

Great Bardfield Primary School



Bereavement Policy

Approved by: Elizabeth Crow (Headteacher)

Ratified by Governors: March 2024

Next review due by: March 2026

POLICY STATEMENT:

We acknowledge that death, while being the inevitable end of life, is often unexpected and traumatic. Its unpredictability can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole school community.

We acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.

We acknowledge that the communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school via telephone, email, text or school website.

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for affected pupils to share their feelings within the school environment, supported by trained staff where and when appropriate, through the use of age related structured programmes provided by Child Bereavement UK. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

Should we receive the news of a death, the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (*It is essential to have the facts confirmed*)
- Share the news as soon as possible with the Headteacher or senior member of staff.

The Headteacher will consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of relevant guidance and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.

THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A PARENT OR CLOSE RELATIVE (whilst a pupil is in school)

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member breaks the sad news. If this is not possible the Headteacher or Senior Member of staff will break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes.

We will:

- Encourage staff to voice any concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school.
- Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress.
- Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way by either letter, email or telephone depending on the circumstances
- Ensure time for grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.

THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE PUPIL

Should we receive such news, members of a *Bereavement Team* will be called together (made up of The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Senior Teacher, Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor). The team will be briefed with the salient facts and decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident. The Headteacher will seek advice from the Critical Incident Team at Essex County Council

The team will consider:

- Who will contact parents, if necessary?
- Who will meet with parents who arrive at school? Where?
- Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. **The school will work with The Critical Incident Team at Essex County Council to formulate a response to the event.**

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff who will be supporting the pupils but also may be grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the Headteacher (and/or the Deputy Head/Chair of Governors as appropriate) will:

- Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- Allow time for collaborative grieving amongst the staff.
- Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made to the children in their classes.
- Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve

the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way. Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death.

GUIDANCE FOR DELIVERING THE INFORMATION

Should we need to break sad news to children we will follow these principles:

- *Whoever is giving the news should prepare themselves with what to say.*
- *Don't be afraid to show emotion - this just shows that you are human but can throw you if you are not expecting to react in this way.*
- *Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.*
- *Be honest, give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.*
- *If known, explain how, where and when the death occurred in age appropriate terms. (If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct.)*
- *Talk briefly about the person who has died without eulogising them.*
- *Share knowledge of any arrangements already in place as appropriate.*
- *Close by acknowledging that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is okay.*
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MEMORIALS and FUNERAL SERVICES

Should we need to consider our involvement with any funeral services or memorial services or memorials, we will ascertain the family's wishes in respect of attendance / involvement of the school in funerals. The family may welcome members of the school community, or wish to keep things private.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

We acknowledge our responsibility to 'keep a special watch' on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school, in the future, at special times of year and at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns.

MANAGING ANTICIPATED DEATH AND THE TERMINALLY ILL

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support children and adults within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil's sick relative or friend
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family's wishes)
- Never give false hope to the child or young person
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so

THE PLACE OF DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During November each year we will hold a special assembly of Remembrance as appropriate, to celebrate the life of those who have sacrificed their lives in conflict, so that we may live in peace. We will remember the anniversary of the death of a member of our school community, with an agreed course of action, in consultation with the family of the deceased.

We will ensure we have approval from the family of the deceased to record the deceased name in a school memorial garden / memory tree.

LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through Child Bereavement UK

<https://directory.childbereavementuk.org/organisation/the-yo-yo-project-chelmsford/>

