

# Hose Church of England Primary School



# Bereavement Support Policy

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart" Colossians 3.23.*

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Chair of Governors: Emily Greasley

**Policy written by: Headteacher**

**Review: April 2029**

## Rationale and Aims

Bereavement affects everybody at some time and our schools aim to provide the best support for its community members during times of bereavement. Death is something that most people choose not to think about so, when faced with it, we often find ourselves ill prepared. The purpose of this Bereavement Support Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

We recognise that every bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved. If there has been a bereavement or significant loss in a family we will seek their advice to help us avoid saying anything that could confuse or upset the child or add further to the distress of those family members most affected. We will always listen, sensitively support and encourage parents, carers or family to tell us of any happenings in their child's life that may affect their child's emotional state but we recognise we will never be told everything.

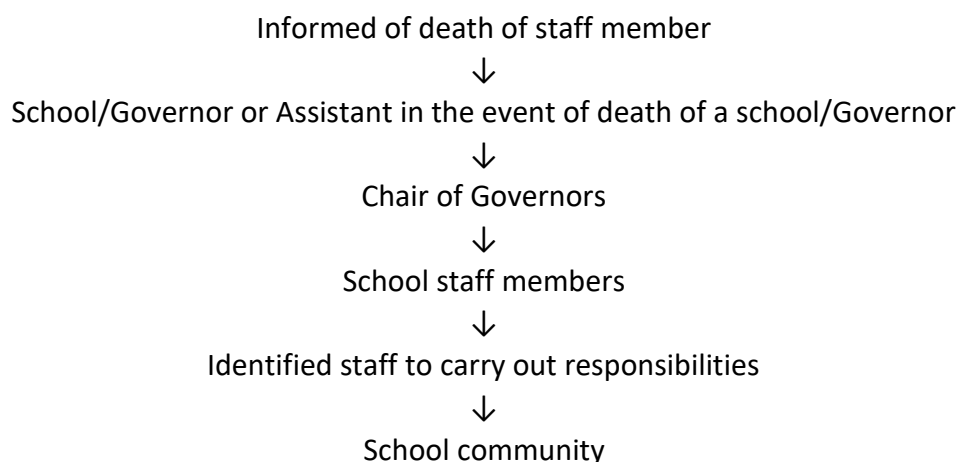
We aim to have suitably trained staff in our schools who understand the complexities surrounding bereavement, and can help support families at times of bereavement to ensure that schools do what they can to best meet the needs of the bereaved.

It is important that children are helped to understand bereavement in clear and unambiguous ways, and given opportunities to experience the full range of emotions that may accompany bereavement within a safe and supportive atmosphere.

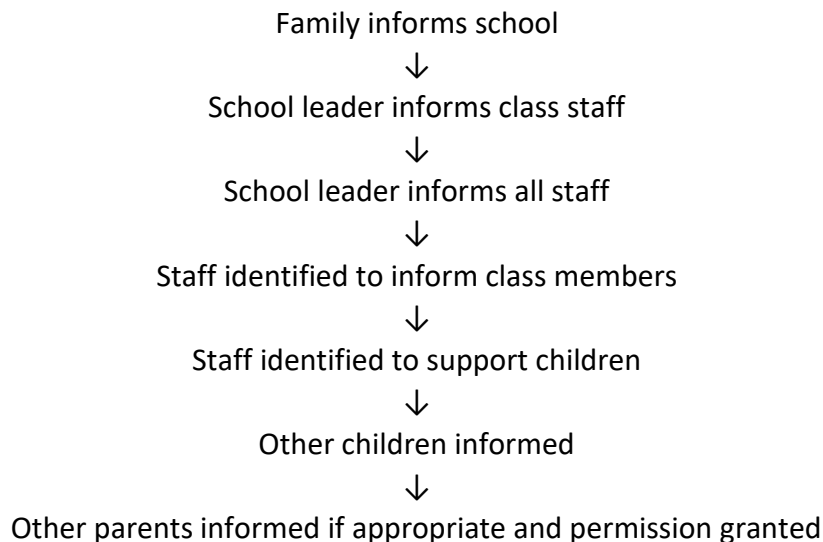
Our schools recognise the importance of long-term support for those who are bereaved, and will endeavour to provide opportunities for memorials and remembrance where appropriate.

