



Federation of Savile Town CE (C) & Thornhill Lees CE (VC) I & N Schools Bereavement Policy 2026

'We celebrate our faith diversity and provide a safe environment where our children are happy to learn. We are kind, caring and respectful to others. We aim to inspire future generations of our school and community to become lifelong learners.'

1. Rationale:

In the event of a sudden or unexpected bereavement school staff may feel considerable anxiety about knowing how to best respond. This is understandable in a culture where death is seldom openly discussed.

1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen-years olds has been bereaved of a parent or sibling – that is one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person, and sadly, around 4000 children die in the UK each year. Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not 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.

As children spend a significant amount of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children may see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and may look to trusted staff members for help. Empathic 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. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavementuk.org

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

2. Objectives:

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.

- To identify key staff within school and LA, and clarify the pathway of support.

3. The role of the governing body

- To approve policy, ensure its implementation and review annually.

4. The role of the head teacher (Debbie Douglas)

- To be the first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To identify the person responsible to have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
- To identify the person responsible for recognising complex grief and make referrals to external agencies, as appropriate.

5. The role of the LA

- To advise and support staff
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

6. Individual roles & responsibilities

In the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher will assume the role and responsibilities supported by the school Well Being Lead Teacher.

7. Child new to the school

Before children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents should be asked about any previous experiences such as bereavement, which might have profoundly affected their child.

8. Procedures: in the event of the death of a child or staff member

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher 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. ALL staff, both teaching and non-teaching, should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Consideration should be given to how best to inform pupils, i.e., whole school/year group or smaller groups such as the tutor groups and who will do this, e.g., SLT, class teachers etc., and what information is to be shared. Pupils who are most impacted upon should be informed as soon as possible, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. Information shared should be agreed with the family.

4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
5. The school should be aware that the school 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 and with particular consideration given to those who have recently been affected by bereavement and/or are closer to the bereaved child or person
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher.
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.