



**TITLE: BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

**MODEL POLICY STATEMENT**

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

<b>Policy Owner:</b>	<b>Vice Principal</b>	<b>Review period:</b>	<b>Biennial</b>
<b>Last Review:</b>	<b>May 2022</b>	<b>Approving Committee:</b>	<b>Academy Committee April 2020</b>
<b>Next Review:</b>	<b>Spring Term 2024</b>	<b>LSB Approval: Policy Adoption</b>	<b>18 May 2022</b>

**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 or member of the school community has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching or pastoral team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with all relevant contacts within the school community.

## **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.

A clear **critical incident plan** is then followed. This details clear actions and a named person for each on day 1, within the first 24-72 hours and beyond the first 72 hours.

#### **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 **school's 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 communication to parents informing them of the loss and that 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 the meaning of bereavement and therefore, 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 the 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.

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 was 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. An appropriate space will be 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 decisions, 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 because 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 *school's 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.

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 site visits' protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed by all, under the guidance of the designated trip leader.

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. This includes our 'Rainbows' trained members of 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. This includes our 'Rainbows' trained members of staff. The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help. The school pastors will be invited in to offer support in times of bereavement.

**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 of 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?" 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 (in conjunction with the Critical Incident Plan)**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED  
1<sup>ST</sup> DAY**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Gather accurate information	
Convene CIMT	
Contact Appropriate Agencies	
Convene a meeting with key staff and end of day briefing	
Arrange supervision of students	
Hold staff meeting	
Organise time table for the day	
Inform parents/carers	
Inform students	
Make contact with the bereaved family	
Dealing with the media	
Manage emergency evacuation plan if appropriate	



**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED  
24 – 72 HOURS**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Review the events of the first 24 hours	
Arrange support for individual / groups / parents/carers / students / teachers	
Plan the re-integration of staff and students	
Plan visits to injured	
Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements etc	
Attendance and participation at funeral service	
School closure	

**BEYOND 72 HOURS  
24 – 72 HOURS**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Monitor students for continuing signs of stress	
Evaluate response to incident and amend critical incident plan appropriately	
Formalise plan for the future	
Inform new staff and students	
Decide on appropriate way to deal with anniversaries	
Review PSHE and pastoral programmes	

## Appendix 1

### Critical Incident Recording Form

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

## Appendix 2

### List of online resources and information

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) - a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

[www.keech.org.uk](http://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](http://www.chums.info) - a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) - a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

[www.juliesplace.com](http://www.juliesplace.com) - a support resource for bereaved siblings

[www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature](http://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](http://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