member of staff delegated by the headteacher will respond to media requests.
- Other staff members must not respond to requests from the media, or make comments on publicly available social media. They should refer any requests to the headteacher.
- A statement will be issued by the school. Any follow up requests from the media will be considered by the chair of trustees and headteacher, in liaison with the local authority as appropriate

4. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting students and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported, for example:

- Supervision sessions
- Check ins with line managers or senior leaders
- Counselling and support via the Employee Assistance Programme
- Bereavement training for staff as appropriate
- Support from the local authority, for example, educational psychologist team

5. Remembrance

5.1 Tributes and condolences

- The senior leadership team and other key staff will plan how the school community will come together to memorialise the deceased. This may be a memorial service at school, participation in an event such as a charity effort, or tributes made by students and staff
- A memorial book will be available for students and staff to make tributes should they wish to. This will be located in an accessible area with consideration made for queueing and staffing
- Any religious or cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate, in consultation with the family

5.2 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or students are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and students can contribute

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

- The headteacher will communicate expectations to staff
- Staff should request leave using the usual process.
- The school will deliberate requests for leave and take into consideration staffing and safeguarding issues such as availability of staff and cover requirements at school

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

- Parents and carers should contact absence@denefield.org.uk to request leave for their child
- Students should attend school before and after the funeral where possible
- The school may make arrangements for representatives from the school to attend the funeral in an official capacity. Students will wear their school uniform and show respectful and dignified conduct at all times

6. Support for students returning to school after bereavement

Whether a student 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 head of house and welfare manager will meet with the bereaved student and their parents or carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the student 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 students and their parents or carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the student about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the student and relevant staff to ensure support should the student feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the students' parents or carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a student who is vulnerable or has special educational needs or a disability (SEND)

6.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the students' parents or carers to monitor how the student is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and encourage parents and carers to keep the school informed of upcoming dates of note
- We know that grief may impact a student's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will make the student a priority for welfare and checks and intervention and keep lines of communication open with parents and carers. While standards of behaviour will be expected to be maintained, there may be special consideration made in considering appropriate sanctions
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved students 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 HR manager and / or the headteacher 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 students 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:

- Meeting with their line manager to discuss welfare and any necessary considerations, signposting to the Employee Assistance Programme
- Adjustments may be made to timetables and the working day in order to support the member of staff. For example, a phased return to school

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Behaviour and discipline policy
- Mental health policy

10. Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
	https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
Daisy's Dream (local charity supporting children through bereavement)	Helpline: 0118 934 2604 www.daisysdream.org.uk
Employee Assistance Programme (school staff)	0800 028 0199