

# Bereavement Arrangements during COVID-19

Annex to Bereavement Policy - version 1.0

## **Executive Statement**

This Annex forms part of the Bereavement Policy and contains the bereavement arrangements for the school community in response to COVID19. This Annex sets out the adjustments SCHOOL NAME is making in line with the changes to operational practice.

The news that someone has died from COVID19 may come as a huge shock to a young person and they may struggle to manage overwhelming feelings of grief, anger, sadness and loss.

Due to COVID19 it may not be possible for young people to attend the funeral and they may not have been able to see their loved ones before they died due to isolation and social distancing rules.

Their emotions may be intensified as they may not be able to grieve or visit with extended family members or close friends at this time.

This Annex has been drafted from guidance provided by Child Bereavement UK. This Annex will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

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## **1. Immediate Steps**

### **Contacting the bereaved family**

If a member of the school community dies or a member of the school community loses a family member to COVID19 a senior member of staff should be contacted immediately, and contact should be made with the bereaved family to offer support, as well as passing on supportive thoughts and messages from the whole school community.

The school at this stage should explain to the bereaved family in an appropriate way that the school would like to inform other people in the school community of the sad news. It is important to get this confirmed. If confirmation is sought a note should be made that authority has been given to release a statement to the school community and media if required.

### **Allowing the school community to say goodbye**

Even with social distancing and isolation it is possible to involve the school community if the bereaved family deem it appropriate to do so, this could be through:

- Drawings;
- Letters;
- Music;
- Film;
- Photography;
- Sharing memories;
- Creating a musical playlist;
- Lighting a candle at home (with parental/carer supervision);
- Poetry.

As funerals during this time are limited to close family members, the school may wish, with permission from the bereaved family, to hold a memorial event at a later date.

In response to COVID19 and social distancing rules the above could be done electronically, by creating a gallery of pictures and photographs with messages or as a film montage for all to share. **Permission must be sought from the bereaved family prior.**

### **Supporting the school community**

Staff should remind the school community that there are people who care and will continue to support them at this time. As well as their immediate family/carers, reiterate that the school equally is available to support them even during remote learning.

COVID19 bereavement support in our school consists of XXXXX.

The school will ensure that the pastoral care team will be available and will ensure that pupils and families have the contact details of external agencies that are able to support:

- Cruse Bereavement Care - <https://www.cruse.org.uk> 0808 808 1677
- Winston's Wish - <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/> 08088 020 021
- Child Bereavement UK - <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> 0800 02 888 40

### **Staff Support**

As well as support for pupils and their families, support will be provided to all staff.

It is important to remember that if you are struggling with your own reactions or emotions to let a member of the XXXXXXXX know. For any COVID19 concerns staff should contact their line manager.

The school has ensured that there is a minimum of two fully trained members of staff available to offer support to staff during this difficult time.

Staff that have suffered a personal bereavement or who are suffering the bereavement of a school community member will be reviewed weekly to ensure their emotional wellbeing.

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY - COVID19 ANNEX**

The school acknowledges that staff may be dealing with their own bereavement as well as supporting pupils and their families. Staff may feel increasingly vulnerable during COVID19 and it is important to discuss how they are feeling regularly.

Staff should be aware that pupils are quick to pick up on the distress of their teachers, peers and family, even if the adults are trying to hide their feelings.

Staff must try and adopt a work and life balance during COVID19 and vocalise any concerns or feelings they may have.

### **2. Supporting Children through a COVID19 Bereavement**

Even if a child has not personally suffered a bereavement, due to COVID19 widely being reported in the media, it can cause children to worry about themselves and others. It is normal for children to feel unsettled when something scary is happening or has happened, and many will be upset, sad or fearful during this time.

If a child expresses concerns about COVID19 you should:

- Talk to them;
- Be honest;
- Acknowledge their concerns;
- Encourage them to create a routine;
- Ensure you as a staff feel supported;

This Annex has been drafted to provide staff with guidance and procedures how to approach the above.

#### **Talking to pupils about fears**

Children will find it helpful if they are able to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling which will help them make sense of events and feel less afraid.

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Young children are equally likely to hear reports in the media or overhear adults talking about deaths caused by COVID19, or the risk of death from COVID19. It is extremely important to talk about their fears or anxieties honestly and openly using age-appropriate language.

