



## **Bereavement Policy**

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Chair of Governors: Dr S Buckingham Shum

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## **Document Purpose**

This policy relates to:

Every Child Matters - Change for Children 2003  
Be healthy – Mentally and emotionally healthy

It is almost inevitable that a school will, at some point, have to deal with a death that affects its community. Every year 20,000 children under the age of 16 years will be bereaved of a parent and many more will experience the death of someone else special in their life. In addition to these individual pupils, schools may also experience the death of a child at the school or a member of staff.

As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children will see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and will look to trusted staff members for help.

Death is something that most people choose not to think about so when faced with it we often find ourselves ill prepared.

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

This policy provides a framework within which all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, work and gives guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

A death can affect the school community in different ways and depends on:

- \* The role that the deceased person had in school
- \* How well they were known in the local community
- \* Circumstances surrounding the death, particularly suicide or other violent or sudden deaths

Rumour and gossip can be damaging and lead to people developing the attitude that death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of all the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

## **School Aims**

Bushfield School aims to meet the needs of all children and staff. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

The Head Teacher and/or Family Liaison Officer will, if appropriate, support the bereaved family by representing the school at the funeral if it is a member of staff, a pupil or a close relative, such as parent or sibling of a pupil.

## **Procedures**

These guidelines should be followed in each of the following scenarios:

- Appendix A - Death of Head of School
- Appendix B - Death of adult/staff member
- Appendix C - Death of a pupil from the school
- Appendix D - Death of close relative of a school pupil
- Appendix E – Death of a child in school

## **Ongoing support provision for bereaved staff, pupils and families**

The school will endeavour to liaise with the bereaved staff / families as much as is practicable through a nominated appropriate staff member to identify the support needed. It must always be acknowledged that the circumstances and contact needs of each family or individual will be personal and unique.

### **Possible support for bereaved staff**

- Access / signposting to counselling support
- Negotiated 'back to work' plans
- Nominated mentor support colleagues
- Compassionate leave request

### **Possible support for bereaved pupils / families**

- All support must be agreed with the family
- Sensitive liaison with a view to gauging support that may be required
- Ensuring consistency of message between parents/staff towards child (particularly with regard to the language used to talk about what has happened and the level of detail acceptable)
- Listening/patience
- Individualised negotiated pastoral support programmes
- Allocated mentor support/sessions
- Staff vigilance and sensitivity about exposure to topics that may cause distress
- Special books / diaries to record feelings
- External agency signposting for counselling and family support
- Keeping family informed of pupils' emotional wellbeing as seen in school

### **Possible support for bereaved parents**

Consideration should be given to how the school may be able to support, even in the short term with:

- Child care needs
- Support with talking to their children
- Financial support
- Opportunities to come in and talk
- Identifying awareness of support via other agencies/professionals

## Local support

*MK Bereavement Service* 01908 231292

[www.bereavementservicemk.org.uk](http://www.bereavementservicemk.org.uk)

Youngsters can receive counselling at home or at the City Counselling Centre from trained volunteers.

Help Line and Drop-In times:

Monday	14:00 – 16:00
Tuesday	10:00 – 12:00
Wednesday	10:00 – 12:00
Thursday	19:30 – 21:30
Friday	10:00 – 12:00

*MK Family Mediation Service* 01908 231293

[www.mediationmk.org.uk](http://www.mediationmk.org.uk)

Anyone aged 6+ can access the 'Listening to Young People Service', if their parents are attending MK Family Mediation.

*Rainbows* 01908 231131 (Helen Finkenrath)

Rainbows offer training in schools and how to run small groups for bereaved children. They operate in Catholic schools in Milton Keynes although it is not necessary to have Catholic affiliation to use the organisation.

*MK Specialist CAMHS* 01908 254375

## National Support

*Winston's Wish* 08452 030405 (local rate helpline)

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

This is one of the foremost organisations related to bereavement, also providing training materials and advice to schools.

*NHC It's not your fault*

[www.itsnotyourfault.org](http://www.itsnotyourfault.org)

This website provides invaluable advice and strategies to help youngsters cope when their parents are splitting up or getting a divorce.

*Childhood Bereavement Network* 0207 843 6309

[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

Provides access to information, guidance and support services for bereaved children, their families and carers. This organisation publishes 4 sets of innovative postcards youngsters can use to remind themselves of strategies and to alert those around them how they can help.

*Child Death Helpline* 0800 282986

[www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

A free phone service for those affected by the death of a child. Staffed by bereaved parent volunteers, and supported by a professional team.

Helpline open Monday – Friday 10:00 – 13:00 and every evening 19:00 – 22:00