



**Grange  
Academy**

*Belong • Believe • Achieve*

**Article 16:** *Children have the right to privacy*

**Article 19:** *Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or in mind*

**Article 28:** *Children have a right to a good quality education*

**Article 29:** *Children have the right to an education which develops their interests, talents and abilities*

## **Bereavement Policy**

**Policy Status:** Statutory

**Review Cycle:** 2 Years

**Owner:** Angela Morris  
Acting Head of School

**Date:** March 2022

**Approved by:** Local Governing Body (LGB)

**Date:** March 2022

**Review Date:** March 2024

## **Introduction**

The main aim of this policy is to provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and nonteaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

## **Aims**

At Grange Academy we aim to meet the needs of all pupils and staff. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place on which both the pupil and their family can rely and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a pupil or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

## **Procedures**

Within school we work in partnership with parents and carers, the local community and other agencies. When pupils join the school, we find out as much as possible about every pupil to ensure their academic, social and emotional needs are well met. Parents and carers are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes or background that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies etc) and keep school up to date with information that will support their child's social and emotional needs. If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

## **Family bereavement**

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family will be contacted to ensure facts are accurate and correct
- The family will be asked how much and what the child already knows and how they have been involved
- It will be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family and offer advice
- The importance of working together and liaison will be explained – both parties assessing any changes in behaviour (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the pupil becomes withdrawn)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. Health Workers, Educational Psychological Service, Family Partnership, Social Care
- For a member of staff experiencing close family bereavement, absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate time off discussed and agreed with the Head of School. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate.

## **Death of a child or member of staff**

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action will be considered;

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the pupils in school

- Signposting to Counselling should be shared if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Psychological Service). Also in school 1:1 support may be offered
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate and they wish to do so
- Staff and pupils should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support
- Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers
- The class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family to assist in the planning of the service
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process. It may be decided and agreed that a memory item such as a plant or statue is appropriate in arranging in memory of the pupil or member of staff.

## **Terminally ill pupils/staff**

In the event of a pupil or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/guardians/next-of-kin should always be respected.

Should the pupil wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child's condition. Their timetable may be adapted to suit their needs.

Occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach for some. Sometimes other agencies and support services may be used. 1:1 support will be offered in school.

If a member of staff is terminally ill the head of School/SLT will consult with the member of staff and decide on the appropriate course of action.

## **Return to school**

For the bereaved pupil or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic and cause further worry or anxiety. Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teaching, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/guardians of the bereaved pupil agree). Staff and pupils will be encouraged to show support and compassion and sensitivity.

A returning pupil or member of staff will receive appropriate support and have access to mentoring/counselling service if required.

At Grange Academy we will endeavor to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet structured. Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain.

For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite.

Staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement and keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate.

## Talking to the bereaved pupil

Staff will be available to listen and support if possible, it may be appropriate to arrange one-to-one sessions with the parent/carers consent as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school.

Staff will be calm and show pupils that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions.

If people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling.

Beware of using platitudes e.g. "I know how you feel", (young people may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

Staff may decide further outside support is needed from other agencies and referrals may be made with parents/carers consent.

### Do

- Let the child know that you care
- Make time to be available and listen
- Accept all that the pupil is saying
- Allow them to express their feelings
- Let them know that it is OK to be upset
- Talk honestly
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation
- Be sensitive

### Avoid

- Stopping the child talking/be dismissive
- Asking leading questions
- Telling them how they should or should not feel
- Physical contact
- Changing the subject
- Denying upset/pain and feelings
- Pointing out things for which they should be grateful
- Being frightened of sharing your own feelings

## Responding to suicide

Suicide is a leading cause of death for young people in the UK. Sadly, it is always a possibility that a pupil, parent or member of staff might take their own life. In young people especially, exposure to suicide may lead to increased risk of their own suicidal thoughts.

Schools and colleges play an important role in reducing the likelihood of copycat behaviour and helping recovery by preparing and responding to the situation appropriately.

National guidance - **How to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in schools and colleges** recommends that schools and colleges should aim to respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school/college routine, while facilitating the expression of grief.

At Grange Academy:

- We are aware that suicide is one of the leading cause of death in young people
- We play a vital role in helping to prevent young suicide
- We want to make sure that children and young people at our school are as suicide-safe as possible and that our governors, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff, pupils and other key stakeholders share our commitment to this policy.
- We are committed to tackling suicide stigma. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos
- Our Trust, Governors and Senior Leadership Team will be clear about how we will respond in the event of a suicide.

Notification of a suspected suicide will be made to our Head of School. They will maintain links with the family, child health services and the multi-agency Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). The Head of School and members from the Trust will then be invited to a CDOP Rapid Response Meeting, within 48 hours. Any Information sharing will be with the prior agreement and consent of the family.

The Head of School will then notify other staff members and Governors. This will initially be made directly to those involved with the deceased, followed by other staff members. This will be done accounting for the context.

