



Bereavement Policy

Reviewed: April 2023

To be Revised: April 2026

Principle Academy Vision

We put children first, pioneering excellence and championing each and every child.

Statement of intent

At The Pioneer Academy, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school communities at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors and the wider school community during and after bereavement.

This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

NB. 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.

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'
- DfE (2019) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- 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'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SMSC Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Media Relations Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The Regional Director and Head Teacher, together, will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate.
- Informing governors and staff when a death occurs and arranging for pupils to be informed, as appropriate and with approval from the family.
- Being the first point of contact for staff, pupils and parents directly involved in a death, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.
- Responding to any enquiries from the media or the wider school community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.
- Liaising with the media as required.
- Monitoring media and social media activity regarding the death.
- Respecting the family's wishes in relation to what information can be provided to the media.

Pastoral staff (Inclusion Lead and Family Workers) will be responsible for:

- Undertaking bereavement support training and conducting in-school training to share their knowledge with other staff.
- Supporting the Head Teacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as directed by the Head Teacher.
- Supporting other staff members with communicating the news of a death.
- Making referrals pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support.

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the Head Teacher or pastoral staff.
- Seeking support from pastoral staff as appropriate.
- Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

The initial response

If the family or member of staff contacts the school to inform them of a death, the member of staff that answers the phone will transfer the call to the Head Teacher or the most senior member of staff available.

In all circumstances, the Head Teacher will contact the Regional Director immediately. Any responses

will be agreed collectively by the Head Teacher and Regional Director together to ensure the Head Teacher feels supported at all times.

If the school is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the Head Teacher will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.

The Head Teacher will gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information will be communicated to the school community and how.

If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the Head Teacher will liaise with the Regional Director, Director of Education or CEO regarding informing the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible.

If the death affects an individual member of staff, e.g. the death of a relative, the Head Teacher will ask the member of staff if they would like this to be communicated to any of their colleagues. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Head Teacher will discuss with the staff member what information will be communicated and how they would like it to be delivered.

If a death affects an individual pupil, e.g. the death of a parent, the Head Teacher will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Head Teacher will discuss with the family, and the pupil if possible, what information will be communicated and how the family would like it to be delivered.

If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to the school to inform the pupil of what has happened and to take them home. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for a member of staff to take the pupil home.

The Head Teacher will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police.

The Head Teacher will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.

In the event of the death of a Head Teacher or any member of the central team, the CEO will be responsible for the duties outlined above.

Informing staff and governors

Staff and governors will be informed of the death before pupils.

All staff and governors will be invited to a meeting by the Head Teacher as soon as practicable.

Absent staff and governors, including part-time and peripatetic staff, will be identified so they can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged.

Any information provided to staff and governors during the meeting will have prior approval from the

family.

During the meeting, 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.
- 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.

Informing pupils

The Head Teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.

If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of pupils.

The Head Teacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.

Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff that is familiar to them at the same time.

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

Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the script provided to them.

To ensure all pupils are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which script to use for which year group.

Where possible, a member of pastoral staff will be present when pupils are told about a death so they can help with answering any questions.

Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.

Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.

Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

Informing pupils in a large group

If it is not possible to inform pupils about a death in small groups, the Head Teacher, in communication with the family, will decide if it would be appropriate to inform pupils in a large group, e.g. during an assembly.

Where an individual pupil has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to attend the assembly and, if they do not want to be involved, appropriate support will be arranged for the pupil during and after the assembly.

The Head Teacher will tell the family and, where relevant, the bereaved pupil exactly what they will say and to whom.

The Head Teacher, with support from relevant pastoral staff, will deliver the information to pupils.

After pupils have been informed, they will go to their classrooms and be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told.

Informing parents

The Head Teacher will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.

If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher will recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.

A nominated member of staff will compose a letter to parents about the death (see appendices). The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to.

Funerals

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 CEO will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.

Transportation to and from the funeral will be arranged for staff and pupils, as appropriate.

Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

The media and social media

The media relations policy and media crisis handling guidance will be followed.

Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family and also the CEO.

Only the Head Teacher and Regional Director will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.

Staff, governors and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. The Head Teacher will investigate any post made regarding the death.

If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Head Teacher and Regional Director 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.

If a pupil 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 Behaviour Policy.

Support for the family

The Head Teacher will be the main point of contact between the school and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary.

The Head Teacher will invite the family into the school or visit the family home if appropriate, to discuss how the school can best support them.

The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and

conducting activities relating to the death.

Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support could include the following:

- Sending a letter of condolence (see appendices)
- Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died
- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school

Support for staff

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
- Organising bereavement leave

Staff who lose a child under the age of 18, or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy, irrespective of how long they have worked at the school, will be given a minimum of two weeks' paid bereavement leave.

