



# Castle Newnham School

TRADITIONAL VALUES, BRIGHT FUTURES, ONE JOURNEY

## Bereavement Policy

Governors' Committee:	Curriculum & Standards
Adopted by the Governing Body on:	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
Signed: (Chair of Committee)	
Signed: (Federation Principal)	
Proposed date of review:	January 2023

## A. RATIONALE

At Castle Newnham School we understand that bereavement within our school community can be a difficult time. We recognise that the news of a death can be challenging for staff, pupils and their families and there is a need for it to be managed carefully and efficiently to support all stakeholders in the most compassionate way. By having a bereavement policy in place, it allows the senior leaders in the school to act with guidance in a time which also might be quite challenging for them.

This policy has been mainly devised to support in the instance of:

- The death of a pupil
- The death of a parent or carer of a pupil
- The death of a staff member

Links to other policies:

- Staff code of conduct
- Leave of absence policy

## B. AIM

This bereavement policy aims to:

- 1) Set out a guideline for how Castle Newnham School will respond to a death in our school community.
- 2) Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- 3) Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff after a school community bereavement
- 4) Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing body
- 5) Provide guidance for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

## C. RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The following staff members will take specific responsibility during the time of a school community bereavement.

### **The Principal or Primary Headteacher**

The principal or headteacher (primary) has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The principal or headteacher will (with support of additional SLT if required):

- 1) Liaise with the family of the deceased
- 2) Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to the chair of governors, pupils, staff and parents/carers as set out in this policy
- 3) Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death

- 4) Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- 5) Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement and ensure that supportive follow-up measures are in place
- 6) Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.

### **The Governing Body**

The governing body is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the principal or headteacher in the time of a bereavement.

The governing body will:

- 1) Monitor the staff emotional wellbeing, notably the senior staff who will have been supporting others, for example through link governor discussions, catch ups, if required.
- 2) Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- 3) Where necessary, arrange with SLT for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

### **The pastoral team**

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before the bereavement may have occurred, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- a) Provide direct support to bereaved pupils, staff and families
- b) Liaise with Bedford Borough and CHUMs to explore appropriate support for staff and pupils in school
- c) Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils, staff and families
- d) Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take time out and talk
- e) Communicate with families over time as appropriate and be mindful of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure support.
- f) Provide additional support if required during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school and ensure appropriate communication to new staff working with the pupil(s) concerned.

### **Religious leaders**

In the case where the family requires the support from their religious leader, such members of our community would be welcomed into our school.

## **D. PROCESSES OF SUPPORTING STAFF**

We recognise that those staff who are supporting the bereaved or know the bereaved family well, may also require support themselves.

Line management for these members of staff must continue so that there is an opportunity to talk on a weekly basis. In addition, support from the Bedford Borough Counselling Service and Care First will be offered.

Training for supporting bereavement may be appropriate and relevant CPD courses will be accessed if required. Whole school bereavement training can be introduced if required.

## **E. PROCESSES – ACTIONS FOLLOWING A DEATH**

### **Clarifying information and the wishes of the family**

The principal or headteacher will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how. However, in the case where a family is already well supported by a member of SLT or the pastoral team, the headteacher may delegate to them.

If the news of a death cannot be confirmed as the family can't be immediately contacted, the principal /headteacher/SLT/pastoral member will seek other, extended family members to help support the wishes of the family.

Once information has been obtained about the family's wishes, this will be communicated as swiftly as possible by the principal or headteacher via ParentMail to avoid news spreading via social media.

### **Sharing the news with staff**

- 1) The principal / headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- 2) The principal / headteacher will consider if individual staff members need to be told on a 1:1 basis depending on their own situation.
- 3) The principal / headteacher or other senior staff will contact any families where sudden news will have impact due to their own circumstances related before school communications are sent out.
- 4) The principal / headteacher will decide on a future course of action regarding staff meetings, assemblies and / or school closure.

### **Sharing the news with pupils**

The principal / headteacher will either communicate the news in specially arranged assemblies or will delegate to class teachers who will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it. In the case where a staff member would find this challenging, SLT or the pastoral team will support them in doing so.

A script of information will be provided so that all pupils are given the same message. This script will be shared with the appropriate classes/year group/whole school at the same time, close to the end of the school day. Pupils will be allowed free time afterwards as appropriate in which they can play/relax and talk to their teacher if needed.

In the script, direct language and actual words such as 'died' and 'death' will be used. Euphemisms such as 'passed away' or 'has left us' will not be used as this can be confusing for children.

### **Informing parents/carers**

Parents and carers will be notified of a death via ParentMail. This will explain the steps that school staff have taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information. This will also include the direct script that has been shared with the pupils.

### **Responding to specific causes of death**

We understand that some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

If the death is the result of suicide, we will use the Samaritans step-by-step programme to support in school.

In the case of a death due to homicide or family violence, we will use guidance from Child Bereavement UK who have produced documentation named 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter'.

If the death is due to contagious or infectious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

### **Responding to the media**

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The principal or headteacher and the chair of governors will have direct media contact only.
- Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the headteacher and chair of governors.

## **F. FOLLOW ON ACTIONS**

### **Attendance at funerals**

As a school, we recognise that grieving is important following a bereavement. With that in mind, staff who wish to attend the funeral of the deceased will be allowed to do so if:

- This is within the family's wishes
- The school has capacity to manage the absence of several staff members and that this will not cause disruption to the school.

If the family do not wish for staff members to attend or they wish for staff representation to be kept minimal then the principal / headteacher will decide who the most appropriate members of staff to attend are.

All staff attending a funeral must complete a leave of absence form (LOAF) as per school policy and will be asked to complete duties for the rest of the day if the funeral is early enough in the day, unless otherwise determined by the principal or headteacher.

### **School Closure**

On occasions it may be appropriate for the principal or headteacher to seek permission from the local authority for the school to close for a maximum of one day following the death of a member of staff. This permission would be sought following full discussion with the Chair of Governors.