The following guidance will be used:

- Only include the pertinent facts about the death without the details of the method of death as agreed with the family
- Normalise the emotions experienced in response to the death
- Encourage caring for each other and letting staff know if anyone has concerns about other students/pupils
- Encourage positive ways of managing distress
- Let staff/students/pupils know that support is available and how to access – i.e. School Nurse 'Drop-In' days; the school's CAMHS worker contact days; school's counsellor contact details
- Share useful resources with staff/students/pupils via printed cards, the school website or on notice boards in the staff room
- We will notify our school administration team to ensure standard student / pupil correspondence to the family is stopped.

Depending on the context a whole school approach to notifying other pupils will be put in place. Pupils close to the deceased will be informed by a familiar member of staff individually - ideally face to face.

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or on notice boards: see Appendix 1

- Refer to the death as a 'traumatic death' until the Coroner's verdict has been made public

The Head of School will liaise with the Public Health Suicide Response Lead at the Council as part of the Suicide Response Team and will plan appropriate action and support with collaboration from other support services and agencies.

### **Keep in touch**

Where possible, the provision of some contact and support from teaching staff can be hugely helpful to children and young people who may be feeling anxious and uncertain, or who may be experiencing the illness or death of a loved one.

Keep in touch, perhaps offering scheduled points of contact with you during the week, using agreed social media, apps, and phone calls. For pupils who are known to be vulnerable, offer additional opportunities to check in with a key member of staff and keep in touch with parents and carers especially if you are concerned about their child.

### **Keep a routine**

Try and bring an element of 'normality' to their days by encouraging pupils and parents/carers to continue the school routine from home, and to create some structure to their days, including during school holidays. The support of visuals, schedules and work packs can support with home learning opportunities. Signpost the parents/carers to our school website for further useful information.

### **Listen and reassure**

Acknowledge how strange and difficult this situation is, rather than trying to make it better. Listen to their worries and fears: these are real and we can't take them away, but it will help children if someone they know and trust hears them. Reassure them when you are able to do so honestly.

Be as clear as possible what help is available, both from school pastoral staff and externally within the wider community.

## Appendix 1

### Useful Websites for dealing with loss and bereavement:

- NHS Choices (link opens in new window) has lots of useful information about bereavement support
- Age UK (link opens in new window) has useful advice on coping with bereavement and how to get support, including personal stories from other people who have experienced the death of a loved one which may help you feel that you are not alone. They also offer advice on accessing counselling services and have produced a factsheet called You Are Not Alone(link opens in new window)
- ACAS (link opens in new window) provides advice to employees on their right to take time off work following bereavement

### Websites updated with Coronavirus specific advice:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-pupils>

### Useful Contacts and Links:

<http://chums.uk.com/bereavement-service/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/eastern-england/bedfordshire>

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

[www.harmless](http://www.harmless)

## Appendix 2

### Books dealing with death and loss

- As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley
- Muddles, Puddles, and Sunshine – Diana Crossley
- We all Grieve (for children with SEND) – Winston's Wish
- The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley  
I Miss You - First Look at Death - Pat Thomson
- Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss  
Michaelene Mundy
- Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide  
- Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley
- The Goodbye Boat - Mary Joslin
- Extra Special: For When Someone You Love Dies - Anna Payne
- Grandpa- John Burningham
- Always and Forever – Alan Durant
- The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside
- What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies? – Trevor Romain
- Badger's Parting Gifts- Susan Varley
- Saying Goodbye to Daddy – Judith Vigna
- Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children



## Appendix 3

### Support and Further Suggestions for Teachers

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement.

It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's development and emotional needs.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death will disrupt the family for many months; in fact the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to
- acknowledge the child's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviours such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness.
- The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, experience attachment issues, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused and unsafe.
- The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the dead person or child. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.
- Teachers should remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family, looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children.
- Teachers may require their own support structures. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining.

## Appendix 4

### Remembering - Collaborative projects for the school community (from Child Bereavement UK)

If a pupil or member of staff dies, the school community may welcome a collaborative project to help to remember the person who died, creating something positive for everyone to share with consent from family. In this way, pupils and staff may feel more connected to each other and take comfort in working together, even though they maybe physically separated. The finished project could be shared within the school and, if appropriate, with the family of the person who died.

#### Collaborative project ideas:

- Audio or film messages which could be collated in classes, tutor groups, year groups or as a whole school message. These could also be recorded and sent in by digital means.
- Individual works of art, which could be based on a common theme such as a season, time of day, special place, sport, hobby or interest. These could be uploaded to a virtual gallery.
- Compiling a cookbook in memory by contributing favourite recipes.
- Composing a piece of music using instruments, household items, percussion and/or singing.
- Writing individual lines of poetry which could form a remembrance poem.
- Contributing to a book of condolence.
- Writing, recording or drawing messages for the family of the person who died.
- Making a jigsaw wall for which pupils write messages or create decorated tessellating shapes, such as paper jigsaw pieces, which can be put together on a wall in school when everyone returns.
- Setting up an online memorial or fundraiser in memory.
- Helping other people by sharing ideas about what has helped them at this difficult time, and creating an information guide to help bereaved pupils in other schools. Some of these project ideas may also be helpful suggestions for a grieving family, as a way of connecting extended family members and friends when they are not able to attend a funeral or visit each other.