

Craven Pupil Referral Service



Bereavement Policy

2024-25

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Haughey".

Date: February 2025

Print: A. Haughey

Last reviewed on:

February 2024

Next review due by:

February 2026

Ratified by Governors:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. L. Pipe".

Date: February 2025

Print: P. Pipe

1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- › Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school community.
- › Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased.
- › Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement.
- › Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board.
- › Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- › Designated Safeguarding Lead - E. Marsden
- › DDSL- A. Haughey
- › Mental Health lead – E. Marsden
- › SENCO- R. Lonsdale

2.1 The Headteacher

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The headteacher will:

- › Liaise with the family of the deceased.
- › Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams.
- › Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- › Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested.
- › Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement.
- › Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.

2.2 Behaviour and Pastoral lead

Has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- › Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff.
- › Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- › Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.
- › Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages.
- › Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- › Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days.
- › Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- › Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through Safeguarding link governor.
- › Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor if relevant
- › Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- › Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately.

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

Access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate

- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change.
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and Pastoral lead
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum.
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community.

4. Immediate actions following a death

Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

- will prepare a press statement, with support from the council's communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (head teacher)
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognizing that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.

- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

The head teacher or Pastoral lead will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how.

What will be communicated to the school community if news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- › Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- › What steps will be taken to ensure that staff will be informed promptly.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- › Headteacher will be responsible for gathering pupils together and sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- › A letter will be sent home with pupils notifying parents/carers of a death and explaining the steps you've taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

Explain what steps you'll take if:

- › The death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)
- › The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which you can find at the bottom of [this page](#))
- › If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- › Headteacher is responsible for responding to requests from the media and other staff members should not respond to media requests and should instead refer enquiries to the headteacher.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- › support will be made available in school, e.g. pastoral care lead, peer-to-peer support.

- pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process.

5.2 Timetables

The school will make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

The school will come together to memorialise the deceased (e.g. a book of condolences or a temporary tribute) and where these will be located this will be located in the school office.

Consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- How staff should request leave to attend
- What considerations will be made in granting permission, e.g. availability of cover

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- How pupils should request leave to attend
- What arrangements will be made for those who attend.

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

Headteacher will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return.
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school.
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed.
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support.

- › Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability.

6.2 Ongoing support

- › We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping.
- › We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and these dates will be noted and monitored .
- › We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will have regular meeting with the pupil, put in appropriate interventions and keep in close contact with home.
- › We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions.

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

Headteacher will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- › Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- › Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- › Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- › Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

Regular pastoral catch ups

Adjustments may be made, e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables.

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40• https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 08088 020 021• https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0808 808 1677• https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393• Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/

