



Bereavement Policy

St Nicholas School is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and promotes rights respecting values in all its policies



*The Governing Body of St Nicholas School formally adopted
this Policy on April 2022*

It will be reviewed in April 2024 unless otherwise advised

Signed _____

Headteacher

Signed _____

Chair of Governors

CONTENTS

Statement of intent

1. Legal Framework
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. The initial response
4. Informing staff and governors
5. Informing pupils
6. Informing parents
7. Funerals
8. The media and social media
9. Support for the family
10. Support for staff
11. Support for pupils
12. Behaviour and SEMH issues
13. Remembrance activities
14. Managing transitions
15. Teaching staff about bereavement and grief
16. Staff training
17. Monitoring and review

APPENDICES

1. Letter to parents
2. Letter of condolence

Statement of Intent

At St Nicholas School, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend of a member of the school community. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors and the wider school community during and after bereavement.

The bereavement policy has been written in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations.

Support and understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children or staff require., though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex.

Some of our staff may also suffer a bereavement of a family member or close friend during their time at St Nicholas. This is addressed through our Discretionary Leave Policy and additional support is offered through the school employee assistance programme.

This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

NB: In this policy, all mentions of 'the family' refer to the family of the deceased individual. The wishes of the family will always be considered when carrying out any of the actions outlined in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislations and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2020
- Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018
- The Parental Bereavement Leave Regulations 2020

This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance

- DfE (2021) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 'Good Work Plan'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'.
- Winston's Wish (2019) A strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death'
- Samaritans (2017) 'Help when we needed it most'
- Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools Information Pack'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Maternity, paternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy
- Reviewing this policy with the headteacher every three years to ensure its effectiveness.

The Head Teacher will be responsible for

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies and the Local Authority, as appropriate.
- Informing governors and staff when a death occurs and arranging for pupils to be informed, as appropriate and with approval from the family

- Being the first point of contact for staff, pupils and parents directly involved in a death, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.
- Responding to any enquiries from the media or the wider school community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.
- To plan special assemblies and memorial events when appropriate with staff and families.

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the Head Teacher
- Seeking support from outside agencies as appropriate.
- Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.
- To support identified pupils with any life limiting illnesses and their families
- To support pupils in school when one of their friends dies.

3. The initial response

If the family or member of staff contacts the school to inform them of a death, the member of staff that answers the phone will transfer the call to the Head Teacher or the most senior member of staff available.

If the school is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the Head teacher will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.

The Head Teacher will gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information will be communicated to the school community and how.

If the death affects the entire school e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the Head Teacher will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible.

If the death affects an individual member of staff e.g. the death of a relative, the head teacher will ask the member of staff if they would like this to be communicated to any of their colleagues. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Head Teacher will discuss with the staff member what information will be communicated and how they would like it to be delivered.

If a death affects an individual pupil e.g. the death of a parent, the Head Teacher will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Head teacher will discuss with the family, and the pupil if possible, what information will be communicated and how the family would like it to be delivered.

If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come the school to inform the pupil of what has happened

and to take them home. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for a member of staff to take the pupil home.

The Head teacher will contact any other agencies as required and will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.

In the event of the death of the head teacher, the Deputy head teacher will be responsible for the duties outlined above.

4. Informing staff and governors

Staff and governors will be informed of the death before pupils. All staff and governors will be invited to a meeting by the Head Teacher as soon as practicable. Absent staff and governors, including part time and peripatetic staff, will be identified so that can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged.

Any information provided to staff and governors during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.

- During the meeting, the Head Teacher will explain what happened leading up to the death
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
- Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and governors.
- Discuss what arrangements for informing pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.

Staff members that will be responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions. The Head teacher and relevant agencies e.g. Educational Psychology and the team at 'Supporting Children and Young People Through Bereavement, Trauma & Change' at Croydon University Hospital will create the script, with input from the family.

5. Informing Pupils

The Head teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed.

Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups at the same time by a member of staff who is familiar with them.

Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the script provided to them (e.g. Social Story). The script will be honest, stating facts in simple facts and using the words dead/died. Staff will allow time for children to talk briefly about the person who has died. They will also let the children know that it is okay to be feeling sad and that is okay.

6. Informing Parents

The Head Teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed.

A letter will be sent to parents about the death. The letter will contain basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to.

7. Funerals

If appropriate, the Head Teacher will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral. With the family's approval, the Head Teacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.

The Head Teacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed during the funeral. Transportation to and from the funeral will be arranged for staff and pupils, as appropriate. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

8. The media and social media

Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family. Only the appointed media spokesperson will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.

Staff, governors and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the Head Teacher. If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Head Teacher and media spokesperson will release a statement on the school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.

Comments and other activity on school-posted social media statements will be monitored and moderated by the media spokesperson. If staff, governors or pupils find any false,

negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the Head Teacher.

