



TITLE: BEREAVEMENT POLICY

MODEL POLICY STATEMENT

This is a Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust model policy, with Local changes

Policy Owner:	Principal	Review period:	Biennial
Last Review:		Approving Committee:	Academy Committee April 2020
Next Review:	Spring term 2022	Latest AC adoption:	20 April 2020

Public Sector Equality Duty

This policy is written with due regard for the public sector equality duty that is placed on all schools. Tavistock College will make reasonable adjustments for members of the school community with SEND and protected characteristics and guard against discriminatory practices and victimisation to ensure no-one is treated unfairly.

RATIONALE

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community - a child or staff member.

We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and guiding principles need to be outlined and developed in an objective manner. This policy will deal with bereavement following the death of a school pupil or staff member and will also address the procedures which will be followed should a child become terminally ill or die whilst at school.

FOLLOWING A BEREAVEMENT:

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate - if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.
- Speak to staff or volunteers that they feel are supportive and that they know have been trained to support others with loss.

We recognise:

- That grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- That differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

THE MANAGEMENT OF BEREAVEMENT IN SCHOOL

The purpose of this policy is to give all staff confidence in recognising and adopting a particular procedure. It should be noted that a universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. To this end, the school will maintain a list of staff who have indicated a willingness to offer support in this way and that have been trained appropriately.

One of our main concerns must inevitably be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

The school may be notified in an infinite number of ways. Past experience has shown that if death occurs during school hours parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.

Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can - they may have the phone number of a member of staff who cares for the child at home for example.

In that instance the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

Appendix 1 Critical Incident Recording Form is attached and should be completed by whoever takes the initial communication of such an incident.

The schools '**Summary of critical incident procedure**' document (attached) will act as a clear and concise guide for those taking any initial call and hence the SLT team members directly involved in the dissemination and the further stages of the stages of bereavement support.

Dissemination.

If school is in session the principal will inform the SLT and admin staff as they need to help in the next part of the process. They will then go about immediately following the **schools critical incident procedures** inform the child's class staff. If necessary, SLT will move into the class to allow the staff to come out and be told together.

Specific and measured approaches should then be taken to ensure that students are informed in a timely and sensitive measure. Support systems should already be in place for those students who may not be able to return to their lessons.

The next step will be informing people not at school. Again there can be no definitive list but these should include:

- ⌘ Current school staff not in school that day
- ⌘ Chair of governors
- ⌘ Social Work team
- ⌘ SEN team
- ⌘ Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- ⌘ Other professionals who work with the child - Ed Psych

Parents - If children have been informed it is appropriate to put out a note to parents informing them of the loss they may need to support or comfort their children. Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but may not have been informed by the family. This task

should be undertaken by a member of the bereavement support team, due to the varied reactions they may receive, but also to ensure a consistency of parental contact where possible

In our setting it is felt that children will understand and the link senior leader and head of year will address their year groups within an assembly. (These will be in different areas of the school - to ensure they students receive news in a timely and fair manner). This assembly must aim to avoid adding worry - if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals for example. Children must be told that while they may feel sad they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief.

Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge. This is not a time to propound one's own religious beliefs.

Memory Table

Once sure that all relevant people have been informed, the principal will set up a memory book in reception. This will have a photo of the child, and may also have a candle, flowers, a helium balloon - whatever is relevant and appropriate for that child, depending on age, gender etc.

This memory book will be for *anyone* to come and write their favourite memories of the child, or messages for the family. The book is open to anyone - staff, students, parents, or other members of the community. People who have written in these books appreciate this chance to 'say goodbye'. Parents who have received the books have been delighted by it and have spoken of how it has helped over time to read the comments. Photographs may also be added. The book is passed on at the funeral and this is the natural time for the table to be taken down.

THE FUNERAL

The Principal will make sure that appropriate representation be made by staff if they wish to attend the funeral. It may be that the school could not run safely if everyone were granted their wish and in that case difficult decisions will be made according to how close people are to the child and family.

The principal, or in an unavoidable absence, the vice principal, will always attend as a mark of respect.

If the parents wish to hold the funeral tea at the school (after school hours) this will be agreed as past experience has shown that this can work very well, especially for the parent needing to maintain contact with the school.

The memory book will be taken to the funeral and passed on to the parents.

REFLECTION

Following bereavement in school, it is only to be expected that many members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of a calm environment in which to meet with those colleagues that have volunteered and have been trained appropriately to have those

conversations. The innovation centre will be the space that is designated for this purpose. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.

IF A CHILD DIES IN SCHOOL

The school first aid team will always be called if staff have concerns about a child's health at any level. They will use their trained judgement to make appropriate calls, this may include calling an ambulance. In the event of an ambulance being called a member of the SLT must be informed immediately. The First aider and SLT as appropriate to that situation will then telephone the parents and agree that they will meet the ambulance at the hospital or come to school.

The first aider will follow their training until the ambulance arrives.

Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered.

Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them, although staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent travelling in a car alone.

