



Bereavement Policy

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Bereavement Leave Policy

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1. Statement of intent

- 1.1** At the de Ferrers Trust, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community, We understand the importance of providing support to students, staff, governors and the wider community during and after bereavement.
- 1.2** This Policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.
- 1.3** N.B. 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 outlines in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

2. Legal Framework

- 2.1.** 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
 - Equality Act 2010
 - DfE (2018) ‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’
 - DfE (2019) ‘Keeping children safe in education’
 - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) ‘Good Work Plan’
 - The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020
 - Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018
- 2.2.** 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’
 - Samaritans (2017) ‘Help When We Needed it Most’
 - Child Bereavement UK (2018) ‘Schools’ Information Pack’
- 2.3.** This policy operates in conjunction with the following school or trust level policies:
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
 - Behavioural Policy
 - Anti-bullying Policy
 - Absence Policy
 - MAPP Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. The Trust will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness.

3.2. The Principal will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate.
- Informing governors and staff when a death occurs and arranging for students to be informed, as appropriate and with approval from the family.
- Being the first point of contact for staff, students and parents directly involved in a death, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.
- Responding to any enquiries from the wider school community, after liaison with the Chief Executive or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved students and to deliver sensitive news.

3.3. Key Staff will be responsible for:

- Undertaking bereavement support training and conducting in-school training to share their knowledge with other staff.
- Supporting the Principal in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Supporting staff, students and parents following a death, as directed by the Principal.
- Supporting other staff members with communicating the news of a death.
- Making referrals for students, staff and other members of the school community to receive support.

3.4. Please refer to all media enquiries to the Chief Executive who will be responsible for:

- Liaising with the media as required.
- Monitoring media and social media activity regarding the death.
- Respecting the family's wishes in relation to what information can be provided to the media.

3.5. All members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the Principal or key staff.
- Seeking support from key staff as appropriate.
- Supporting their colleagues and students following a death, as appropriate.

4. The initial response

4.1. Death of a child / student

- School to verify information regarding the circumstances.

- School to inform Chief Executive.
- School to contact family to understand how much they wish to disclose to the school community.
- School and Trust Central (C.E.) to write to the family to express condolences.
- Notify staff, preferably through the school's phone tree but by email if this seems appropriate.
- Notify children/students and the school community by letter (exemplars available) bearing in mind the outcome of point 3, above.
- Named person to contact the family regularly to check how they are and if there is anything the school can do to help, initially every two weeks and after a period on a monthly basis unless the family requests otherwise. This should be reviewed regularly in discussion with the family.
- Assemblies, memorials, lessons etc. should be considered and planned for when schools reopen after the pandemic has ended.
- Counselling should be offered generally, and arrangements put in place to ensure this happens when schools reopen, if necessary.

4.2. Death of a parent or carer

- School to verify information regarding the circumstances.
- School to inform Chief Executive.
- School to write to the family to express condolences.
- Notify staff by email.
- Be prepared to speak to children/students in assemblies once schools reopen.
- Support plan to be put in place for any children/students involved.

4.3. Death of a member of staff based in school

- School to verify information regarding the circumstances
- School to inform Chief Executive
- School to contact next of kin to understand how much they wish to disclose to the school community
- Notify staff as quickly as possible and advise not to publicise on social media
- School and Trust Central (C.E.) to write to next of kin to express condolences
- School to contact the Director of HR (copying in C.E) to write to next of kin and inform them of arrangements regarding pay and pensions etc.
- Notify children/students and the school community by letter (exemplars available), bearing in mind point 3, above
- A colleague should be asked to keep in regular contact with the next of kin and to act as a point of contact for any eventuality. Contact should be maintained on a fortnightly basis initially moving to monthly contact.
- Assemblies, memorials, lessons etc. should be considered and planned for when schools reopen after the pandemic has ended.

- Counselling should be offered generally, and arrangements put in place to ensure this happens when schools reopen, if necessary.

4.4. Death of a member of the Trust Central Team

- Line Manager to verify information regarding the circumstances.
- Line Manager to inform Chief Executive.
- Ian to contact next of kin to understand how much they wish to disclose to the Trust schools.
- Chief Executive to notify all staff as quickly as possible (bearing in mind point 3, above) and advise not to publicise on social media.
- Chief Executive to write to next of kin to express condolences.
- Line manager to ask Director of HR to liaise with next of kin and inform them of arrangements regarding pay and pensions etc.
- A named colleague should be asked to keep in regular contact with the next of kin and to act as a point of contact for any eventuality. Contact should be maintained on a fortnightly basis initially moving to monthly contact.
- Counselling should be offered generally, and arrangements put in place to ensure this happens when schools reopen, if necessary.

5. Informing staff and governors

5.1. Staff and governors will be informed of the death before students.

5.2. All staff and governors will be invited to a meeting by the principal as soon as practicable.

5.3. Absent staff and governors, including part-time and peripatetic, will be identified so they can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged.

5.4. Any information provided to staff and governors during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.

5.5. During the meeting, the Principal, with the support of key staff, will:

- Explain what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- All time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
- Designate a member of staff as media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media as required.
- Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and governors.
- Discuss the arrangements for informing students, including whether all students will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.

