



Bereavement Policy

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Ratified: May 2025

Next Review Date: June 2028



Our Academy

The Southwater Infant Academy is openly inclusive and welcomes all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment. We believe at our academy all children can achieve to the very best of their abilities. At The Southwater Infant Academy, the wellbeing of our children and their families is at the heart of all we do. We aim to support each child on their journey as they grow emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially, supporting them to become empathetic and emotionally intelligent people.

Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. Within our academy community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation. Sometimes the entire academy community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope not to encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of our academy may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require. Children may also be supported by our ELSA and families by our family support worker, however referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex.

Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Objectives:

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support children, families and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between the academy, the family/families and the community.
- To identify key staff within the academy, and clarify the pathway of support.

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to offset any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain children' emotional well-being.



The role of the Trustees

To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.

There will be a nominated Trustee with responsibility for bereavement issues.

The nominated Trustee is: Claire Quinlisk

Their responsibilities are:

- To contribute to generating and updating the policy.
- To support the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

The role of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher

The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Board of Trustees, families and appropriate outside agencies.

The responsibilities of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are:

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the Board of Trustees fully informed.
- There will be a designated person within the academy who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that this person is absent then another named person will take responsibility.
- Our named person is Mrs Vicky Dilling. In her absence Mrs Christie Cavallo will lead.

Their responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving children, staff, trustees, families and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the academy and sharing the responsibilities.
- Co-ordinating the planned action to manage academy-related incidents in and beyond the academy; decide who will be responsible for communicating with the family/families directly involved.
- Decide who gives news to the academy community and if necessary who will communicate with the press.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools and academies, including pre-schools and nurseries.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff and trustees.



Curriculum

Our children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the PSHE curriculum. This is taught as part of the 'Relationships' theme. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as life cycles. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death e.g. Remembrance Day or other commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way. Staff will openly discuss cultural and religious issues around death. Children will be encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

Procedures:

- 1.** Contact with the deceased's family/families should be established by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. (Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.)
- 2.** Staff should be informed before children and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
- 3.** Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
- 4.** A letter to all academy families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed. (Appendix 1 and 2). Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil or member of the academy staff, permission must be gained from the child's parents or staff member's family. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents, family and academy.
- 5.** The academy should be aware that the daily timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
- 6.** Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate, as directed by the bereavement agencies listed under 'useful websites' (Appendix 3).
- 7.** In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial academy closure in some circumstances.
- 8.** Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher in coordination.
- 9.** Academy staff should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.



The First Few days:

- Although time at the academy may provide stability and normality for staff and children, some flexibility may be necessary.
- Remind staff of previous training and signpost them to suitable resources and prompts for themselves and the children.
- The Bereavement Policy will be shared and made easily accessible to staff, parents and trustees.
- Ensure that time is built in for the children to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings.
- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the child/children to be able to leave the classroom and take time out in a safe space with a familiar adult.
- Where provision allows Time2Talk will be scheduled with the ELSA or Family Support Worker.
- Where multiple children or staff members are affected (e.g. following the death of a staff member or child from the academy) a book of condolence or similar tribute will be arranged and supervised so that children can visit this and contribute as they so desire.
- In the event a child from the academy dies, the family will be given the opportunity to visit, if they wish to.
- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.

The Funeral:

- The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will consult the family to find out whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend.
- Where appropriate the children may be involved in choosing flowers or organising a collection with agreement from the family.
- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will identify the practicalities of issues such as staff cover to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so. (For some circumstances, it may be appropriate to close or partially close the academy, for others, it may not).
- In conjunction with the ELSA, Family Support Worker and outside agencies, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will consider any arrangements for children attending the funeral, and how they will be supported/supervised.

Support for children:

In the event of the death of a child's family member, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will investigate if the family are receiving any support from external agencies.

