



# **Bereavement and Loss Policy**

**November 2023**

**Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 30/11/23**

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 2  
2025–26**

# **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

## **OF**

### **GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### **SECTION ONE RATIONALE**

We believe that the learning environment should be challenging, expecting children to take as much control of their lives as they are able. In order to achieve this, children must be given relevant knowledge and experience to reflect on the world within and beyond the school.

Children experience bereavement in many ways including the death of a loved one, a friend or a family pet. They also experience loss in different forms. This may include the loss of a parent or family routines through separation or divorce of parents or the loss of family connections caused by events such as the Covid 19 pandemic. This policy outlines the way in which the school manages both loss and bereavement.

We believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing and that it is an important part of the school curriculum to raise awareness of the needs of dealing with loss, grief and bereavement. Our aim is to provide children with adequate levels of compassion, comfort and empathy and to support children experiencing the reality of bereavement and loss so that they can develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to deal with these experiences and be understood and valued through the process, however long that lasts. It is important to understand that there are many stages of grief and adjustment to the reality of loss and it will be different for every child.

We believe that the ethos of our school, based on openness and mutual support, provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in an enriching manner throughout the school.

#### **SECTION TWO – DEATHS THAT MIGHT OCCUR WITHIN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

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

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

Death can be categorised as sudden or expected and the school's response to each circumstance will vary accordingly. A death will be classified as a sad event or a critical incident by the KCC Psychology services team when or if there support is required.

The 5 main possibilities of death which may affect our school community (ref [www.winstonswish.co.uk](http://www.winstonswish.co.uk)) are:

- Death of a pupil
- Death of a parent, carer or sibling of pupil in school
- Death of a teacher or other member of school staff
- Tragedy affecting a section of the school community e.g. fatal coach crash
- Death of another member of school community

## **SECTION THREE – SCHOOL RESPONSE**

### **What can school do to support?**

- Acknowledge the loss
- Maintain contact with home and pupil
- Honor family's wishes where possible
- Consider the right support structure
- Plan return date if there has been absence.

The school will always aim to act in a planned and agreed manner to a death whether it is sudden or expected, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute their part in a way that is consistent with the values that have been adopted.

In all circumstances however the wishes of the family involved are paramount and may in some circumstances supersede the contents of our school policy.

When supporting children with loss and bereavement, it is always important to:

- show interest
- listen well
- encourage open and honest communication
- empathise with child through emotional coping strategies
- make time as and when needed through their period of grief.

### **3.1 Preparing for the Expected Death (Terminal Illness) of a Member of the School Community**

- After discussion with the family, SMT will inform school staff. We will endeavour to ensure that everyone hears the same message at the same time. Confidentiality is essential. Chair of Governors will also be informed.
- School will seek advice from the family and relevant professionals as to whether children / parents or carers of children should also be informed. This will depend on circumstances surrounding individual situations.

- Bereavement policy and supporting general information to be circulated to staff which outlines procedures and support available.
- Personal bereavement support plan drawn up by school in consultation with family, specific to individual outlining any specific support or arrangements that might need to be made. This may occur sometime after the death as and when the family members are ready for support from the school.
- Relevant charities, support services and Educational Psychology Service consulted for further advice or support.
- If the person involved is a parent/ carer or sibling of a child the school will work with the family to provide support for the child in the most appropriate way.

### **3.2 Responding to Sudden Death or Expected Death Occurring**

#### **3.2.1 Informing School Staff**

On hearing of the death of a member of school community, the school's response will be as follows:

1. If the death occurs during school hours a staff meeting will be arranged for all staff as soon as possible in order for all staff to receive the facts surrounding the situation.
2. Absent staff will be informed as soon as possible by a member of the SMT.
3. If the death occurs out of school hours the school will use Parentmail or email to inform all staff if appropriate or will arrange for a meeting at school the following day.
4. Staff will be given a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
5. Staff should be prepared for colleagues to feel angry and upset. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement. Support information will be shared with staff. Staff who may be extremely upset by the news and who may be alone that evening could be identified and a colleague phone contact established.
6. Staff will be informed as to how children and parents / carers will be informed. Information provided by Winston's Wish charity may be circulated to staff. The Chair of Governors will be informed by the Headteacher.
7. For a death that might attract media coverage (e.g. if the member of staff was a well-known personality or died tragically), the Headteacher will contact the Local Authority press office. The school may wish to identify a nominated person to make a press statement. This will be discussed with the press office. Liaison will take place with the family.
8. In the event of a serious incident e.g. fatal coach crash involving staff and pupils, the school will try to establish a 'protected' telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information to and from the school/hospital. This can be achieved through the use of the direct dial telephone numbers to the Headteacher and Assistant headteacher offices, or by use of a mobile phone.

9. Further emergency staff meetings may be arranged to inform staff of any arrangements e.g. funeral arrangements or to answer any concerns.
10. Staff condolences with collaborative agreement will be arranged if felt appropriate.

### **3.2.2 Informing Children and their Parents / Carers**

Children are often interested in knowing more about death as it helps them to understand and act upon their own sense of grief. In particular they might want to know what happened, how it happened, why it happened and perhaps most importantly what happens next? Parents and carers also need to be informed in order to process their loss.