5.6. Staff members that will be responsible for informing students about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what students should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions.

5.7. The Principal and relevant key staff will create the script, with input from the family.

6. Informing students

6.1. The Principal will have a discussion with the family about whether all students need to be informed about the death.

6.2. If the death affects the whole school, e.g., the death of a staff member or student, the Principal will strongly recommend to the family that all the students should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of students.

6.3. The Principal will make the final decision regarding which students will be informed.

6.4. Where possible, students will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff that is familiar to them at the same time, e.g., during form time.

6.5. Students with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs include the following:

- Students that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died.
- Students with a history of loss.
- Students with SEND.
- Students who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour.

6.6. Staff responsible for informing students will use the script provided to them.

6.7. To ensure all students are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which script to use for which year group.

6.8. Where possible, a member of key staff will be present when students are told about a death so they can help with answering any questions.

6.9. Students will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.

6.10. Any questions that are asked by students will be answered factually.

6.11. Students will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

7. Informing students in a large group

- 7.1.** If it is not possible to inform students about a death in small groups, the Principal, in communication with the family, will decide if it would be appropriate to inform students in a large group, e.g., during an assembly.
- 7.2.** Where an individual student has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to attend the assembly and, if they do not want to be involved, appropriate support will be arranged for the student during and after the assembly.
- 7.3.** The Principal will tell the family and, where relevant, the bereaved student exactly what they will say and to whom.
- 7.4.** The Principal, with support from relevant key staff, will deliver the information to students,
- 7.5.** After students have been informed, they will be given time to express any thoughts or feeling about what they have been told.

8. Informing parents

- 8.1.** The Principal will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.
- 8.2.** If the death affects the whole school, e.g., the death of a staff member or student, the Principal will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.
- 8.3.** A nominated member of staff will compose a letter to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting students, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to.

9. Funerals

- 9.1.** If appropriate, the Principal will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or students are able to attend the funeral.
- 9.2.** With the family's approval, the Principal will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and students may want to attend.
- 9.3.** The Principal and Chief Executive will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- 9.4.** Transportation to and from the funeral may be arranged for staff and students, as appropriate.
- 9.5.** Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

10. The media and social media

- 10.1.** Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- 10.2.** Only the Chief Executive will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and students will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.
- 10.3.** Staff, governors and students will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the Principal.
- 10.4.** If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Principal and media spokesperson will release a statement on the school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.
- 10.5.** If staff, governors or students find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the Principal. If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 10.6.** If a student is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Behavioural Policy.

11. Support for the family

- 11.1.** The Principal will be the main point of contact between the school and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary.
- 11.2.** The Principal will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them.
- 11.3.** The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.
- 11.4.** Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support could include the following:
 - Sending a letter of condolence.
 - Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.

- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school.

12. Support for staff

- 12.1.** Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend of the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place.
- 12.2.** The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Principal, and may include the following:
- Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own.
 - Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered.
 - Organising bereavement leave.
- 12.3.** Staff who lose a child under the age of 18, or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy, irrespective of how long they have worked at the school, will be given a minimum of two weeks' paid bereavement leave.
- 12.4.** Staff may take bereavement leave as either a single block of two weeks, or as two separate blocks of one week, each taken at different times across the first year after their child's death.
- 12.5.** Any member of staff who loses a child under the age of 18, and has been employed at the school for six months or more, will be able to claim statutory pay for the period of bereavement leave.
- 12.6.** Any member of staff who loses a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or during maternity leave, will not lose their entitlement to maternity leave and pay.
- 12.7.** Where staff are dealing with the death of someone outside of the criteria above, the usual compassionate leave allowances apply per the Absence Policy.
- 12.8.** Staff members will be given information about the in-school and external support they can access.
- 12.9.** Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or make a referral to a member of key staff.

13. Support for students

- 13.1.** Where a student has experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member, a member of staff that is familiar with the student will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the student will be made aware of who the staff member is.
- 13.2.** The Principal will contact the student's family to discuss whether the student will be attending school.

- 13.3.** Any support put in place for a student will be student-led, based on their needs and wishes.
- 13.4.** When deciding what support will be put in place for a student, the impact the death will have on the student will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:
- The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g., was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
 - The relationship between the student and the person who has died.
 - The ability of the student's family to support them following the death, e.g., if a student's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the student?
 - Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
 - The support the student has from their peers and other organisations and people.
 - Characteristics of the students, including their age and any SEND they have.
- 13.5.** The student will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate.
- 13.6.** If a student chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and staff members will be made aware that the student may not be able to work to their usual capacity. The designated staff member will keep in communication with the student's family to inform them about how the student is doing.
- 13.7.** If the student is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told. The designated staff member will make regular contact with the student during their absence.
- 13.8.** The Principal, designated staff member, student and the student's family will make arrangements for the student's return to school, e.g., a phased return.
- 13.9.** If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the student will take an exam, the Principal will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations apply.
- 13.10.** If a student misses an exam due to the death of a close family member or friend, the Principal will report this to the appropriate exam board who will then make a decision as to whether special considerations can be applied.
- 13.11.** Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved student will be dealt with in line with any Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

14. Support for all students

- 14.1.** All students, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g., the death of a staff member.
- 14.2.** Students will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of staff. Staff will talk to students about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.
- 14.3.** Following a death in the school community, Students will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g., remembrance assemblies.
- 14.4.** Staff will identify any students that may need more direct support and make a referral to the Principal who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with key staff.

