

# Donnington Wood Infant School & Nursery



## Bereavement Policy

Coping with death in school

<b>Date of Policy Creation</b>	June 2017	<b>Named Responsibility</b>	Headteacher – Mrs C Boddy
<b>Date of review completion</b>	February 2025	<b>Named Responsibility</b>	Resources Committee
<b>Inception of new Policy</b>	April 2025	<b>Named Responsibility</b>	Resources Committee
<b>Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body</b>	April 2025	<b>Review due</b>	April 2028

Every death in the school community, expected or sudden, presents real challenges. This guidance is intended to help the school community to respond appropriately and sensitively at this challenging time.

### **Aim**

This policy aims to support the emotional and physical wellbeing of bereaved pupils and their families, from the early days of a bereavement onwards.

It can be shared with bereaved families, to help explain what our school is trying to do to help, and how we will do that.

### **Objectives**

We will have robust procedures that enable us to communicate with, and support, bereaved pupils and their families, both before, and after, a pupil's return to our school.

Our procedures will help bereaved children and their families:

1. **Be safe** – with their welfare supported
2. **Be involved** – be given information and choices
3. **Feel connected** – with support from people they trust and can help
4. **Understand, and be understood** – particularly regarding their reactions, feelings and thoughts
5. **Be respected** – have their identity and family context acknowledged
6. **Thrive** – within our supportive education setting.

All bereavements, in all families, matter to our school equally.

- Every bereavement is unique, and results in different challenges.
- Sometimes, more than one person dies suddenly in a family, or a family faces other difficult challenges, such as injury, or another life challenge.
- Every family is unique, and their needs deserve to be understood and met.

**When the whole school may be affected by the death of a pupil, a pupil's parent or a member of staff.**

If a pupil is suddenly bereaved, we will commit to supporting both them and their family in the following ways.

1. Establish a core group of staff responsible for communication and co-ordination of support offered. This should include a main point of contact.
2. In the days after the death, but before a bereaved pupil returns to education, a nominated person with experience and skills in listening and empathetic support, will contact the family to:
  - a) Acknowledge the bereavement, offer the school's condolences, and listen to their story of bereavement, if they want to tell it, in confidence;
  - b) Establish the family's initial wishes regarding what the child, wider school community, local authority and media (if applicable) should be told about the death;
  - c) Offer time for the family to reflect on information they may wish to keep private, and a future time to talk about it further, if necessary;
  - d) Offer a point of contact and explain ongoing support the school can offer; and listen to the family's views on the pupil's emotional needs;
  - e) Offer future availability, as required, to discuss anything the family may wish to, relating to the pupil's welfare, and explaining days and times available;
  - f) Offer bereavement resources that are age-appropriate and signpost to online advice and relevant agencies;

- g) Offer the opportunity, at a time and place agreed with the family, for a teacher (or other school representative who the pupil knows and trusts), to meet with the pupil directly, accompanied by any family member/s, to explain what will happen when the pupil returns to school, and who will support them in school;
  - h) Establish the family's wishes regarding funeral arrangements and find out if the family would like staff and individual pupils to attend.
  - i) In consultation with the family, decide if the school should have a memorial service and/or a more lasting memorial.
  - j) Signpost to agencies that can support bereaved families; and
  - k) Make clear the names of anyone else who is available to communicate with the pupil's family, and find out who, within the family, wishes to liaise with the school.
3. In the days after the death, we will inform staff members and pupils. This will be done in an age-appropriate and sensitive way, considering confidentiality, potential stigma surrounding the cause of death and the family's wishes (as established with them). It is important to be open and honest with all members of the community, remembering that grief is painful but normal and healthy.
4. When the pupil returns to school we will:
- a) Determine the date of that return in discussion with the family, reflecting on the needs of the pupil;
  - b) Acknowledge their bereavement directly with them;
  - c) Discuss collaboratively with the pupil, family and our staff what we can do to best support them; and
  - d) Work to enable the pupil's re-integration into 'normal' school routines and create a safe and secure environment for them.
5. For a bereaved pupil's remaining time in our school we will:
- a) Ensure significant dates (such as death anniversaries, birthdays and culturally-significant dates such as annual festivals) are recorded and considered;
  - b) Allow opportunities for reflecting on the death, through encouraging an ongoing and open dialogue with the pupil, and with their family; and
  - c) Consider a pupil's bereavement when planning school activities that might trigger thoughts or feelings about the bereavement and engage the pupil and their family in discussions regarding the pupil's involvement, providing information and choice.
6. When helping a bereaved pupil we will:
- a) Ensure they know who they can reach out to for support and how to access this help in ways that are easy and discreet;
  - b) Offer them opportunities to express their reactions, feelings and emotions about their bereavement, in ways they want to, safely and confidentially;
  - c) Offer a safe and supervised space where a pupil can go if they need time out from a classroom or playground because of their bereavement;
  - d) Use age-appropriate bereavement resources available to us from child-specific bereavement charities and review and update a list of resources are available on an annual basis;
  - e) Be aware of the pupil's family circumstances, including their cultural background, and its relevance to their bereavement;
  - f) Be on the look out for changes in behaviour that may be a sign of a mental health condition, or other illness or risk to health and safety; and
  - g) Signpost to support for the wider family, as well as the pupil, through the local authority, in order that the family unit work together where necessary.

7. To enable and support our staff, we will:
- a) Ensure staff involved in planning school activities and lessons are helped to:
    - i. identify content that may be triggering for children who have been bereaved; and
    - ii. consider whether to avoid this content or manage its delivery with care and sensitivity, in line with point 5c) above.
  - b) Provide bereavement training and refresher bereavement training, specific to supporting children/young people, and specific to bereavement care and mental health; and
  - c) Give supportive HR management and peer support to staff who liaise with bereaved families.
8. If a suddenly-bereaved child or young person is showing signs of suffering from a mental health condition, or other illness, or any indicators or risks of harm, we will ensure that information is shared with the family, appropriate agencies and managed appropriately.
9. We will, annually:
- a) Review age-appropriate bereavement tools, such as websites, books and other resources, and ensure we have books and website lists we need;
  - b) Review a list we maintain of national and local age-appropriate services that help children and families who are suddenly bereaved, such as charities and mental health services, and understand what they do, so we can appropriately signpost

**When an individual pupil is affected by a bereavement which may not impact on the whole school.**

- Gather the facts and liaise with the family to find out what the pupil understands.
- Let the pupil know, in a sympathetic manner, that you are aware that someone close to them has died.
- Dedicate a member of staff to make daily contact with the pupil, whilst allowing the pupil to seek support elsewhere.
- Maintain routines but adjust expectations.
- Offer 'Pupil & Family Support' dependent on need eg resources, 1:1support

More specific support and advice is available from :

**Winston's Wish** [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) 08452 030405 e-mail [ask@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org.uk)

**Hope House Children's Hospice** tel. 01691 672618 e-mail [kay@hopehouse.org.uk](mailto:kay@hopehouse.org.uk)

**CRUSE** [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk) CRUSE Youth Helpline 0808 808 1677 Mon-Fri 9.30 - 5pm