Staff may take bereavement leave as either a single block of two weeks, or as two separate blocks of one week, each taken at different times across the first year after their child's death.

Any member of staff who loses a child under the age of 18, and has been employed at the school for six months or more, will be able to claim statutory pay for the period of bereavement leave.

Any member of staff who loses a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or during maternity leave, will not lose their entitlement to maternity leave and pay.

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.

Support for pupils

Pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member

A member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be made aware of who the staff member is.

The Head Teacher will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school.

Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes.

When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:

- The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
- The relationship between the pupil and the person who has died.
- The ability of the pupil's family to support them following the death, e.g. if a pupil's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the pupil?
- Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
- The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
- Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.

The pupil will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate.

If a pupil chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and staff members will be made aware that the pupil may not be able to work to their usual capacity. The designated staff member will keep in communication with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is doing.

If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told.

The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence.

The Head Teacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.

If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam, the Head Teacher will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations apply.

If a pupil misses an exam due to the death of a close family member or friend, the Head Teacher will report this to the appropriate exam board who will then make a decision as to whether special considerations can be applied.

Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Support for all pupils

All pupils, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g. the death of a staff member.

Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of pastoral staff.

Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.

Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. remembrance assemblies.

Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the Head Teacher who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with pastoral staff.

Behaviour and SMSC 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 Behaviour 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.

The school's SMSC Policy will be followed to ensure pupils that may be vulnerable to developing or experiencing SEMH issues following a bereavement can be identified and appropriately supported.

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.

Covid-19

A bereavement from COVID-19 is likely to be a very challenging kind of bereavement for most people. Because it is a challenging kind of bereavement, it is really important that people bereaved by COVID-19 are cared for and receive support, especially in the first days and weeks following their bereavement.

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 fortnightly 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.

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.

Suicide

The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.

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 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.

Any memorial activities conducted by the school will be held within two weeks of the death; following this, any memorial material will be given to the family.

Permanent memorials will not be held at the school.

Pupils and staff will be warned about the risks of un-moderated online memorials (e.g. those on social media), such as their comments becoming public without their permission and online memorials attracting negative comments.

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.

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.

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.

Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

See the managing critical incidents and lessons learnt protocol.

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.

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

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.

Staff training

All pastoral staff will receive training in bereavement support.

Pastoral staff will organise whole-school training sessions to share their knowledge with all staff members, including support staff.

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.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on a three-year basis by the Trust Board.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff members.

Managing a Critical Incident and Lessons Learnt

This guidance was written following the death, in tragic circumstances, of two pupils from Belvedere Junior School in March 202.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with:

- Media Relations policy

Managing a critical incident

As soon as school authorities become aware of any incident that might have an impact on it, a Critical Response Team (CRT) made up of senior leaders from the school, the Trust (if an academy) and the Chair of Governors should find out the facts and assess its significance for the school. The CRT decision will determine the response that will be implemented. The position can be reviewed as new information emerges.

During which time a meeting with the local authority and the school should be initiated at the earliest point, to ensure all facts are established and support is agreed for the school/s involved. At this point a point of contact/ critical team leader should be identified, this person will coordinate the school's response during the critical incident and also be the point of contact for all agencies involved. This can be the head teacher.

Planning and tasks

During the planning stage there is a need to consider both managing the incident but also providing support and guidance for the staff, pupils and families. The following lists identifies the key tasks that need to be considered:

- a school response depending on the nature of the incident;
- essential tasks, contingency arrangements and staff deployment;
- clear lines of communication;
- a resource contact list of external agencies
- support for staff, pupils and families;
- procedures for dealing with the media;
- plans for on-going support; and
- consideration of memorials.

(DfE a guide to managing critical incidents in schools)

The Local Authority should provide support from the Educational Psychology Service (EP) providing 'Psychological First Aid', intending to reduce initial distress, meet current needs and support the head teacher in communicating the incident to the staff, pupils and wider community.

The EP service should also support senior leaders to assess the significance and impact of the critical incident and plan their response by supporting in the preparation for communication with parents and communicating the news to pupils as well as signposting staff to additional services, resources and activities that may be beneficial when understanding trauma, bereavement and loss.

Initial response

During day 1 in school the following tasks should be agreed by the CRT:

- agreeing the school routine for that day;
- informing staff;
- establishing a dedicated, telephone line;
- setting-up recovery/designated room;
- informing pupils and parents;
- preparing/adapting a media statement; and
- assessing initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils.

(DfE a guide to managing critical incidents in schools)

The EP should support the CRT in what language was appropriate for staff and pupils. A member of the CRT should be nominated to lead on communications with the wider community.

