



Bereavement Policy

Updated: 06-26
Prepared by: JOH

Next Review: 06-27
Approved by: Governors

This policy applies throughout the school from EYFS to Year 6.

The Cavendish School is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all pupils and a 'culture of vigilance' to safeguard and protect all in its care, and to all aspects of its 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'.

The aims of the School and the principles of excellent pastoral care will be applied to all children irrespective of their race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or pregnancy or maternity; equally these characteristics will be recognised and respected, and the School will aim to provide a positive culture of tolerance, equality and mutual respect.

We adopt a trauma-informed approach to bereavement, recognising the wide-ranging impact trauma can have on children and adults and aiming to provide support that acknowledges and responds sensitively to these effects.

Introduction

Background and rationale

The Cavendish School is an inclusive School that strives to ensure all children feel safe, nurtured and happy. Their well-being is paramount. Our values focus on openness, honesty and trust. We endeavour to nurture the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

Our trauma-informed approach ensures that staff understand the possible emotional, psychological, and behavioural responses to trauma and bereavement and are equipped to respond appropriately to individual needs.

Around 46,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's approximately 5 children under 18 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person¹.

Experiencing bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact members of our school community at any time.

Bereavement can be a traumatic event for children and staff, and it is essential to recognise the potential for trauma reactions, such as anxiety, difficulties with concentration, and changes in behaviour or emotional regulation. The school recognises that bereavement following suicide can present additional complexities and may require enhanced pastoral, safeguarding and mental health support for pupils, families and staff.

¹ Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

Our School is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, Governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for and respond to bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses, including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

We recognise bereavement as a potential adverse childhood experience (ACE) which can impact emotional wellbeing and academic engagement. Staff are expected to respond in a trauma-informed manner, with particular attention to the protective role of the school environment, including creating predictability, safety and emotional support.

We recognise that a school can be uniquely placed to help at these times and we are committed to doing so.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish.

Purpose of the policy

This Bereavement Policy supports us in providing effective support to pupils and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of School may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex. The stages of grief can be found in the appendix to this policy.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- Clarify the pathway of support between School, family, community and services
- Make the best use of the support available in School, the Local Authority Support Services and the wider community

This policy reflects principles outlined in the Department for Education issued guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children, to ensure that bereaved children are offered timely, appropriate and effective support through a whole-school approach.

Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy, we have adopted the Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website. All support within this charter will be underpinned by trauma-informed approaches, ensuring sensitivity to trauma triggers and promoting psychological safety.

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens and staff will be equipped to respond using a trauma-informed approach.
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives, such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their life even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try, where possible, to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children, where appropriate, to understand that they are not responsible and not to blame for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them, particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with Data Protection Legislation.

We will ensure that staff who are aware of bereavements receive clear guidance on how to record, share and follow up this information using CPOMS and iSAMS, in line with statutory safeguarding record-keeping requirements. Where appropriate, a child's bereavement will be reflected in their individual pastoral support or SEND Power Up plan.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting the child.

Staff will also consider whether a bereavement may lead to increased vulnerability and whether it meets the threshold for an Early Help Assessment or referral to children's social care, as outlined in KCSIE.

Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

The role of the Governors is to:

- Approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- Ensure the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- Ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- Ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it
- Ensure the school's bereavement policy links appropriately with safeguarding, SEND and mental health policies

The role of the Head and relevant members of the Senior Leadership Team is to:

- Lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement, including ensuring appropriate training and support is provided for staff
- Provide leadership to ensure the school's approach to bereavement is consistently trauma-informed, supportive, and sensitive at all levels
- Ensure staff receive the training and resources needed to maintain a trauma-informed culture in all aspects of bereavement support
- Contact the local authority in the case of a sudden or unexpected death or suicide (this procedural detail is included in our Crisis Management Policy)
- Be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- Record bereavements affecting children

- Designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- Monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- Keep the Governors appropriately informed
- Deal with media enquiries as/if appropriate (this procedural detail is included in the Crisis Management Policy)
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) coordinates support for bereaved pupils and staff, liaises with families and external agencies, and ensures trauma-informed interventions are implemented consistently across the school
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) should also maintain a calendar of significant dates for the student and ensure appropriate support is in place at difficult times, including when a student changes school or in the time coming up to a holiday period