Even if it is obvious that a death has occurred in school, the procedures outlined above must still be followed as only a doctor can confirm a death.

Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with the Principal.

The school will then follow the *schools critical incident procedures*.

The above procedures and protocols will then apply as for a death out of school.

IF A CHILD DIES ON A SCHOOL TRIP.

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on a trip, then the adult with the child or the trip leader or first aider on the trip should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Principal. The school will take the responsibility of contacting the parents.

Again, once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.

The off sites visits protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed.

The above procedures and protocols will then apply as for a death out of school.

ON GOING SUPPORT

For staff:

The MAT buys in the APL Counselling Service and staff will be reminded about this service.

The school pastors will be invited in to offer support in times of bereavement.

The Bereavement support team will be known and available for staff.

For Pupils:

Experience has shown that most students can be supported by the school staff, and that each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach. The bereavement support team in school will be known and available for students. The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

For the family:

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes, with someone who they know and trust, potentially but not exclusively the head or year or tutor.

It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on going links, each family will be different, however the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF:

All the same principles and procedures apply as they do for the death of a pupil.

Summary of Critical Incident Procedure

Taking the Initial Call

This conversation requires a calm, steady, quiet and sensitive approach. It will be important to allow the person to tell their story, and to listen.

You might want time to take a breath and steady yourself. It is okay to ask for a pause, for example to get something to note down contact details and important information.

Demonstrate that you are listening through occasional gentle responses. These could be empathetic sounds or short phrases like "Oh I'm so sorry", "I'm listening", "Take your time".



Leave pauses so that the caller does not feel hurried and has time to gather their thoughts.

Allow the caller to tell their story in their words and in their own time and avoid asking questions.

You can check that you have heard and understood by paraphrasing back, for example “You said that he died at home last night, Is that right?” and again leave pauses so that the caller can correct you.

When the conversation reaches a natural break, explain that you need to take very clear notes of the important information.

Obtain as much **accurate, factual information** about the critical incident as possible. Bear in mind that it is very easy for rumours to spread: uncertainty or misinformation can greatly add to distress levels, create confusion and will take time and effort to correct.

Before ending the call, check that you have collected sufficient factual information and the personal and contact details of the person you are talking to. **(See form in appendix 1)**

As soon as the call ends inform the **senior leadership team**, who are advised to take actions in line with the planning checklist.

After alerting others it is important that you give yourself time to process the information and your own thoughts and feelings before getting back to work. It may be helpful to share your reaction with a colleague.

SLT Planning Checklist

Task	Who?	When?	Key contact and details	Completed (date)
Obtain the facts	Whoever takes the call.	Immediately	Use the form provided.	
Contact leadership team		First hours	Shona Meek (01392) 382057 shona.meek@devon.gov.uk	
Contact Babcock Lead for the Learning Community	TFO/BMA	Within hours	Babcock lead for Learning Community	
Notify governors	SJO/TFO	As above	Sean Sweeney Jay Hooper	
Seek additional health guidance where needed and follow public health guidance	Linda Coe	As above		
Reconsider RAG rating of risk to children attending the school/ setting	BMA/HOY	As above		
Contact immediate family to discuss the information they consent to share	BMA/HOY	First day		



Seek advice on any media interest	SJO/TFO	As soon as possible		
Alert Educational Psychology Service	BMA/TFO	First day	01392 287233 Alison.Russell-Garner@babcockinternational.com	
Consider whether involvement with Early Help is appropriate	BMA/GSM		0345 1551071 Earlyhelpsouthsecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk	
Identify those individuals in greatest need of support	BMA/TFO/HOY	First/second day		
Agree on factual communications To all staff To families To pupils	SJO	First day if possible		
Seek consent for support for pupils	HOY	Before support can be delivered		
Arrange debriefing for all staff affected	SJO	First / second day		
Be alert to those whose memory of past trauma and loss might	SJO			

<p>be triggered and seek support as the need arises</p>				
<p>Discuss acts of remembrance with family and those most affected Implement any which are immediate e.g. web page for condolence messages. Commit to plans which are for the longer term</p>	<p>SLT</p>	<p>First week</p>		



Appendix 1

Critical Incident Recording Form

<p>Who has called?</p>	<p>First or given name: Surname:</p> <p>Position Relationship with the person or family affected</p> <p>Contact details for getting in touch later</p>
<p>What happened?</p> <p>What is the nature of the incident? When did it happen?</p>	
<p>Who has been affected? For example note the names and ages of children attending the school</p>	
<p>Who else has been contacted? Who else is offering support?</p>	
<p>Ask the caller "what else is it important for you to tell us?"</p>	

Appendix 2

List of online resources and information

www.winstonswish.org.uk - a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

www.keech.org.uk - the website of Keech Hospice Care, our local Children's Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers.

www.chums.info - a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

www.childbereavement.org.uk - a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

www.juliesplace.com - a support resource for bereaved siblings

www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using carton creatures. An animated film and we have a printed pack to go with it.

www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml Information on the way bereavement affects children

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/> An organisation offering bereavement support

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> federation of organisations