The academy will offer support from:

- **ELSA**
- **Family Support Worker**
- **Arrangements for Time Out**
- **Advice from...**
 - Winston's Wish
 - Child Bereavement UK



- Any other relevant bereavement support e.g. Macmillan

Support for Staff

- The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will source up-to-date training for staff as soon as possible from Child Bereavement UK's (www.childbereavementuk.org) helpline on **0800 02 888 40** or Live Chat on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
- As an academy we understand that supporting bereaved children can be very stressful for staff especially those who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions.
- We understand that at certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives.

Remembering

- The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will consult the family of the person who died about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute.
- A more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork, a bench) may be appropriate, but in future the removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed sensitively.

Bereaved Pupils Returning to the Academy

- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher will ensure that familiar and trusted adults are available to work with the child over the coming days.
- The class teacher will offer routine, a familiar environment, care and compassion for the bereaved child.
- The family will be invited in for a meeting before the child returns to school, at this meeting the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will establish what has happened and to discuss their return to the academy.

At the meeting the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will...

- Record the minutes of the meeting onto CPOMS to ensure this event is recorded on the child's permanent records.
- Acknowledge the death.
- Find out how the child would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved child to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'.
- Discuss how will the child will inform staff of this? For example, a 'time-out' card, a non-verbal signal or message.
- Inform all staff members of the agreement
- Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend.

A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved>



Appendix 1

Sample letter on death of a child



The Southwater Infant Academy

“Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together”

DATE

Dear Families,

Your child’s class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of , **NAME**, a child in **XXXX** Class. He/she died from **an illness called cancer**. **As you may be aware, many children who have cancer** get better but sadly **NAME** had been ill for a long time and **died peacefully at home yesterday**.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her. When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at the academy but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact the academy office on office@southwaterinfants.co.uk and Mrs Cavallo or Mrs Dilling will be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service at the academy in the next few months as a means of celebrating life.

Yours sincerely

Worthing Road, Southwater, West Sussex RH13 9JH

Tel: (01403) 733254 / Email: office@southwaterinfants.co.uk

www.southwaterinfants.co.uk / twitter @Southwaterinfs / Headteacher: Mrs Christie Cavallo BSc Hons QTS





Appendix 2

Sample letter on death of a staff member



The Southwater Infant Academy

“Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together”

DATE

Dear Families,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our **NAME** has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news.

Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way at the academy, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the academy office on office@southwaterinfants.co.uk. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk.

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. It is likely that the academy will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole academy community. I am so grateful for the close partnership we have with you as a parent community and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Worthing Road, Southwater, West Sussex RH13 9JH

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Appendix 3

Useful websites:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.griefencounter.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.thelauracentre.org.uk

www.rd4u.org.uk

www.penthaligonsfriends.org.uk

www.cruse.org.uk

Useful books for children:

I Miss My Sister by Sarah Courtauld: Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop

A young girl's sister has died and the impact on her and her family is sensitively illustrated with minimum text. Designed to be shared with an adult, it will help to start conversations, answer questions and allay any fears.

Missing Mummy Rebecca Cobb Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop

Beautifully illustrated and with moments of wonderful warmth, this is a touching, honest and helpful book about the death of a parent. With minimum text, it touches on some of the worries and fears that a young child may have after a death, offering reassurance and hope.

I Miss You: a First Look at Death Pat Thomas

This helps children understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have. It briefly covers a range of issues such as why people die, how you may feel when someone dies and what happens afterwards. A good one to use to introduce the subject.

Goodbye Mousie Robie H Harris

The story of a young boy dealing with the death of his pet mouse is handled with the sure touch of an author familiar with children's tender emotions. Simply told by the boy, in a matter-of-fact tone with a dash of humour, he recounts his reactions to the death of his pet mouse.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

The authors explain in simple language the feelings people may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to honour the memory of someone who has died.



Granpa John Burningham This award-winning book is a beautifully written tale about the close and imaginative relationship between a little girl and her Granpa. The last page is an illustration of Granpa's empty chair with the little girl beside it looking very thoughtful. No explanation is offered but his death is implied. This non-directive approach enables the book to be used for a variety of situations.