## Information Pathways

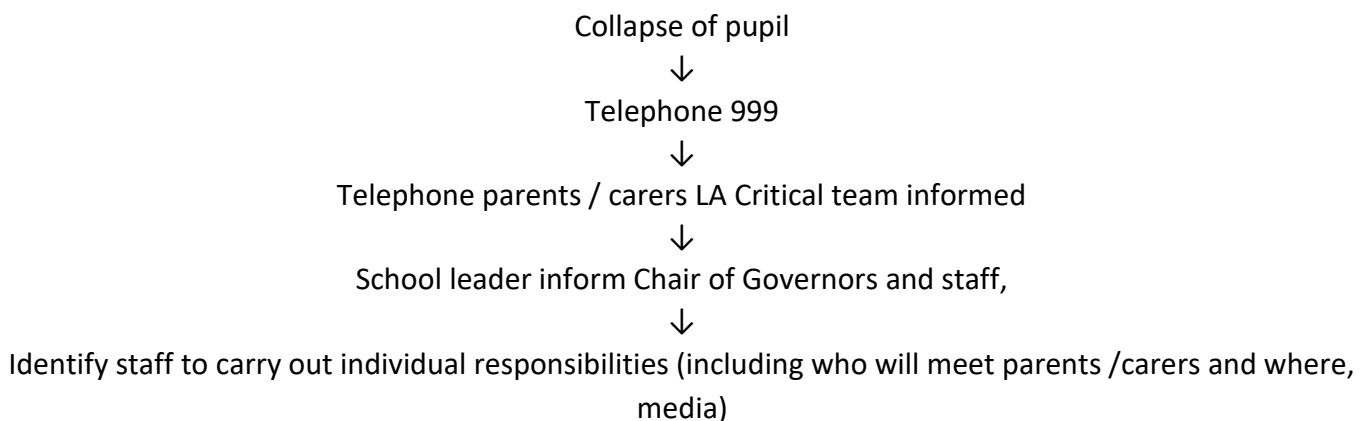
### **Information pathway following bereavement of a member of staff:**



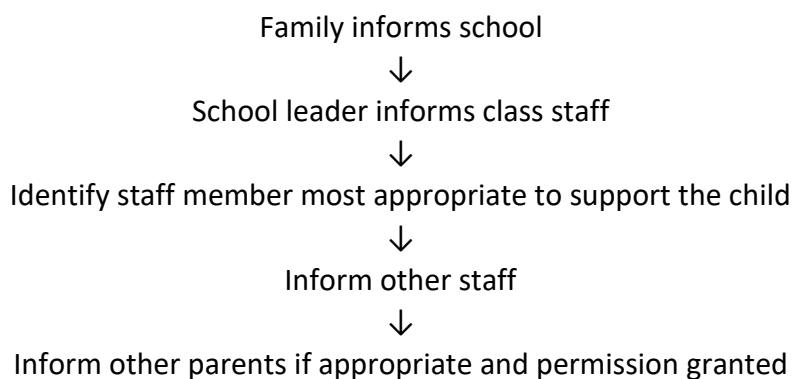
### **Information pathway following bereavement of a pupil:**



### **Information pathway following bereavement of a pupil whilst in school / on school activities:**



### **Information pathway following bereavement of a pupil's close family member:**



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

- Confirm the facts concerning the child's sick relative / friend.
- Discover what the child has been told of the illness.
- Communicate the information as appropriate in line with the family's wishes.
- Never give false hope to the child.
- Allow the child to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting.
- Enable the child to talk freely about how he/she is feeling.
- Do not inform the child about any progression concerning the illness unless requested to do so by the family.

### When informed of a bereavement of a pupil or member of staff:

- On receipt of the news of a death, in all cases the person receiving the news will offer condolences, confirm the information, record it and share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff.
- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible (*virtual if necessary*).
- Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways.
- Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened. Everyone will react in their own way.
- Be cognisant of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died.
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
  - support other members of staff
  - inform and support groups of children (The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.)
- Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family.
- Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take 'phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate.
- Identify a member of staff who will deal with the media.
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a letter for parents which should be sent the same day.
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation (*virtual if necessary*).
- Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.
- Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.
- Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement.

