

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

JUNE 2018

ASPIRE
ACADEMY
BEXLEY



ENDEAVOUR
ACADEMY
BEXLEY



HORIZONS
ACADEMY
BEXLEY



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ETHOS

At Aspire Academy, Endeavour Academy and Horizons Academy Bexley we believe that all our students are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We recognise each of our Academies works differently based upon their cohort therefore every bereavement situation is unique. Our policy aims to formulate structure and guidance for the most difficult of circumstances so that should we experience a tragedy we are in a better position to deal with the situation and all those effected.

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. Within our Academies there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire Academy community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a student. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of the Academy may be all the bereavement support some children, or staff, require, although referrals to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. The impact should always be considered in line with the needs of our cohort particularly relating to our students with recognised SEN and formal safeguarding status. Additional information and resources can be accessed at: www.childbereavement.org.uk

AIMS

The aim of the policy is:

- To outline what the Academy should do when a sudden death occurs.
- To outline what the Academy should do to manage the impact of bereavement.
- To support students and/or staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between the Academy, family and community.
- To identify key staff within each Academy and Local Education Authority and clarify the pathway of support.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain students' emotional well-being.

HEAD OF SCHOOL

- To follow our formal recording processes.

- To notify the Executive Head of School of a sudden death or serious injury.
- To notify Bexley LSCB and relevant associated agencies and act upon any advice given when a child has died or suffered serious injury.
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies and share with relevant staff members including Executive Headteacher and Inclusion Manager.
- Notify Ofsted of the death of any child on our roll and any action taken in respect of it. Notification would be made as soon as is reasonably practical, but within 14 days of the death occurring or receipt of notification.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief in partnership with LSEAT HR and appropriate external agencies.

EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER

- Liaise with Head of School.
- Assist Head of School in liaison with external agencies when required.
- To respond to media enquiries via the Trust and the family.
- To keep the Chair of the Governing Body and The Trust fully informed.

ROLE OF SUPPORT STAFF

(Including but not limited to; Behaviour Learning Mentors, Progress Coaches, Teaching Assistants, Outreach staff & Pastoral Support Co-ordinators)

- To receive bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.

GOVERNING BODY

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.
- To liaise with Head of School and Trust relating to a Sudden Death or major incident.

PROCEDURES

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head of School and their wishes respected in communicating information with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

2. Staff should be informed before students and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age and need appropriate and ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

3. Students who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.

4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom and how, it should be distributed.

5. The Academy should be aware that the curriculum may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the students affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial Academy closure in some circumstances.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Executive Headteacher in partnership and with agreement from the Trust and the family.
9. The Academy should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a student throughout their academic life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points but in line with their right to confidentiality and also GDPR 2018.

GUIDELINES FOR INFORMING STAFF AND OTHER PERSONNEL

Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable possible. Ensure that absent staff are also informed.

- Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious 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.
- Inform absent staff over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical or appropriate.
- If the death is traumatic, such as suicide or murder, consider requesting bereavement support services via Employee Services or Child Bereavement UK can also advise/support.
- Arrange staff condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- Identify someone who can be available to talk things through with a parent, child or member of staff if they are finding the situation particularly hard.
- Head of School, in partnership with nominate staff will prepare a letter to parents and carers (to be given after school) sharing the news.
- Arrange a staff meeting for the end of the day to give staff the opportunity to express their feelings about the day.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Simon Says help line should you want to check out ideas during the following days, weeks and months ahead.

GUIDELINES FOR INFORMING STUDENTS

Good practice would promote a discussion with the family to gain their views where appropriate. We will identify those students who had a long term or close relationship with the deceased to be told together as a separate group. Class or tutor groups are ideal for this process.

- It is more beneficial if all students are informed. Teachers are not expected to die and children expect to live forever. It can be shocking.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children relevant to age, capacity, cultural and religious beliefs. For example:

"I've got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. Mrs. Smith, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that Mrs. Smith died yesterday in hospital."

"Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday Stephen Smith, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died."