Badger's Parting Gifts Susan Varley (also available in Urdu and Arabic)

When old badger dies, his friends think they will be sad forever. Gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and to treasure the gifts he left behind. Sensitively written, this book will help children identify and begin to understand feelings associated with the death of someone they love.

The Invisible String Patrice Karst

This heart-warming story delivers a very simple approach to overcoming the fear of loneliness or separation from parents. Specifically written to address children's fear of being apart from the ones they love, The Invisible String delivers a particularly compelling message in today's uncertain times, that although we may be separated from the ones we care for, whether through anger, or distance or even death, love is the unending connection that binds us all, and by extension, ultimately binds every person on the planet to everyone else.

The Lonely Tree Nicholas Halliday

A story based on the life cycle in the natural world. The young tree is sad when his old friend the Oak dies but Spring brings joy to the little tree.

Am I Like My Daddy? Marcy Blesy

This beautifully illustrated and poignant book will help children bereaved when very young who struggle to remember the parent who died. Grace is in the process of learning about who her father was. Through the eyes of others, she learns about who she is today. This book is American, but relevant to all.

Pre-bereavement:

My Brother and Me Sarah Courtauld Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop

This pre-bereavement book is designed to help children understand how they and the rest of their family might feel when someone in that family is seriously ill. It offers opportunities to share concerns and fears and ways to manage difficult feelings such as jealousy.

Sudden death: Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute? Elke Barber and Alex Barber

Alex is only three when his father suffers a heart attack. All on his own, Alex manages to get help but his beloved Daddy dies at the scene. This is a good book to explain sudden death to young children using words and illustrations they will understand.

The Saddest Time Norma Simon

Explains death as the inevitable end of life and provides three situations in which children experience powerful emotions when someone close has died. The scenarios are an uncle with a terminal illness, a classmate killed in an accident and a grandparent who dies of old age.



Death of a baby:

We were gonna have a baby, but we had an angel instead Pat Schwiebert

A children's book told from a young child's perspective about the excitement and dreams of a coming baby, and the disappointment and sadness of a miscarriage. Beautiful ink and watercolour illustrations.

Goodbye baby – Cameron's Story Gillain Griffiths

Cameron cannot understand why his brother died and he gets angry. He creates a special scrapbook so that he will not forget his brother. Written by the author to help her 3-year-old son understand what a miscarriage is.

All Shining in the Spring Siobhan Parkinson

Matthew is looking forward to the new baby but there is bad news, the baby is not growing properly and will not live after it is born.

Christian:

Pip and the edge of Heaven Elizabeth Liddle

Pip is very young when he first asks his mother a question about Heaven. His mother encourages him to think through an answer of his own. Together, Pip and his mother try to find their own answers to many more questions about Heaven. As Pip grows older, his questions and answers begin to show a more mature understanding. By the time Pip is almost five years old, he and his mother have come to a view of love, God and Heaven that is both simple yet sophisticated, endearing yet profound. This book is perfect for encouraging children to formulate and answer questions about life, death, love, God and Heaven.

Heaven Nicholas Allan

While he is waiting for the angels to collect him, Dill the dog explains to Lily what he thinks heaven is like: hundreds of lampposts to pee against, lots of whiffy things to smell and bones everywhere. Lily completely disagrees. Luckily, they agree to disagree just in time for a poignant, last goodbye

Josh – coming to terms with the death of a friend Stephanie Jeffs and Jacqui Thomas

Josh's friend Max has died. The book explains with simple clarity not only what happens to the body of a dead person but also the Christian belief that we will be safe in heaven.

Death of a teacher:

The Copper Tree Hilary Robinson and Mandy Stanley

When Olivia's teacher dies, the children at her school are encouraged to think of everything that reminds them of her. Sprinkled with light-hearted moments, The Copper Tree approaches grief with sensitivity and sound judgement. A delightful and touching short story.



Other Useful Resources:

Work Books:

- The Elephant's Tea party – Child Bereavement UK
- Sunshine and Muddy Puddles-Winston's Wish

The References listed below

References:

CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL Child Bereavement UK 07.04.2022

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/17241/17244/17259/4298412526.pdf?timestamp=433701843>