15. Behaviour and SEMH issues

- 15.1.** Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a student may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:
 - Inability to concentrate.
 - Lack of motivation.
 - Tiredness and irritability.
 - Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks,
 - Inability to take others' feelings into account.
 - Anger, frustration or aggression.
 - A general change in behaviour, e.g., becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn.
 - Anxiety.
 - Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them.
 - Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness.
- 15.2.** The student's designated staff member will keep in contact with the student's family and share information about how the student is behaving at school and home.
- 15.3.** Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved students will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behavioural Policy.
- 15.4.** A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
- 15.5.** Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved student is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the [Anti-bullying Policy](#), taking into account the student's needs and circumstances.
- 15.6.** All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved student is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social

development and will refer the student to key staff who will put appropriate support in place.

15.7. The school's [SEMH Policy](#) will be followed to ensure students that may be vulnerable to developing or experiencing SEMH issues following a bereavement can be identified and appropriately supported.

16. Specific circumstances

16.1. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the school community and individual students; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.

17. Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live

17.1. If a student has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place.

17.2. A member of key staff will meet with the student [fortnightly](#) to provide the student with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.

17.3. All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the student is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to key staff who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

18. Students with a life-threatening illness

18.1. Students with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.

18.2. The Principal, the student and their family, and other relevant staff members (e.g., a member of key staff) will decide how to share the news that a student is terminally ill with the school community.

18.3. Other students will be informed about how they can best support the student in the most appropriate way.

18.4. If the student is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the student will be identified and the Principal will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

19. Suicide

19.1. The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.

19.2. The Principal, or other appointed member of staff, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.

- 19.3.** If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.
- 19.4.** If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the Principal will check with the police before speaking about the death with students who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- 19.5.** Staff will be told about the death first.
- 19.6.** The script that staff will use to inform students of the death will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the suicidal act itself.
- 19.7.** Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any students and staff who require it.
- 19.8.** Liaison with the media will be handled in line with this policy.
- 19.9.** Any information distributed to the school community and media regarding the death will:
- Be factually correct but not include detail of the cause of the death or method used.
 - Not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death.
 - Not include details of any suicide note.
 - Not include speculation over the motivation for suicide.
- 19.10.** Research indicates that students that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff will report any concerns about students to the Principal and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with any school [SEMHS Policy](#).
- 19.11.** Any memorial activities conducted by the school will be held within two weeks of the death; following this, any memorial material will be given to the family.
- 19.12.** Permanent memorials will not be held at the school; however, the school may set up a memorial on the website that will be moderated by a designated member of staff and removed after an agreed time.
- 19.13.** Students and staff will be warned about the risks of un-moderated online memorials (e.g. those on social media), such as their comments becoming public without their permission and online memorials attracting negative comments.

20. Cultural and religious behaviours

- 20.1.** The school will keep in mind the cultural attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will make sure these needs are taken into

consideration when putting support in place for those affected, including the length of bereavement leave for members of staff.

21. Forces' families

21.1. The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' students will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g., commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for students as required.

21.2. Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' students, particularly during times of change.

21.3. Bereaved forces' students will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated area in school that the student can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

22. The death involving murder or manslaughter

22.1. The Principal will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.

22.2. A designated staff member will be available to talk to the student to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.

22.3. Research indicates that students that have been bereaved due to murder or manslaughter can be at significant risk of developing PTSD. Any concerns relating to the student will be addressed in line with the [SEMH Policy](#).

22.4. Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

23. Remembrance activities

23.1. Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g., a remembrance assembly.

23.2. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.

23.3. All members of the school community, including staff, governors, students and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities.

23.4. All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

24. Managing transitions

24.1. Information about students that have been bereaved will be recorded.

24.2. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:

- If the student moves school.
- When the student moves to [secondary school](#).
- If the student moves class.
- When the student will be taught by a new teacher.
- [\[Secondary schools and sixth forms\]](#) Good communication will be established with feeder schools so students that have experiences bereavement can be identified.

25. Teaching about bereavement and grief

- 25.1.** Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death.
- 25.2.** Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved students they are teaching.
- 25.3.** Bereaved students and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required.
- 25.4.** Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the student and will work with the student to design activities that the student feels they are able to get involved with.
- 25.5.** Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

26. Staff training

- 26.1.** Key staff will receive training in bereavement support.
- 26.2.** Key staff will organise whole-school training sessions to share their knowledge with all staff members, including support staff, regularly.
- 26.3.** If any members of staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to students or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will speak to the Principal who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.
- 26.4.** The Principal will check if the staff that work for third party providers that deliver extra-curricular activities for students have received bereavement training and will recommend them to do so if this training has not been undertaken.