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## BEREAVEMENT POLICY

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<b>Approved by:</b>	Epsilon Star MAT Board of Trustees
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<b>Date Approved:</b>	April 2026
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<b>Next review due:</b>	April 2028
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# BEREAVEMENT POLICY FOR THE EPSILON STAR TRUST

## Introduction

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their loss, or sometimes the death of a member of staff or a pupil may have an impact on the whole school community. Whilst we would hope to not encounter such circumstances, we have this Bereavement Policy in place so we can be proactive, rather than reactive, in these very sensitive situations.

Usually, support and understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of our school, along with that provided by their family and friends, may be all the bereavement support most children or staff require. However, we recognise that referral to more specialist support may be necessary where the impact of grief is more complex.

## Aims and ethos

As we recognise that most children and adults can be effectively supported through bereavement and loss by those with whom they already have relationships, we want to equip school staff and others to respond effectively and confidently to a death in the school community. It is important too that we recognise that everyone experiences bereavement and grief differently and that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Therefore, it is our aim to:

- Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school community
- 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
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

## Roles and Responsibilities

### The role of the Trust

The Trust is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, the wellbeing governor through check ins with the headteacher and/or pastoral team.

- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and a representative, or bereavement link appointed Trustee
- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

### **The role of the head teacher**

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

- To have oversight of support required and provided, liaising with external agencies as appropriate
- To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- To keep the governing body fully informed
- To ensure staff are appropriately trained around bereavement and undertake actions set out in this policy (such as how to share sad news with pupils), including a deputy for the role of the head teacher should the event mean the head is unable to complete this role

### **Pastoral support staff**

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

The pastoral support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days

- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

### **The role of the Local Authority (LA)**

- To advise and support school staff as required
- To signpost to referral pathways and other means of support
- To provide information, guidance and support for all schools (available on Essex Schools InfoLink)

### **The role of staff**

- To provide a safe and calm environment for all
- To act as a 'trusted adult' to support pupils and proactively enable them to have the time and space to talk
- To monitor the wellbeing of their pupils, identify concerns and escalate where additional support may be required
- To ensure any safeguarding concerns are shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead

### **Procedures following a bereavement**

1. Wherever possible (and if deemed appropriate), the Headteacher will attempt contact with the bereaved family before taking **any** other action. This is to ensure any communications to the wider school community (and the media) are factual, avoid rumour or confusion and are aligned with the family's wishes. Where it has not been possible to establish contact with the family, and news of the death is already in the public arena, the Headteacher will need to manage this and will do so, taking advice from the local authority
2. The Headteacher will inform staff of any death and agree how information will be shared with pupils and the wider school community
3. The Headteacher and staff will agree how to share information with pupils in a supportive and age-appropriate way
4. The Headteacher will prepare a communication to all parents / carers to inform them of the death and advice about how to support their child, should they be affected
5. The Headteacher will agree a statement for the media, where this is required, linking with the local authority as appropriate

6. The Headteacher will adapt the school day and timetable if necessary to enable appropriate support to be provided. This support may be from school staff and / or from the local authority Education Psychology Service or other appropriate agencies
7. The Headteacher will make arrangements in school for a book of condolence and / or an area where flowers may be placed
8. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance will be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances
9. The Headteacher and staff will monitor the wellbeing of all pupils identifying any concerns and escalating where additional support may be required
10. The school will record any concerns about a child's wellbeing on their file to ensure any future school is aware that additional support may be required
11. We will provide on-going support – maintaining contact and acknowledge significant dates or holidays which may be especially difficult as well as preparation ahead of certain topics.

#### Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us</a></li> </ul>
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 08088 020 021</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/">https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/</a></li> </ul>
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpline: 0808 808 1677</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us">https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us</a></li> </ul>
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393</li> <li>• Further contacts: <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/</a></li> </ul>