### Guidelines for breaking news of the death to children:

- Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.
- Inform the children as soon as possible about the death. Parents of class children informed and invited in when the children are told.
- Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class groups.
- If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died. An assembly soon after a death is a milestone to acknowledge the pain and shock, for children and adults alike.
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

- Allow the children to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person.
- Avoid using euphemisms.
- Ensure the children understand that the death has nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in **no** way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion.
- Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family.
- Continue to be available for any child who needs additional help and support (ELSA).
- *During school closure, informing children will be through the parent / carer body. All of the above points need to be considered in preparing communications to parents / carers.*

### Things to consider in the days following the news of the death:

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.
  - It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children and staff can go if necessary.
- Be aware of those who worked closely with the person who has died and staff who are dealing with calls and queries etc.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.
- Consider practical issues:
  - Who will attend the funeral (if possible)? Staff cover requirements.
  - Sending a card / letter of condolence.
  - Sending flowers to the home or to the funeral.
  - Making a collection.
  - Possible closure of the school for the funeral.
  - Giving family members an opportunity to collect personal belongings of the person who died.

### Return to school:

We acknowledge our responsibility to 'keep a special watch' on children who have been bereaved. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns.

- Keep a routine, providing a sense of normality.
- Plan a quiet place where the child can go if necessary, alone or with a companion.
- Identify staff members who the child can go to if they require support.
- Keep a diary of significant dates to support the child.
- Maintain regular correspondence with home, providing assurance about behaviours and general wellbeing as the child is managing their grief.
- Advise parents / carers about access to bereavement support and counselling through external agencies.
- Endeavour to include the child in commemorative days such as mother's / father's day, by sensitively providing time for reflection and remembrance where appropriate.

## Transition:

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new school.

## Developmental stages relating to an understanding of death

Age	Understanding of death	Child's needs	Phrases / techniques
<b>Birth to 3 years</b>	Death as separation and / or abandonment. Careful listening and watching. Death is when the body stops working.	Brief simple, honest explanations with familiar examples. Reassurance of safety, parental support and attention.	"We'll be here to take care of you."
<b>3 to 6 years</b> (uses magical and intuitive thinking)	Death as sleep, temporary, reversible, impersonal. Or as a person who comes to get you, can be catching. Egocentric thinking causes feelings of responsibility or guilt.	Clarification and expanded answers.  Permission to attend funeral with assistance. Acceptance of feelings without qualification, corrections or judgement.	Avoid euphemisms such as sleep, lost, past away.  Check and see if explanations are understood. Expect repeat questions. Acknowledge everyone's feelings of sadness and loss. Anticipate and counteract guilt. Look out for unusual or subtle expressions of grief.
<b>6 - 11 years</b> (uses concrete thinking, begins rational thinking)	Death is final, perhaps not inevitable. Occurs to others. Perhaps retaliatory.	Reassurance that grief is okay, to feel bad is normal. Open communication and opportunity to express feelings when ready. Encouragement to attend the funeral.	Acknowledge adult feelings, including anger and guilt. It's okay to cry. Accept fluctuating grief.

## Useful websites:

[www.winstonwish.org.uk](http://www.winstonwish.org.uk)  
[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)  
[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)  
[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
[www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk) [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Children's books:

### **Under 5s**

Goodbye Mousie - Robie H Harris  
I Miss You: A First Look at Death - Pat Thomas  
Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute? - Elke Barber and Alex Barber  
Missing Mummy - Rebecca Cobb  
Saying Goodbye to Daddy – Judith Vigna  
Someone I Know has Died - Trish Phillips  
Suzie Goes to a Funeral - Charlotte Olson  
The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside  
Tough Boris - Mem Fox  
What Does Dead Mean - Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas  
What Happened to Daddy's Body? - Elke Barber and Alex Barber  
When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death - Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

### **5 - 11 years**

Always and Forever – Alan Durant  
Am I Like My Daddy? - Marcy Blesy  
Badger's Parting Gifts- Susan Varley  
Benny's Hat - Juliet Clare Bell  
Ben's Flying Flowers - Inger Maier  
Goodbye Mog - Judith Kerr  
Grandpa- John Burningham  
Isaac and the Red Jumper - Amanda Seyderhelm  
Love Will Never Die - Clare Shaw  
Michael Rosen's Sad Book - Michael Rosen  
Remembering - Dianne Leutner  
Remembering My Brother - Ginny Perkins and Leon Morris  
Saying Goodbye to Hare - Carol Lee  
Stewart's Tree - Cathy Campbell  
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney -  
Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children  
What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies? – Trevor Romain

## Resources for adults supporting bereaved children:

As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley  
A Child's Grief: supporting a child when someone in their family has died - Di Stubbs, Julie Stokes, Katrina Alilavic

Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

I Miss You - First Look at Death - Pat Thomson

Someone Very Important has Just Died - Mary Turner

The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

When Your Partner Dies: Supporting Your Children - Child Bereavement UK