

ALDERMAN RICHARD HALLAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bereavement Policy



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Our School Ethos

At Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School, the happiness and safety of our children is paramount. We are an inclusive school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities.

At A.R.H, we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole learner, physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

Aims

Bereavement is the experience of losing someone important to us. It is characterised by grief, which is the process and the range of emotions we go through as we gradually adjust to the loss. Losing someone important to us can be emotionally devastating - whether that be a partner, family member, friend, or pet. It is natural to go through a range of physical and emotional processes as we gradually come to terms with the loss.

Bereavement affects everyone in different ways, and it's possible to experience any range of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Feelings of grief can also happen because of other types of loss or changes in circumstances, for example:

- the end of a relationship, particularly divorce;
- losses of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom;
- moving away to a new location;
- a decline in the physical or mental health of someone we care about.

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 school community, there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. Whilst we hope not to encounter such circumstances, due to the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence, this policy outlines our school's proactive approach when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathetic 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.

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To outline support strategies for children who are suffering a loss or bereavement.
- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and the LA 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 and carers to protect the child from harm¹. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the PSHE curriculum. Children are taught to understand the importance of relationships in their life and what can happen when these relationships end, covering different types of loss. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through Art, English and Religious Education. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death e.g. Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way.

Children are given the opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death as well as being encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

As a school, we ensure children are given many ways of voicing their opinions and feelings, such as through the use of daily emotional check-ins in class and a focus on oracy.

Many children and adults who experience a death will be able to lean on the people already in their lives for support. There may be occasions where the circumstances of the death have made the experience traumatic or complicated for the child and they need extra help. Symptoms of trauma or PTSD don't necessarily come out of only violent deaths. A child who has watched someone die from an illness or who witnessed a car crash could develop symptoms of trauma. If this is not supported, this could turn into complicated grief whereby symptoms of normal grief are enhanced and children (or adults) might find it difficult to manage everyday life. In such occasions, where more than the usual support is required, our SEMH practices will be followed.

¹ [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Procedures

Where a child has suffered a loss:

It is important to note that children can suffer grief after different types of loss and bereavement. Where there has been a change in a child's life that can cause this, such as parental divorce or a death in the family, the child's parents or carers should seek to inform their child's class teacher of this as soon as possible so that appropriate support can be put in place. The school seeks to ensure there is effective ongoing communication with the child's parents or carers so that family support can be put in place, if required, and to ensure that the in-school support is as effective as possible.

Support provisions will be decided based on the individual needs of the child. All children suffering grief as a result of loss or bereavement will be given a link adult in the school that they can speak to about their feelings; this adult will regularly conduct emotional check-ins with the child. These adults can support other members of staff where required. For some children, more intensive support may be required, such as time to create a 'Memory Box', small nurture group interventions and one-to-one time with their link adult. In extreme cases, it could lead to a referral to CAMHS or the SEMH team if necessary.

Where a member of staff has suffered a loss

When a member of staff is suffering grief as a result of a significant loss or bereavement, they should speak to their line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team that they feel comfortable talking to. This can be done in person or by phone.

Based on the needs of the individual staff member, support will be put in place. Where a member of staff takes compassionate leave, as agreed with SLT, regular contact will be made with them to ensure support and provide emotional check-ins whilst not in school. These check-ins will continue on a regular basis once they return to school until no longer deemed necessary. If a member of staff needs additional support on key dates in following years, such as anniversaries or birthdays, they should liaise with their line manager.

External support may be provided where necessary, such as the Education Support Partnership helpline (08000 562 561) or support through Vivup.

There may be times of the year, such as anniversaries or key dates, on which staff require additional support. Staff should liaise with their line manager to discuss support arrangements that can be put in place during these periods. Please refer to the 'Staff' section below for details regarding key occasions e.g. Father's Day and Mother's Day.

Where a pupil or staff member has passed away:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher or a member of SLT 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 pupils and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to who should receive this 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, which will be made available by the SLT.
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, if required.
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded on CPOMS and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff

All staff at Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School are expected to ensure children feel safe, secure and valued when in school. It is vital that staff build strong relationships with the children at school and foster a sense of belonging, enabling children to communicate openly about their feelings and feel able to access support when necessary.

When dealing with a child who is suffering grief as a result of loss or bereavement, staff are expected to act with empathy, prioritising the child's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Staff should always ensure they are aware of any children in their class who have suffered a loss or bereavement and should act with sensitivity at all times. For example, when planning a lesson which includes texts or questions relating to death or dying, they should be mindful of how this may impact bereaved children in the year group. If there are set texts that are to be covered in the year group, such as 'No Outsiders...' books or novel-study texts, a conversation should be held with relevant children about how best to manage this moving forwards; this could include an opportunity to pre-read the text.

Staff who are unsure on how to support a child who is suffering grief are expected to access online training to support them in this (<https://www.minded.org.uk/>).

As a school, we always celebrate key occasions such as Mother's Day and Father's Day. On these occasions, staff must allow children to create a card for an important person in their life, being sensitive to the fact that some children in their class may not have a mother or father present in their life. For example, a teacher may say 'You can make a card for your mother or any other important woman in your life'. Where members of staff have suffered a loss and need support with these days, they should liaise with SLT to arrange alternative provisions, e.g. cover for their class by another adult to make cards.

Teaching staff must also ensure that any form of significant loss or bereavement is monitored and passed on effectively through in-school systems. These can be logged on CPOMS as an incident under that category of 'ACES' and should be included in each year's transition. This should be as detailed as possible and include dates of anniversaries.

The Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher, Miss Kedzior, has overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation, with support from the Senior Leadership Team. They are responsible for liaising with the Governing Body, parents and carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

Their responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
- Co-ordinating the planned action to manage school-related incidents in and beyond the school: decide who will be responsible for communicating with the family directly involved; decide who gives news to the school 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.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

In the event of the death of a pupil or staff member, the SLT are responsible for the following:

- 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 governing body fully informed.

Governors

Whilst the SLT are responsible for the implementation of our Bereavement Policy on day-to-day matters, the Governing Body is kept informed of any key strategies being implemented or incidents that occur.

They should ensure that the policy is implemented effectively across the school.

Parents and Carers

So that the school is best able to support children who are suffering grief as a result of loss or bereavement, it is vital that parents and carers communicate effectively with the school, and in particular with their child's class teacher. Contact can be made through the school website (<https://www.arhprimary.co.uk/contact-details/>), by calling the school on 0116 262 4003 or by messaging on Seesaw.

Policy Links

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following other policies and documents:

- Curriculum Policy
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policies
- Parent and Carer Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

Additional Support

If you wish to learn more about supporting individuals with loss or bereavement, you may find the following websites useful:

- www.griefencounter.org.uk
- www.winstonswish.org.uk Freephone National Helpline: **08088 020 021**.
- [Child Bereavement UK](http://ChildBereavementUK.org.uk)
- www.thelauracentre.org.uk
- <https://www.minded.org.uk/>
- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>
- <http://www.cruse.org.uk/> (for adults who require extra support)

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE LETTER ON DEATH OF A PUPIL

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of (name), a pupil in (year).

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 school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office on 0116 262 4003 and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating (name's) life.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE LETTER ON DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff, [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 ask 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 in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office on 0116 262 4003. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [Child Bereavement UK](#)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, although it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school 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 school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and carers 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