The role of all staff in our School is to:

- Access bereavement support training, be familiar with this policy and support bereaved pupils in their class as appropriate
- Provide day-to-day emotional support by creating a nurturing classroom environment where children feel safe to express grief or ask questions
- Use trauma-informed communication techniques, carefully avoiding pressure for disclosure while offering reassurance, empathy and guidance to help pupils manage their feelings
- Know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- Know how to report a concern if the bereavement, or sudden and unexpected death, has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- Know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to pastoral leads and specialist support if needed
- Have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- Provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the Head and pastoral team
- Know how to apply a trauma-informed approach and take into account any neurodiversity or additional needs when supporting a bereaved child.
- Teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of Class Teacher (teachers only)
- Inform the Head at the earliest opportunity if they hear about the death of someone in the school community

Our SLT has had more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other members of staff, etc.

Procedures

Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the Head in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations. When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family, we will:

- Contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them. Staff knowledge of individual families and the degree that they would welcome this approach will be considered
- The Head will remain in close contact with the family
- Identify a key point of contact in School, this is normally the Head, or in her absence, the Deputy Head (Pastoral), in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- Ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has been and needs to be shared with the pupil
- Keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- Explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice
- Explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice. This may include counselling support in partnership with an external provider
- Arrange training for specific members of staff if appropriate, to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- If appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community, for example, the pupils' classmates
- If appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

Following a bereavement

We will consider each situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response, we will:

- Contact the deceased's family, if appropriate, to establish the facts and avoid rumours. This will be done by the Head, or in her absence, the Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- Consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- Find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the School
- Allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child/young person or children/young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- Assess whether the pupil requires additional safeguarding or mental health support, and determine if updates are needed to their existing pastoral care, SEND arrangements or safeguarding protocols
- Send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- Inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared through prior training to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information
- With the knowledge of the family, inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the School

- Where appropriate, inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and/or letters to parents
- Make appropriate changes to an individual pupil's timetable to accommodate the needs and well-being of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable, as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity
- Pupils will be given opportunities to express how they would like to be supported in school, recognising that their needs and preferences may change over time

For the funeral, we will:

- Find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community, or not
- Identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances, it may be appropriate to close the school
- Organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils
- Any memorial activities or tributes within school will be carefully considered in consultation with the family and with regard to the emotional wellbeing of the wider school community
- Be sensitive to religious and cultural issues

After the funeral, we will:

- Consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to School if they have been absent for any period of time
- Ensure friendships are secure, peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- Continue regular contact with the family and demonstrate our care for them and their child over time
- Monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- Consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- Continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly

Longer-term, we will:

- Be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. We will record information and share it with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference
- Signpost families to bereavement support, including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- Ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas, including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement, we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by it
- Particular attention will be given to transition points, including moving class, moving school or returning after extended absence, as these may re-trigger grief responses

The details of operational responses to a death in the school community, including communication protocols, coordination with the local authority, media handling, memorial arrangements and crisis management procedures, will be set out in the School's Crisis Management Policy and are not included in this bereavement policy.

Following a sudden and unexpected death - suicide

The school recognises that suicide bereavement can be particularly complex and may increase emotional vulnerability within the wider school community.

In the event of a suspected or confirmed suicide, the school will work closely with external agencies and follow guidance from the Samaritans Step by Step resource and local authority critical incident procedures.

Communication with pupils, staff and families will be carefully planned to ensure information is factual, age-appropriate and does not glamorise or sensationalise the death.

The school will use sensitive and appropriate language, including phrases such as "died by suicide" rather than "committed suicide".

Equality, inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these. Our approach to bereavement is trauma-informed, recognising the complex emotional needs of pupils and families.

Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate. Our staff are trained to recognise trauma symptoms and provide sensitive support tailored to individual needs. Where appropriate, staff involved in supporting bereaved pupils may also be offered opportunities for reflective supervision, debriefing or peer support to promote emotional wellbeing and professional resilience.

