

Woodland Academy Trust

Bereavement Policy

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Woodland Academy Trust is committed to inclusion, diversity and promoting equal opportunity for all. All schools within the Trust share this commitment, providing an inclusive environment.

This objective applies to all policies and procedures and the Trust will at all times adhere to the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and any other associated guidance.

1: Introduction

We recognise that pupils and staff are affected emotionally and psychologically by loss, change and bereavement.

We are aware of the effect of this on pupils' social relationships in school and their ability to learn.

We acknowledge that pupils and staff facing significant loss need the support of others in the wider school community if they are to cope positively with changes.

We acknowledge that adjustment to such circumstances may take a long time and commit the school community to sympathetic handling of the individual during this period of adjustment.

It is essential that the school is informed when loss, change or bereavement occurs so that it can be supportive of pupils and staff.

It is essential that the school is informed when loss, change or bereavement occurs so that it can be supportive of pupils and staff. In this policy, all mentions of 'the family' refer to the family of the deceased individual. The wishes of the family will always be considered when carrying out any of the actions outlined in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

2: Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Children Act 1989

Employment Rights Act 1996

Equality Act 2010

DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 'Good Work Plan'

The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018

This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'

Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death'

Samaritans (2017) 'Help When We Needed it Most'

Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools' Information Pack'

3: Aims

We will ensure that all pupils and members of staff faced with a significant loss or bereavement are provided with appropriate support.

Our Trust will provide support to pupils who experience bereavement within their families, and support to pupils and staff on the death of a member of the school community, whether it be an adult or a child.

The way in which children and young people are treated when someone important in their lives dies has a profound effect on their future ability to manage their own lives. The caring and supportive school environment has a key role to play and we recognise that every situation is unique and demands careful handling, with the wishes of the pupil or family being of paramount importance.

In our schools, we believe in a holistic approach to the support and care of our pupils. When bereavement occurs it affects many people, not just the family concerned. We aim to ensure that the whole school community, both inside and outside the school, are offered the appropriate support and the advice they require.

4: Responding to a death

Breaking the news to governors, staff, pupils and families

- News of the death of a close member of a child's family or the death of a pupil or member of staff must be passed to the Head or Inclusion/Pastoral Team who will immediately try to obtain factual information, avoiding unnecessary rumour or assumption, which could only lead to further distress.
- Where possible the Head will liaise directly with the family and agree exactly what information should be passed on to governors, staff and pupils. All staff will be informed as soon as possible, ideally before the pupils, remembering part time and peripatetic staff that may not be in school that day.
- The Head Teacher, with the support of pastoral staff, will:
 - Explain what happened leading up to the death.
 - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
 - Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
 - Designate a member of staff as media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media as required. This must be done in discussion with the DoE.
 - Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and governors.
 - Discuss the arrangements for informing pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.

- Staff members that will be responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions.
- The Head Teacher and relevant pastoral staff will create the script, with input from the family.
- The staff team needs to be united and space should be given to anyone who is badly affected by the news.
- Pupils should however, be told as soon as possible to avoid rumour and uncertainty. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know, probably their class teacher. A large assembly is not usually ideal, particularly for young children. Opportunity should be given for pupils to ask questions and respond to the news. Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- The bereaved child may or may not wish to be present when the news is broken.
- Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs include the following:
 - Pupils that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
 - Pupils with a history of loss
 - Pupils with SEND
 - Pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour
- Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.
 - Where the bereaved is a specific child, a key adult will be chosen to support the child.
 - Guidance and support will be offered from the Inclusion team
 - If the family agree, a letter home to all parents on the same day may be appropriate. A suggested letter can be found at the end of this policy.
 - Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head with support from the DoE.

The first few days

- As far as is possible, it is best to have as little disruption as possible. 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.

- If it is a teacher who has died, the class should be covered by another teacher from the school whom the children know well and feel comfortable talking to.
- Many bereaved children and young people find returning to school as soon as possible a welcome refuge of normality after the chaos of emotion at home and their return should be as fuss free as possible. A bereaved child will require enormous support but as far as possible school life should go on as normally as possible.

Support for Pupils

- In supporting both the bereaved child and the other pupils, staff should act sensitively at all times, seeking advice when necessary, from both the Head and the families involved.
- The class teacher will be the first line of support for the child but should the child need extra support away from the classroom the Pastoral Team will offer extra support. For example, if a child finds it difficult to stay in the classroom when they are upset, it may be necessary to identify with them a suitable place, where they can go for some quiet time with an adult they trust.
- Grief is a normal and natural response to loss. Both school and families need to work together to note changes in behaviour and if necessary counseling from outside agencies may be sought. Where appropriate this will involve the agreement of the families. It should be noted that not everyone needs outside counselling; grief is a natural process that can be aided by the family and school working in partnership.
- Pupils who are bereaved through suicide, violent death or may have witnessed a death, will be particularly vulnerable. These pupils may experience PTSD (post - traumatic stress disorder) and are likely to need skilled help and support, but the informal support of familiar adults is still vital. These children will be identified by the Pastoral Team and the team around the pupil. Once identified a referral to supporting agencies will be made to offer counselling to these pupils.
- Following the death of a member of the school community a special assembly or remembrance service may be held as a way of saying 'Goodbye' and as a celebration of their life. This may take many forms, but will always be in accordance with the wishes of the bereaved family.
- If it is appropriate, discussions will take place with the family regarding attendance at the funeral, flowers and donations, being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

- 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.

