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**Violet Way Academy**

# **Bereavement Policy**

## Document Control

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<b>Policy Approver</b>	LGB (Local Governing Body) of Violet Way Academy

## Version Control

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## 1. Introduction, Rationale and Aims

A death can affect the school community in many differing ways. Adults and pupils benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumours and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

At Violet Way we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. We provide opportunities within our setting for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. We believe that the ethos of the school based on openness and mutual support, provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in a supportive manner. Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs. By adopting a planned and considered approach the school can support the emotional well being of the child, family and staff.

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the 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

### 2.1 The Headteacher (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

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
- 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 Inclusion Manager or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- The Headteacher has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).
- Provide direct support to bereaved staff members
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved staff

### 2.2 Inclusion Manager

The Inclusion Manager has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The Inclusion Manager will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils
- 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, e.g. 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 and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. 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 regular catch-ups with the Headteacher or Inclusion Manager
- Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through regular meetings between the Headteacher and chair
- 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. Informing staff and governors of a death in the school community

Where possible discussion should take place with family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school.

- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible, with factual information including all part time staff. A staff meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable and absent staff will be identified. Arrangements will be made to inform absent staff over the telephone.
- Senior leadership team will be prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural response.
- Senior Leadership team will be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Advice for families will also be provided of support services available to them.
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary.
- Where possible all staff that have requested to attend the funeral or memorial service will be released from class.

## 4. Informing pupils of a death in the school community

Pupils of all ages can experience grief and loss.

- Pupils in the same class should be told, in small groups with adults they know.
- A letter should go to families within school the same day if possible (Appendix 2).
- Staff will be provided with guidelines of how to inform pupils (Appendix 3).
- Time and space will be provided
- Staff will be as honest as possible about their own feelings and experiences and talk about their relationship with the person.
- A bereavement support pack will be available for classes to access.

## Ongoing support

- The family and staff will be given an opportunity to celebrate the life of the child with a special assembly held in school at an appropriate time.
- School will provide ongoing support children to explore their feelings and memories through identified activities. Some opportunities may include story telling, remembering activities, and expressing feelings activities
- Appendix 1 has a number of useful contacts and resources.

## 5. Supporting pupils of a death outside of the school community

When school is informed of a bereavement that is linked to a school pupil e.g. family member, close family friend, pet:

- The family should be asked how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
- It should be explained to the family how school can provide resources to support the pupil.
- Both parties will monitor any changes in child's behaviour and share any information.

## 6. 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.
- Sam Lewis is the Trust mental health and well-being lead and can be called upon to support staff and pupils as well as offering advice and support.
- The Trust portal also has links to agencies that can offer support and guidance to staff members.
- The Headteacher will ensure regular 'check ins' with staff supporting pupils who have suffered bereavement.
- Appendix 1 has a number of useful contacts and resources.

## 7. Responding to specific causes of death

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

If the death is the result of suicide, the Samaritans provides a step-by-step programme to support schools and this would be referred to.

If the death is due to homicide or family violence, advice from Child Bereavement UK 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', would be taken.

If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

## 8. Responding to the media

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

The Headteacher will liaise with the Trust Executive Leadership Team. Our VWA website and the Trust website signpost any media enquiries to Ben Peck.

## 9. 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:

- They should request leave in the usual manner – in writing to the Headteacher

- The availability of cover will be taken into consideration when granting permission

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

- Parents will need to request leave by completing a leave of absence request form

## **10. 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. Parents will always be consulted and transition arrangements can be made. A reintegration meeting will be arranged with parents to discuss how best to manage their return to school. The bereaved pupil will also be consulted, as appropriate. Any concerns will be addressed in the meeting and a support plan will be put in place.

## **11. 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. The Headteacher will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school. Any concerns will be addressed and a support plan will be devised.

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

## **12. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the Headteacher. At every review, it will be approved by the Governing Body.

## Appendix 1: Useful resources

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a>
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a>
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a>
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a>
<a href="http://bhf.org.uk/smallcreature">bhf.org.uk/smallcreature</a>	British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using cartoon creatures.

## Books and Workbooks for Children

- **Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine**: Your activity book to help when someone has died (EY)
- **The Memory Tree** (EY)
- **Badgers Parting Gifts** (EY)
- **Always and Forever** (EY)
- **Grandad's Island** (EY)
- **When Dinosaurs Die: A guide to Understanding Death** (KS1)
- **Luna's Red Hat: A Storybook to Help Children Cope with Loss and Suicide** (KS1)
- **The Invisible String** (KS1)
- **The Invisible String Workbook** (KS1)
- **Michael Rosen's Sad Book** (KS1)
- **The Dragonfly Story** (KS1)
- **Vicky Angel** (KS2)
- **Bridge to Terabithia** (KS2)
- **When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness** (KS2)
- **When Someone Very Special Dies** (KS2)
- **When Dinosaurs Die** (KS1-KS2)
- **The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back** (EY-KS2)
- **The Huge Bag of Worries** (EY -KS2)
- **The Fox and the Star** (All ages)
- **The Invisible Leash** (KS1/KS2)

## Appendix 2

### Letter to families - template

Dear Parents and Carers,

Unfortunately, we need to inform you of the sad and sudden death of (a pupil / staff member) at our school.

(Child/Adult) has been a pupil /staff member at Violet Way Academy for (number) years. She/he was a very popular member of the school community and will be missed by everyone that knew her/him.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different emotions like sadness, anger and confusion. The staff will be able to help any questions any pupils may have and we have a resource pack available to support pupils' understanding. If there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will support in any way we can.

Our thoughts are with (child/staff member) family at this time. We will be arranging a special assembly in the next few months to celebrate their life and contribution to our school community.

## Appendix 3

### Guide for how to inform pupils

- Be honest
- Use clear language
- Expect questions
- Recognise every death and reaction to it is unique
- Don't assume
- Allow time
- Acknowledge that some days will be better than others

Suggested script: "I've got some really sad news to tell you today that might make you sad. (Name)died yesterday. This means that we won't see (Name) again. We have lots of memories of (Name) that we can think about and we can celebrate those together"

Staff will be able to utilise the resources in the ELSA Bereavement Support Pack, available on the school Drive.