- Allow time for fears and feelings to be verbalised or for students to share their own experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and experiences and talk honestly about the relationship that you had with the person.
- Answer students' questions factually, avoiding euphemisms like 'passed away'.
- Be prepared for the students to say or do the unexpected. Behaviour can be affected. Adults may be upset by some responses or apparent lack of response but this does not mean that a student does not care.
- Our primary age students or those with specific SEN diagnosis may need particular reassurance, time and patience. They will need staff to give clear simple information, help them feel safe and make it easy for them to talk and ask questions.
- Consideration should be given to the impact on public examinations, if due in the near future with appropriate applications being made to awarding bodies. Advice can be found on www.jcq.org.uk or through the Exams Officer.
- Perhaps end the discussion with a moment to remember the deceased and their family.

A whole Academy approach to bereavement can include a variety of provision including 1-2-1 support, peer support, books and resources, tutor time, a safe environment to discuss, support for all staff and the inclusion of loss and bereavement in the curriculum in PSHE and other subject areas. The approach taken will always be child-centred, in-line with the students age and capacity and with the family's consent if appropriate. It is crucial that relevant information pertaining to bereavement is shared when transitioning to new classes

and schools either internally and externally. Keeping a discreet note on the student's file/SIMs profile of important dates such as the anniversary of a death or the birthday of the person who has died can help subsequent staff maintain an awareness of potentially difficult days for the student and family to could potentially impact on attendance, behaviour or wellbeing. This process will allow staff to adequately prepare to avoid or minimise such impact as much as practically possible.

TIPS ON HOW TO HELP BEREAVED STUDENTS

Showing that you care about what has happened, how they are affected and listening to their needs are some of the most helpful things you can do for a bereaved student. Even a simple acknowledgement ('I was sorry to hear what happened...') can make all the difference. Your student may find some of the outlined approaches helpful and may help you to open up conversations with them and their family in agreement with the Head of School. Remember, however, that their needs will change over time and you may need to check that the support you are giving is still appropriate and agreed by the Head of School. Your support will help, although it may not always appear so.

Students may wish you to....

- Inform other teachers, especially supply teachers about my loss although I may not wish to talk to them about it. Keep this on record.
- Talk to me about what has happened. I may need more information, advice and education about loss.
- Arrange for me to get extra help with my work so I don't get behind, especially before exams.
- Realise that I have a lot on my plate. Try not to put the spotlight on me too much. I will participate when I can.
- Help me to cope by treating me the same as everyone else.
- Let me know about groups for children and young people who are also coping with loss and change.
- Ask me how I am feeling. It may not be obvious.
- Give me a note that allows me permission to leave class briefly, without having to explain myself if I feel overwhelmed.
- Understand that I will not 'get over it' or 'put it behind me' but with time I will learn to cope with all the changes.
- Give me extra encouragement for all the things I am managing to do and keep me in mind.
- Find a way of getting my attention back in class, without others noticing and making me embarrassed.
- Wait until I am ready to talk.
- Remember that I am still me, just feeling a bit lost at the moment.

- Help me to find new dreams of the future and make plans.

TEMPLATE EXAMPLES FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

**Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a student, permission must be gained from the deceased child's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must equally be agreed by the parents, the Head of School and the Executive Headteacher.*

INFORMING PARENTS THAT STUDENTS HAVE BEEN MADE AWARE

Sample letter on death of a primary student (e.g. Cancer):

Dear Parents

Your child's teacher/form tutor had the extremely sad task of informing the students of the death of <Name> in <Year Group>.

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the Academy Office and we would be more than happy to help you. Equally, you may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will be arranging a memorial service in the Academy in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name's> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name>
Head of School

LETTER TO BEREAVED PARENTS

Dear NAME

We are so very sorry to hear of *Toby's* death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss *him/her* very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to *his/her* friends and classmates. *He/She* was a much loved member of our Academy family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan *Toby's* funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of *Toby's* that remains in the Academy is returned to you, including photographs we may have on our system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With deepest sympathy

NAME
Head of School

LETTER TO PARENTS ON THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

Dear Parents

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

NAME
Head of School

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