Points to remember when talking to the bereaved child

- **It is really important that we are honest with ourselves and recognise that someone else may be in a better position to support a child facing loss.**
- Understand the age and level of comprehension of the child.
- Listen and consider the child's needs.
- Make sure the child's voice is heard.
- Use the given name of the deceased when speaking about them. (Nanny B, Gramps).
- If you don't know the answer to a child's question be honest with them and say so.
- Talk about the funeral if this is appropriate.
- Give the child the opportunities to remember even if this is very sad.
- Children grieve as adults do, but sometimes need more help in recognising and expressing their emotions.
- It is important to know what the families beliefs are around death and dying and work with that even if very different from your own.
- Be aware of Cultural and Religious differences within the family.

Support for Staff

- Supporting a bereaved child is very upsetting and emotionally demanding for staff and therefore informal support between colleagues is vital. Opportunities to discuss feelings and reactions with colleagues, in the staffroom, are necessary and important. Support and counselling is available to any member of staff and can be arranged through the Head.
- All staff should be aware of colleagues and offer support on an individual basis where necessary and alert a member of the SLT if they become concerned about a colleague's well being.

- Our staff also have access to the Educational Assistance Programme. The EAP can assist with:
 - 24/7 telephone and online live chat for confidential matters such as coping with bereavement, anxiety, insomnia, relationships and personal challenges.
 - Counselling for work life balance, home life stress
 - Financial information
 - Legal information
 - Specialist information on childcare, eldercare and disabled care
 - Support for managers
- EAP contact details are: Call: 08000 856 148 or visit <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>

<https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/helping-you>

Online 60 minute Bereavement: Coping with Losses Seminar

https://www.advantageengagement.com/p_content_detail.php?id_division=d00&id_module=m000&id_element=030&id_cr=192760

- Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend of the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place.
- The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Head Teacher and may include the following:
 - Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own
 - Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered
- All staff members will be offered the opportunity to speak to a member of the pastoral team one-to-one.
- Staff members will be given information about the in-school and external support they can access.
- A designated room will be made available to staff where they can go during break and lunchtimes to meet with other staff and share their thoughts and feelings.
- Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or make a referral to a member of pastoral staff.

5: The Funeral

- If appropriate, the Head Teacher will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral.
- With the family's approval, the Head Teacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.

- The Head Teacher and DoE will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

6: The media and social media

- Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- Only the appointed media spokesperson will deal with media enquiries and communications.
- Staff or governors will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the Head Teacher.
- If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Head Teacher and media spokesperson will release a statement on the school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.
- Comments and other activity on school-posted social media statements will be monitored and moderated by the media spokesperson.
- If staff governors or pupils find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the Head Teacher.
- If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

7: Behaviour and SEMH issues

Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:

- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of motivation
- Tiredness and irritability
- Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks
- Inability to take others' feelings into account
- Anger, frustration or aggression
- A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
- Anxiety
- Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them
- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness

The pupil's designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home:

- Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behavioural Policy.

- A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
- Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the Anti-bullying Policy, taking into account the pupil's needs and circumstances. All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to pastoral staff who will put appropriate support in place.

8: Specific circumstances

- The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the school community and individual pupils; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.
- Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live
- If a pupil has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- A member of pastoral staff will meet with the pupil regularly to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.
- All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to pastoral staff who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

9: Pupils with a life-threatening illness

- Pupils with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.
- The Head Teacher, the pupil and their family, and other relevant staff members (e.g. a member of pastoral staff) will decide how to share the news that a pupil is terminally ill with the school community.
- Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.
- If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the pupil will be identified and the Head Teacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

10: Suicide

- The Head Teacher, or other appointed member of staff, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.
- If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.
- If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the Head Teacher will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.

- Staff will be told about the death first, in line with section 4 of this policy.
- The script that staff will use to inform pupils of the death will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the suicidal act itself.
- Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any pupils and staff who require it.
- A designated room will be set up where pupils and staff can go to if they are struggling with the news.
- Liaison with the media will be handled in line with this policy.

Any information distributed to the school community and media regarding the death will:

- Be factually correct but not include detail of the cause of death or method used.
- Not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death.
- Not include details of any suicide note.
- Not include speculation over the motivation for suicide.
- Research indicates that pupils that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff will report any concerns about pupils to the Head Teacher and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made.

11: Cultural and religious behaviours

The school will keep in mind the cultural attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will make sure these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected, including the length of bereavement leave for members of staff.