On hearing of the death of a member of the school community the school will:

- Consider the most appropriate way of informing children and their parents / carers. This may be by a written letter to parents / carers from the Headteacher sent home in a sealed envelope, by staff talking to children directly or by parents receiving an alert to a letter via Parentmail. Parents / carers will be kept informed of the actions of the school throughout the immediate period of grieving. Staff may be given prompts on what to say when talking to the children.
- Recognise that parents and carers remain the most significant support to children trying to come to terms with the death of a teacher or a school friend. We will offer guidance to parents and carers on how they might respond to their children and what support services are available to them and endeavor to share resources and signpost to bereavement sites for further support.
- Identify those children who had a long term and /or close relationship with the deceased and who may require access to one of the support services. We will also respond to parental concerns about their children and may also access support as a result of this.
- Allow opportunities to talk about and share feelings around the deceased person, sharing memories and stories. Children may also find it useful to link this to their own personal experiences of death. Staff will be supported in how they talk to children about death and dying through our Rainbows resources and team. This will be age specific to the children.
- Answer children's questions factually, avoiding using euphemisms like 'passed away' 'sleeping' or 'lost'. The words dead, death, dying and died should be used to avoid confusion. All questions will be answered in a sensitive and age appropriate way.
- Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected. Some children may be very visibly upset whereas others may be quiet and withdrawn. There are a wide range of ways in which children will show grief, the season of grief may be longer for some than others. It will always need to be reviewed to observe progression or healing.

### **3.2.3 After the Death has Occurred**

The school will have a variety of strategies that it may adopt in the days and weeks that follow any significant loss. Decisions about which to undertake will be determined following discussions with the family concerned and will take into account the cultural/religious beliefs of the family.

An individual or small group of school staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention.

The Headteacher will inform school staff as to the arrangements for the funeral after discussion with the family. The Headteacher will liaise with the local authority as to whether the school will need to close in order for staff and pupils to attend the funeral. If the school does not close the school will endeavour to accommodate the wishes of those who wish to attend the funeral, but will ensure that this does not compromise the safety or supervision of the children at school.

School staff will continue to monitor the emotional well-being of the school community in order to assess whether any further support may be required. Particular attention will be given to siblings and close friends.

The whole school community will decide how they will remember the deceased and make appropriate arrangements taking into consideration the wishes of the family. This may include a special 'celebration of life' assembly, a book of condolences, a scrapbook, a charity collection or fundraising activity or a memorial. School will encourage all members of the school community to be involved with this including parents / carers, and especially pupils.

## **SECTION FOUR – CURRICULUM**

In the event of bereavement or significant loss the school has established clear guidelines for action. However, as a truly proactive school we will prepare for such an experience by ensuring that it is dealt with as a matter of course for all pupils/students within planned programmes of study within the school's curriculum. Opportunities for this within or school curriculum includes:

### **4.1 Rainbows Bereavement Programme**

Godinton is an accredited Rainbows Bereavement Support School (<https://rainbowsgb.org/>) and now has trained a Rainbows coordinator and facilitators. These members of staff are able to run termly bereavement and loss groups for those children in school who have been

identified with ongoing grief or who are unable to fully process their loss. This is covered under **SUNBEAMS** for Key stage 1 and **RAINBOWS** for Key stage 2.

#### **4.2 RE**

The spiritual dimension relating to loss and bereavement is explored within themes dealing with:

- Rites of Passage
- Worship
- Show awareness of cultural beliefs, views and values within the major world religions, including awareness of practices and ceremonies
- Be prepared to explore child's own beliefs.

Religious customs associated with death and dying are built into our RE curriculum as part of the work on rites of passage.

#### **4.3 PSHE**

The emotional element and the nature of ongoing relationships and feelings are explored within PSHE.

#### **4.4 Science**

Children learn about death and aging as part of the scheme of work for 'life processes' and 'ourselves'.

Age appropriate lesson plans are also available on the *Winston's Wish* website for staff to use where appropriate.

The school may address issues of National bereavement (e.g. death of a well-known figure or tragic National incident) in class in an age appropriate way. The content will be agreed with the Senior Management Team before a lesson commences. Similarly, these types of event may be addressed through assemblies.

### **SECTION FIVE – OUTCOMES**

By adopting a planned and considered approach the school can promote desired, positive outcomes for both staff and children within the school and those in the wider school community. These may include:

Staff will:

- Feel equally valued.
- Experience compassion and empathy for their own feelings

- Have an opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenging role they face and feel supported in this.
- Be given the opportunity to work through their own feelings.
- Become aware of the skills needed, and be offered support, to develop them.
- Be given adequate time to come to terms with grief or loss.

Pupils/students will:

- Be offered support by sensitive, trained staff working in unison.
- Grow as a result of this experience and be more able to come to terms with their feelings.
- Develop a sense of perspective about their own lives and the fears that this might engender.
- Be given adequate time to come to terms with grief or loss of any nature.

The school will:

- Have clear expectations about the way it will act, not simply react.
- Promote a sense of unity and identity in the whole community with sensitivity.

The family will:

- Have real support to draw on.
- Be signed posted to online bereavement support
- Be given an opportunity to reinforce feelings of worth rather than a sense of loss.

The parents/carers will:

- Be drawn into a closer partnership with the school.
- Be given guidance on how to support their sons and daughters.
- Have time to prepare their own responses to loss and bereavement and seek professional services

## **SECTION SIX – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RACIAL EQUALITY (Refer also to these specific policies)**

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life. We tackle discrimination through the positive



promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

**SECTION SEVEN– CHILDREN IN CARE** As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care to achieve the highest standards they can. Staff are aware that Children in Care can be at risk of underachieving at school because they have experienced disruption to their family life and education. Some may have low expectations, poor emotional and psychological health and a lack of family support.

#### **SECTION EIGHT – MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This policy is reviewed every two years and is monitored by the Senior Management Team.