Supporting staff

Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we adopt a trauma-informed approach by encouraging open communication and offering sensitive support tailored to individual needs. Staff are encouraged to speak with their line manager or Deputy Head Pastoral about how they are coping and any adjustments they may require. We will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP, Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>, counselling, information and advice. Aviva provides a counselling service for teaching staff through our pension scheme and we have a wellbeing assistance programme in place that all staff can access.

Where required, the school may also seek advice and support from educational psychologists, CAMHS, bereavement charities or other specialist services to support both pupils and staff following a bereavement.

We will work within our Absence Policy to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable teaching or want support to teach.

Staff training

Winston's Wish offers training courses and a free online training course for school staff. Staff will be encouraged to keep their training needs up to date and will be given time and resources to do so. This training includes trauma-informed bereavement support techniques to help staff respond appropriately.

Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, religious education and PSHE.

We also use age-appropriate assemblies to address aspects of death, such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class, having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident. Staff follow a trauma-informed approach to ensure pupils feel safe and supported during these discussions.

Teachers are given support and advice on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe learning environment. We also point parents and carers toward appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences, but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings. These discussions are delivered within a safe, inclusive and emotionally supportive environment that promotes resilience, empathy and emotional literacy across the whole school community.

Additional support

National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work, we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish

Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and those caring for bereaved families

www.winstonswish.org

Cruse Bereavement Care

Support for anyone who has been bereaved

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Live Chat available on website Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us

Childhood Bereavement Network

Find childhood bereavement support in your local area

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Hope Again

A website for young people who have been bereaved

<http://hopeagain.org.uk/>

Papyrus

Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person

<https://papyrus-uk.org/>

Samaritans

A range of guidance and support for schools

www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools

Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/>

Document links

Keeping Children Safe in Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Linked policies

- Absence Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy for pupils
- Behaviour Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Crisis Management Policy
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy for Employees and Other Adults
- Educational Visits Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy for Pupils
- Health and Safety Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

APPENDIX

Stages of grief

Knowing about the 'normal' stages of grief can be very useful in beginning to understand what someone may be going through when grieving. The 'Kübler-Ross' stages of grief are an accepted model and include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

The stages have evolved since their introduction and have been very misunderstood over the past three decades. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grief is as individual as our lives.

The five stages are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling, but they are not stops on a linear timeline in grief. People may flip between elements of different stages, back and forth, within hours or minutes, not just experiencing them in order over several months or years. Our hope is that with these stages comes the knowledge of grief's terrain, making us better equipped to cope with life and loss.

Denial

This stage is about surviving the loss of a person. The denial and shock experienced help us to cope with the pain and slow down the feelings of grief. When denial and shock begin to fade, and we begin the healing process, the denied feelings begin to surface.

Anger

The feeling of anger is normal and a healthy part of the healing process. It is important not to try and suppress angry feelings – they are, in fact, helpful, by providing a connection to the real world. The feelings of anger may be directed at all parts and people in a person's life, to their family, friends, themselves or even their faith.

Bargaining

Bargaining is a stage where we obsess over 'what if' and 'if only' scenarios. It can range from praying to do anything to bring a loved one back, to going round in circles thinking what could have been done differently. Guilty feelings often accompany people in this stage.

Depression

The depressive stage is characterised by a deep sadness that penetrates through life, and may feel never-ending. People may feel empty, withdrawn, in a fog, or wondering if it is worth carrying on without their lost loved one. Depression is often seen as something which needs to be 'fixed', or for people to 'snap out of', but this is not the best way to think about it. The loss of someone close is a truly sad event – depression is a normal and appropriate part of the grieving process, and people in this state need gentle care, support and patience.

Acceptance

Acceptance is when we truly accept the reality of a loved one being physically gone as a permanent situation. It does not mean the person is 'over it' or everything is now 'OK'. Rather, it means that a person has reached the point where they are able to readjust their life to cope with continuing in a reality without their loved one present. It is a time when we may reach out and invest in our existing friendships, family, and forge new connections as well.

Reading recommendations

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Death-Dying-Elisabeth-K%C3%BCbler-Ross/dp/0415463998>

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Grief-Grieving-Finding-Meaning-Through/dp/1471139883/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2IZI8YHR3V1US&keywords=On+Grief+and+Grieving&qid=1655721114&s=books&srefix=on+grief+and+grieving%2Cstripbooks%2C85&sr=1-1