12: Forces' families

- The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.
- Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change.
- Bereaved forces' pupils will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated area in school that the pupil can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

13: A death involving murder or manslaughter

- The Head Teacher will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.
- A designated staff member will be available to talk to the pupil to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.
- Research indicates that pupils that have been bereaved due to murder or manslaughter can be at significant risk of developing PTSD. Any concerns relating to the pupil will be addressed in line with the SEMH Policy.
- Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

14: Remembrance activities

Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly.

- The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.
- All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities.
- All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

15: Managing transitions

Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded.

This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:

- If the pupil moves school
- When the pupil moves to secondary school
- If the pupil moves class
- When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

16: Teaching about bereavement and grief

- Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death.
- Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching.
- Bereaved pupils and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required.
- Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.
- Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

17: Staff training

- All pastoral staff will receive training in bereavement support.
- If any members of staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to pupils or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will

Speak to the Head Teacher who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.

- The Head Teacher will check if the staff that work for third party providers that deliver extra-curricular activities for pupils have received bereavement training and will recommend them to do so if this training has not been undertaken.

18: Links to other policies and information

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policy

Appendix 1: Template of a letter informing parents of the 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.

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task today of informing the children of the death of a member of our school community.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. Additional support has been put in place for those directly affected as well as the whole school, however, should any parent feel their child needs additional support then please contact the pastoral team through the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Headteacher

Appendix 2: Support during the pandemic 2021

We have created this appendix in accordance with government guidance and advice from bereavement organisations such as Winston's Wish and Cruse Bereavement Care.

Considerations in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Support for pupils

- As far as possible, support for pupils will continue to be implemented in line with this policy.
- The Head Teacher will inform pupils and their parents via letter of the support available, both from the school and externally.
- The Head Teacher will arrange for links to resources that can support pupils with bereavement during the coronavirus to be hosted on the school website.
- Pastoral staff will arrange a number of scheduled sessions where pupils are able to get in touch with a member of staff to discuss any concerns or questions they have related to bereavement and the pandemic. Other staff members will assist pastoral staff in speaking to pupils during these contact points as required.
- Pupils who are known to be vulnerable will be identified and designated a key member of staff who will be responsible for keeping in touch with this pupil and their parents.

Support for staff

- Pastoral staff will advise other members of staff on how to support pupils as the school opens fully.
- Support for staff will continue to be implemented in line with section 10 of this policy as far as possible.
- The Head Teacher will ensure staff are informed via email of the support available to them both in school and externally.
- Line managers will arrange regular catch ups with the members of staff in their team, where they can discuss any questions or concerns relating to bereavement and the coronavirus pandemic. These conversations will be held face-to-face or virtually.
- The Head Teacher will identify staff members who are known to be vulnerable and will arrange for pastoral staff to contact these members of staff to identify any additional support that is required.

Supporting those who have experienced the death of someone close to them.

- If the school learns that a pupil or member of staff has experienced the death of someone close to them, the following process will be followed:
- The Head Teacher will contact the family via telephone to:
 - Acknowledge what has happened.
 - Express their support and the support of the school community.

-Discuss how the family would like the news to be shared with the rest of the school community, bearing in mind that not all staff and pupils will be present on the school premises at this time.

-Check whether the family want their contact information to be shared.

-Agree on one or two contacts who will liaise with the family and, where a pupil is bereaved, the child.

-Direct the family towards additional support they can access, e.g. bereavement charities such as Winston's Wish.

- The Head Teacher will share the information with staff members. Those staff members that are on the school premises will be told during a staff briefing and staff members that are at home will be contacted by the Head Teacher via telephone.
- The Head Teacher will inform the governing board of what has happened.
- A member of the school team will contact the pupil or staff member via letter to acknowledge what has happened and express their support.
- The information is shared with the wider school community, as agreed with the family and taking into consideration that not all pupils and parents are able to come to the school premises.
- The Head Teacher and pastoral staff will identify pupils and staff members who may be particularly vulnerable (i.e. those who have been bereaved or who have a seriously ill relative). Pastoral staff will arrange to speak to these pupils and staff members individually.

Remembrance activities

- Group remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies, will be held but would only be held with one pupil 'bubble' at a time.
- Other remembrance activities will be undertaken as appropriate, e.g. compiling condolences from the school community and sending these to the family.
- Where a death has affected the whole school community, e.g. the death of a pupil or staff member, the Head Teacher will decide whether a memorial service will be held at a later date.

Support for the school community during the recovery phase

- When the school opens to all pupils, pastoral staff will speak to pupils and staff members who have experienced the death of someone close to them and ensure the appropriate support remains in place.
- The Head Teacher and pastoral staff will discuss whether it would be appropriate for certain pupils and staff that have been affected to have a phased return to school.

Informing the DfE and HSE

- The DfE is asking employers and providers to tell the department if a member of education staff as died from coronavirus – there is no legal duty to do this.

- The Trust Central Team will be responsible for informing the DfE if a member of the school's staff has died from coronavirus. The family of the person who has died will be informed if the above information is submitted by the school.
- The Trust will report a coronavirus work-related death to the HSE if it meets the criteria under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) within 10 days of the death.