A timeline should be created and an order of communication agreed with all involved within the CRT. All information shared with staff and pupils must be factual.

- outline the school's response and proposed plan of action;
- allow staff to ask questions and to get a response;
- outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare;
- identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk;
- clarify specific responsibilities for staff;
- advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries;
- advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents;
- inform staff of the support services that are available;
- reassure staff and pupils that they will be supported; and
- advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session.

(DfE a guide to managing critical incidents in schools)

The following timeline is an example that can be used:

TIME	ACTION	LEAD
07.00	Briefing with EP Team	
07.40	Inform specific Class Teachers	
08.00	Briefing Teachers	
08.40	Briefing to Support Staff	
10.15	Briefing to wider HT/Exec Team (if an Academy)	
11.00	Briefing to Trustees (if an Academy)	
11.30	Briefing to Governors	
12.00	Letters emailed to parents	
12.00	Media statement issued reactively	
12.30	Staff meeting to discuss activities for the afternoon	
1.00	Inform specific classes followed by non-curriculum activities	
1.20	Inform remaining classes in year group followed by non-	

	curriculum activities	
2.00	Inform classes in remaining years followed by PSHE circle time	
3.15	Presence on the school gate	
3.45	Staff meeting	

It is important to have someone taking detailed notes of when actions were undertaken, and also to co-ordinate the range of support to be provided to staff, parents and pupils. This support should be ongoing for the next week, and provided by someone either within the Multi-Academy Trust (if an academy) or the Local Authority (if a maintained school, to enable the Head Teacher and Senior Leaders to prioritise the children, staff and parents at the school. In the coming days, this support should also include writing the letters to parents and Governors, to keep them informed.

When informing the pupils, it is vital that the pupils whose classes were immediately affected would be informed first. Assemblies should be held in year groups to reduce the potential of high emotions and consideration given to the range of different groups among the pupils. The head teacher should communicate the news, as they are familiar to the children and are able to create a 'safe space' for the children. The information communicated should be factual and current, with follow up assemblies arranged for the children to ask questions.

During the assembly the head teacher should outline that there is no right or wrong way to grieve and everyone can grieve in their own way and their own time, some might feel angry, sad, just want to cry or not even speak and that is ok.

Depending on the nature of the critical incident, the school may have to liaise with the police before any communication can go out to the parents. The first letter issued should only give the facts of the critical incident, in line with any police guidance, and also provide parents and carers with support and guidance when dealing with grief.

It is important that the school and parents work together, in providing support and helping their child/ren cope during this time. To ensure this happens the school should provide daily letters, an email address dedicated to parents and a point of contact within the school for pupils who require additional support.

The school should release a press statement to follow the wording of the initial letter to parents, which should be circulated to the press agencies. By being proactive with the release of a media statement, this should reduce any press enquiries to the school.

Support for staff and children

It is important that staff are well supported during a crisis. In order to support pupils effectively, staff need to be kept informed, to understand the importance of their role and to be supported themselves. The needs of all staff must be monitored and appropriate support provided.

In addition to support arrangements for all staff from within the school, external sources of help should be identified and made known to all. Any counselling support should be considered within the framework of a whole school approach to managing a critical incident.

The CRT should identify vulnerable members of staff and ensure that they are contacted over weekends or holidays, and kept in touch over the coming weeks.

Below is an example of the support that should be put into place:

	Critical support (up to Easter)	Ongoing support (Summer Term)
Children	• Place2Be • Additional Counselling • Tailored PSHE lessons from Winston's Wish • Yoga and meditative breathwork • Drawing & talking therapy	• Place2Be • Music therapy • Yoga and meditative breathwork • Drawing & talking therapy
Parents	• Daily letters from school • 1:1 support from school • Signposting to relevant organisations	• 1:1 support from school • Signposting to relevant organisations
Staff	• Additional counsellor • Critical Management debrief through EAP • Bexley EP team • Supervision support for the Head Teacher • EAP helpline • EAP counselling • Yoga and meditative breathwork • Clinical practitioners through Shaw Trust	• EAP helpline • EAP counselling • Yoga and meditative breathwork • Clinical practitioners through Shaw Trust

Days and weeks after the incident

The CRT should continue to communicate the facts to children through year group assemblies, allowing them time to ask questions and understand the need to just know the facts. Letters should continue to be sent to parents and carers informing them of what had been discussed in the assemblies and then the types of questions that were asked by the children and the responses. Along with the letter to parents and carers, the school should continue to send out resources and contact details for grief and bereavement support.

In addition to this, the school should provide bespoke PSHE lessons based on emerging needs from the pupils, e.g. bereavement, kindness, loss, worries. An example of this could be the introduction of the book and the soft toy 'The Worry Monster'. This approach can be adopted by the whole school community and also shared with the parents and carers as a strategy when dealing with loss and worries.