If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If a pupil is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Behavioural Policy.

9. Support for the family

The headteacher will be the main point of contact between the school and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary. The headteacher will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.

Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sending a letter of condolence
- Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died
- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school

10.Support for Staff

Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend of the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place. The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the headteacher, and may include the following:

- Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own
- Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered
- Organising bereavement leave

All staff members will be offered the opportunity to speak to a member of the pastoral team (Educational Psychology service) one-to-one. Staff members will be given information about the in-school and external support they can access.

A designated space will be made available to staff where they can go during break and lunchtimes to meet with other staff and share their thoughts and feelings. Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or make a referral to an external agency.

11. Support for pupils

Pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member

A member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be made aware of who the staff member is. The Head Teacher will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school. Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes.

When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:

- The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
- The relationship between the pupil and the person who has died.
- The ability of the pupil's family to support them following the death, e.g. if a pupil's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the pupil?
- Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
- The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
- Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.

The pupil will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate.

If a pupil chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and staff members will be made aware that the pupil may not be able to work to their usual capacity. The designated staff member will keep in communication with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is doing. If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told.

The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence. The Head Teacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.

Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Support for all pupils

All pupils, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g. the death of a staff member. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of staff. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.

Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies.

Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the headteacher who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with pastoral staff.

12. Behaviour and SEMH issues

Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:

- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of motivation
- Tiredness and irritability
- Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks
- Inability to take others' feelings into account
- Anger, frustration or aggression
- A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
- Anxiety
- Being easily upset by events that would normally not affect them
- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness

The pupil's designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home. Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behavioural Policy.

A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.

Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the Anti-bullying Policy, considering the pupil's needs and circumstances.

The Head Teacher will ensure that all staff members are aware of the lasting impact that bereavement can have on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.

All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to outside agencies who will put appropriate support in place. The school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy will be followed to ensure pupils that may be vulnerable to developing or experiencing SEMH issues following a bereavement can be identified and appropriately supported.

13. Remembrance Activities

Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities

being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities. This will be organised within three weeks of a death in the school community.

All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities. All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

After the assembly there will be time in class groups to reflect before carrying on with normal school timetable. Some pupils may be deeply affected, others not at all, or react with out-of-character behaviour. The leadership team should ensure that all pupils and staff are offered additional support if required.

14. Managing transitions

Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:

- If the pupil moves school
- When the pupil moves to secondary school
- If the pupil moves class
- When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

15. Teaching about bereavement and grief

Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death. Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching.

Bereaved pupils and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required. Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.

Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

16. Staff Training

If any members of staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to pupils or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will speak to the Head Teacher who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.

17. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the governing board and headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is April 2024. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff members and all relevant stakeholders.

Appendix 1 Sample letter to report a death of a pupil or staff member

(Date)

Dear Parents,

I am sorry to tell you that a much-loved Year (?) pupil, (name), sadly died on (date).

Brief details as agreed with parents

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. Senior Leaders and class teachers will be speaking to all of the children sensitively about (name) death over the coming days and they have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school. However, if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than willing to help you. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will be arranging a special assembly and in the next few weeks as a means of celebrating (name) life with the children and there will be opportunities for parents and families to contribute their memories or condolences in a memory book for the family. We will let you know how you can do this later in the week.

Yours Sincerely

Appendix 2: Example letter of condolence

(date)

Dear (?),

We were devastated to hear the news today about (). She/he was a wonderful girl/boy, with a fantastic smile, kind and caring, and a great friend to his/her class. We will all miss her/him.

We have told all the pupils and the adults who worked with him/her and they all send their love to you and the family. We have also told the parents of his/her classmates and they all wanted us to pass on their love and to let you know they are thinking of you at this very sad time.

()'s friends in his/her class have been sharing memories. We are collecting photos and memories to share with you and would love you to join us for a special assembly in due course. I will give you a ring to sort this out. All the family are welcome to join us.

When a funeral is eventually organised I know that staff, and maybe some of her friends, would like to attend, if you are happy for this. We can talk about this nearer the time.

I have passed on the sad news to transport and to the education authority so that you don't have to worry about this.

() will be sorely missed and our love and condolences go out to you and all the family. I will be in touch soon.

Yours truly,

Appendix 3: Example script for telling pupils about a bereavement (please note this is in a PowerPoint format using visuals and symbols)

We are going to talk about our friend (name)

(name) has not been in school for a long time

(name) has been very ill and (name) has been in hospital

The doctors were not able to give (name) medicine to make (name) better

(name) has died

This means (name) is not with us anymore. We will not see (name) again.

This may make us feel sad. It is okay to feel sad because (name) has died

We can remember (name) and we can talk about (name)

We can remember all the fun we had with (name)

We can talk to grown ups at school and at home about (name) and about how we are feeling.