### **ADD DETAILS HERE OF COVID19 SUPPORT PROVISION FOR PUPILS AND WAYS IN WHICH PUPILS CAN DISCUSS THEIR FEARS.**

The school will provide parents and carers with guidance about mitigating their fears through the restriction of the amount of media coverage and social media they are exposed to. The school will promote the importance of balanced media coverage with other activities and positive things to focus on. The school understands that children have a varied understanding of death with their stage of development and it is important to understand that children may respond differently to a negative situation or bereavement.

#### **Being Honest**

The school understands that in response to COVID19 many pupils will have questions and some pupils will ask their teachers questions or may discuss COVID19 and bereavement during remote learning sessions. It is important that staff know how to respond to questions. The school has ensured that staff are trained to deal with COVID19 questions.

The school will provide factual and honest information using appropriate language for their age and level of understanding, and be guided by their questions.

The school appreciates that children may pick up when questions are avoided and may imagine all kinds of things, causing further anxiety and this is why staff will ensure the pupil feels supported and listened to.

Staff will not go into detail but will help explain things when a pupil voiced a concern that directly affects them, such as, but not limited to:

- Why they are being asked to wash their hands regularly;
- How the virus is spread;

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- Why their school has closed;
- Why they can't visit a grandparents or other family members;
- Why their parent is working from home;
- Why they cannot see their friends;
- Why only some children are attending school.

### **Acknowledging Concerns**

Pupils may express concerns about someone they know becoming ill or even dying.

School staff have been trained to ensure them that:

- Some people will have no symptoms and will be fine;
- Most people will experience only a mild form of the virus and will get better;
- Some people are more vulnerable and so we need to make sure they are protected.

Staff will be honest if asked by a pupil and will not shy away from explaining that some people may die. School staff will not make a promise that everyone will be fine.

Staff acknowledge that it is important that pupils trust they are being honest and open with them, so that they can ask other questions with confidence if they wish.

If staff have a concern and need to refer a pupil for pastoral support, they should refer them to the DSL or Deputy DSL in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### **Encouraging routines**

In response to COVID19 a pupil's usual educational routine may have changed. The school acknowledges that many pupils will find this extremely challenging and this may

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cause additional stress, anxiety and/or fear.

The school will encourage parents to adopt a home routine, as routines can be reassuring to children when everything else seems to be disrupted.

If a pupil is being educated at home, the school will offer the parents support to encourage:

- Regular mealtimes;
- School work;
- Breaks;
- Play time;
- Family time;
- Personal hygiene routines;
- Bedtime.

The school acknowledges that pupils may feel more in control, and less fearful, if they are given clear tasks, and this is why an educational routine remote learning schedule will be set.

### **3. Delivering Sad News to the School Community**

It is important that in the event the school has to deliver the sad news that a member of the school community has died from COVID19 they should give themselves time to prepare.

Such sad news should be delivered both verbally and in writing if possible. In response to COVID19 the school has prepared a clear template of statements that are available to be adapted for parents, carers, pupils and staff.

#### **Writing**

The procedure for preparing to deliver such sad news in writing is:

- Find a quiet place away from distractions to adapt the pre-prepared statement;

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- Ensure any statement is personalised and appropriate;
- Explain who has died in the letter, ensure permission is granted from the appropriate person prior;
- Ensure there is an appropriate contact detail for further support and advice;
- Ensure that there is one clear point of contact within the school;
- Ensure that the letter is dated and signed by a senior leader and preferably head of school.

### **Verbally**

The procedure for preparing to deliver such sad news verbally is:

- Find a quiet place away from distractions to prepare a statement and what you are going to say;
- Agree during COVID19 how verbal communication will take place, and if it is appropriate and possible;
- Explain to the school community who has died and how. Ensure permission is sought prior;
- Check the school community understands and has acknowledged what you are saying, explain it is ok to feel sad and many emotions;
- Be prepared to answer any questions they may have. If you do not have the answers say so;
- Listen to their questions and concerns;
- It is ok to show your feelings delivering such sad news. Let them know it is normal to feel upset or afraid;
- Reassure them that you are ok, but are feeling very sad because the person has died;
- Encourage pupils, staff, parents and carers if they want to and feel it will help, to share their feelings, memories, and worries they may have. Remember not everyone will want to share their feelings at this time;
- Discuss the next steps that will happen taking into consideration the ever-changing guidance in response to COVID19;
- Explain that as additional information becomes available you will keep them

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updated;

- If applicable, explain that the school will hold a ceremony at a later date;
- Discuss the support mechanism the school has put in place to support the school community during a COVID19 bereavement.