School counsellors should continue to work with parents, enabling the school to intervene and support the parents in supporting their children.

The following is a list of organisations that can provide guidance and support:

Organisation	Contact Email	Website
Winston's Wish - childhood bereavement charity	ask@winstonswish.org Online chat option via the website	www.winstonswish.org
Child Bereavement UK - support for parents and those working with children when a child dies	helpline@childbereavementuk.org Online chat option via the website	www.childbereavementuk.org
Child Bereavement Network - supporting those working with children who are bereaved		www.childbereavementnetwork.org
Cruse - supporting bereaved children, young people and adults	Online chat option via the website	www.cruse.org.uk
Cruse youth website (Hope Again) - website specifically for young people and children	hopeagain@cruse.org.uk	www.hopeagain.org.uk
Cruse Bexley & Bromley branch - supporting bereaved children, young people and adults in Bexley and Bromley		
St Christopher's Candle - supporting bereaved children and young people in Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	info@stchristophers.org.uk	www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle
Grief Encounter - supporting bereaved children and young people in London and Bristol	griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk Online chat option via the website	ww.griefencounter.org.uk
Marie Curie - supporting bereaved family and friends		www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/supporting-grieving-child/questions-children-ask
LGfL collaboration with Child Bereavement UK - resources		www.bereavement.lgfl.org.uk

to manage a sudden death in the school community		
Slideaway - offer bereavement support to children and young people in Kent	info@slideaway.org	www.slideaway.org
MHIST (Mental Health Independent Support Team) - provide mental health support		www.mhist.co.uk
Anna Freud Centre - provide mental health support to parents and those working with children and young people	referrals@annafreud.org	www.annafreud.org

It may be appropriate to employ a time of watchful waiting; however it may be more appropriate to deploy immediate support to the staff, pupils and the wider community.

Commemorations, vigil and memorial

It is important for the pupils to be able to share their feelings regarding the incident. An example of this can be that each pupil write a memory or message on a slip and these hung on a memorial tree which is placed on display.

After the funeral, the school may wish to hold a vigil in a local community centre for the family of the pupils who passed away, pupils, parents, carers and the community to come together and remember.

The school may also want to create a memorial on the school grounds.

Lessons learnt from the tragedy at Belvedere Junior School

1. The detail in our Bereavement policy was accurate but not sufficient for the event that occurred; subsequently this document should be read alongside it
2. A number of books that were recommended by organisations such as Winston's Wish were purchased but took a few days to arrive. Having a resource box with relevant books, guidance leaflets and organisation details would have been useful on the first day.
3. The school and Trust had to source the majority of support and guidance themselves, rather than there being a national or local authority point of contact for this.
4. Although watchful waiting was recommended, the school felt it more appropriate to deploy immediate support and felt that this assisted the school in returning to a normality as soon as was possible.

Appendix 2

Template letter to the bereaved family.

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of **NAME** death.

There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

NAME was a **VALUED/CHERISHED/HIGHLY-REGARDED/WELL-LIKED/POPULAR/FRIENDLY** member of our school family. As a school community, we will miss **NAME** very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to **HIS/HER** friends, classmates and teachers.

If we can do anything to help you and your family, such as helping you plan the funeral, please let us know. We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With deepest sympathy

Appendix 3

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a pupil

Dear Parents and carers,

Pupil name

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you that **name, class** died **suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness** on **date**.

He/She was a VALUED/CHERISHED/HIGHLY-REGARDED/WELL-LIKED/POPULAR/FRIENDLY member of the class/school community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

Today I visited every class and with the class teacher, shared the news with your children. We took time together to reflect and think about **name**.

We have encouraged your children to talk to you about this. When someone dies it can be a very worrying and confusing time, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some children may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Children Bereavement UK website [childrenbereavementuk.org](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/) or <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/>

If you have any concerns about your children at this time, please contact us so that we can work together to support your children through this time.

Our thoughts are with **NAME'S** family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember **NAME** life.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Appendix 4

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff

Dear Parents and carers,

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you that **name** died **suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness** on **date**.

Many of you know that he/she was a **well-respected, much loved, popular** member of our school. He/she had been **job role** for **period of time**.

Today I visited every class and with the class teacher, shared the news with your children. We took time together to reflect and think about **name**.

We have encouraged your children to talk to you about this. When someone dies it can be a very worrying and confusing time, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Children Bereavement UK website [childrenbereavementuk.org](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/) or <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/>

If you have any concerns about your children at this time, please contact us so that we can work together to support your children through this time.

Our thoughts are with **NAME'S** family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember **NAME** life.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher