

Bereavement and Loss Policy Trust Policy

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Related Documents	
<i>Trust/school-mandatory policies</i>	Behaviour Policy Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Data Protection Policy Equality Objectives Online Safety Policy
<i>Optional school policies</i>	
<i>External</i>	

Document Control

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18/03/22	1.0a	Reference company name change to Learning Partners Academy Trust
22/11/23	1.1	Dates, staff names & contact details update to reflect current organisation

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Please note that this list may be updated by the responsible officer when change arises in the organisation, without the need for committee meeting review/approval.

1 Introduction

At Learning Partners Academy Trust (“the trust”), we recognise the need to offer support for the emotional well-being of pupils, families and staff should our school community be tragically impacted by bereavement.

This aim of this policy is to create a framework to:

- Support staff and pupils before during and after bereavement
- Enable effective communication and clarify the availability of support from the school, family and community
- Enable staff members to feel more confident when working with bereaved pupils, families and staff and to support them more effectively
- Help maintain the well-being of pupils, families and staff as they address death and the consequences of death.

2 Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each 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. COVID-19 brought with it an increased likelihood that higher death rates and bereavement would occur.

Within our school community there will almost always be some children who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope not to encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement & Loss Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these challenging situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children or staff require, although referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex.

Keeping lines of communication open with the family is very important throughout.

The school must be a place of security and support for each child.

The following guidelines will provide a framework for informing staff, Local Governing Body (LGB) members and pupils following a death.

3 Roles & responsibilities

3.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation, for liaison with the LGB, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies such as the Police. The Headteacher will oversee and ensure that the following is in place

- Monitoring progress and liaise with external agencies. This might include cross-phase liaison with primary and secondary schools

- Responding to media enquiries
- Keeping the trust Executive Team and LGB fully informed
- Being the first point of contact for the family/child concerned
- Advising and support staff, consult on referral pathways and help with the identification of more complex grief
- Considering whether 'bereaved pupils' becomes an identified 'vulnerable group'

3.2 The Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team must communicate this policy to the school community, to ensure that support is applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, and that a member of the Senior Leadership Team has been identified to take overall responsibility for support and training required.

3.3 Staff responsible for pastoral care

Appropriate staff responsible for pastoral care – this may include the HSLW, Heads of Year and class teachers – will be identified to take a lead role in implementing this policy. It is always important to consider the member of staff who has the closest relationship to the child and/or family when allocating a key liaison point.

3.4 All staff

All staff, including: LGB members, senior leadership, teaching and non-teaching staff must support and uphold this policy accordingly

3.5 Parents/carers

Parents/carers to continue to support their children and work in partnership with the school.

4 Procedures - bereavement experienced by the school community

- Where possible discussions should take place with family and their wishes considered before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious traditions. For those families who choose not to tell their child of the circumstances surrounding a death, this can lead to trust issues for the child later on - you can only encourage families to be as open as possible but we must respect their choices
- When the Police are involved in any death such as suicide, they **must agree the content and timing of any formal communication** before it is made to any members of the school community
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible and before pupils are informed and they must be provided with factual information. Communication should also include all part-time staff. A staff meeting or whole-staff communication will be arranged as soon as practicable and absent staff identified so arrangements can be made to inform them
- Staff should be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time, adhering at all times to related school policies
- The Senior Leadership Team should be prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural response and one that needs consideration and where necessary, response.

- The Senior Leadership Team should identify the most appropriate member of staff to be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. This would usually be a member of the SLT or the HSLW. Advice concerning support services available will be provided for families
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary. The school will help facilitate access to these services where they can
- Where possible all staff that have requested to attend the funeral or memorial service will be released from school commitments in order to facilitate their attendance
- Where necessary a media statement should be prepared by the Headteacher and shared with all staff.

4.1 Informing pupils of a death in the school community

- Pupils of all ages can experience grief and loss.
- School leaders will need to decide whether in the first instance, this information should be given as part of a whole school approach such as assemblies or whether only certain groups of pupils such as close friends and the class group need to be informed.
- A communication should go to families at the earliest opportunity (See *Appendix 1-3*)
- Staff will be provided with guidelines of how to inform pupils.
- Time and space will be provided to support pupils.
- Staff will be as honest as possible about their own feelings and experiences and talk about their relationship with the person in an age-appropriate way and considering their role in the school. All staff need to ensure they give careful consideration as to whether an empathetic and emotional response to a child would be reassuring or likely to cause distress. Sensitivity to the child is paramount.

5 Procedures - bereavement experienced by an individual pupil or family

- Parents, family members or members staff would make their own personal choice as to who they share their loss with in the first instance. School staff should then inform the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher in their absence so that senior staff can carefully co-ordinate any actions moving forward, including messaging and communication in line with the family's wishes.
- Consideration should also be given regarding whether the involvement of the safeguarding team would be appropriate.
- Staff should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a pupil throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points and on anniversaries (including a clear indication on a school's MIS where a pupil has lost a direct family member).
- It is important to note that a pupil or member of staff could be affected by the loss of a close family member, friend or even a pet.

6 Ongoing support

The school will provide on-going support to pupils on a case-by-case basis according to the needs and age of the particular pupil and available resources. It may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Attendance at funeral
- Arrange pastoral meetings if required including consideration of Pupil Premium funding/Free School Meal support if the financial situation has changed

- Identify a safe place with an allocated member of staff
- Establish a reduced or amended timetable
- Alterations to exam access arrangements if relevant
- Individual or group counselling
- Signpost to external organisations in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Referral to Home School Link Worker or Young Carers
- Additional class teacher or pastoral support

7 Use simple language

- Use clear words such as 'died', 'death' and 'dead'- avoiding euphemisms. The following suggestions would need to be considered in light of the age of pupils:
- You could start the conversation with: 'I've got some very sad news to tell you today that might upset you. As you know there is a virus called coronavirus, sometimes people with it get better but sometimes people die from it. Some of you may know that Mrs/Mr was suddenly taken ill last week. I have to tell you that Mrs/Mr died in hospital yesterday'
- Consider explaining what has happened from a medical perspective
- Stress the fact that pupils may have a range of possible feelings: 'it is important for you to know that strong and perhaps difficult feelings are part of the normal process of coping with this sort of situation. It will help to talk about what has happened and about your thoughts and feelings'
- Begin to explore 'grief' as a journey where emotions will change and at times be hard to regulate.

8 Be mindful of the language that you use

The language that adults sometimes choose to use to explain a death particularly when communicating with younger pupils, can be meaningless. Avoid phrases such as:

- '*Watching over you*' - this phrase could be frightening for a child or sound threatening
- '*Passed away*' - in life things can pass back and forth, so the child may be left with the question....'Will they come back?'- this often results in confusion
- '*Died in their sleep*' - this can cause undue anxiety, the child may begin to think, 'Does that mean I might die in my sleep?'
- '*Lost*' - this could prompt the child to think, 'if someone is lost why aren't we looking for them?'

9 How might a young child react to the news?

- Anger/shock/distress
- Show their feelings through their behaviour
- Ask questions
- Show no reaction at all

10 Delivering sad news

- Prepare for the conversation and consider how to tell the child(ren)
- Explain using age-appropriate language
- Check that they understand what you have told them
- Acknowledge their emotions- everyone reacts differently
- Answer questions that they may have
- Share
- Support
- Identify what the next steps might be

11 Useful links and supporting organisations

- Child Bereavement: www.childbereavement.org.uk
- Managing bereavement: A Guide for School: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb>
- Winston's Wish: <https://www.winstonswish.org>
- Cruse Bereavement Care: www.cruse.org.uk
- Hope Again: www.hopeagain.org.uk
- Jigsaw: www.jigsawsoutheast.org.uk
- Oakleaf: www.jigsawsoutheast.org.uk
- Woking Hospice: www.wsbhospices.co.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- Young Carers: www.youngcarers.net
- Local General Practitioners
- The Key for School Leaders:
- Supporting pupils: https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/safeguard-and-support-pupils/pupil-wellbeing-and-mental-health/coronavirus-supporting-pupils-through-bereavement/?uuid=d2278e44-adce-453c-b151-dc35afdd8a42&token=a3656c5a-cc94-4353-bebb-5987db81fb0&utm_campaign=KSL%20engagement%20-%20Spring%202020&utm_medium=email&hsmi=87429211&hsenc=p2ANqtz_vbK5GjCyMlnpKDy48Rbe-1TQy3MgynUCNUwR0ONsEtegioHs1QeufuJs7OJgLv-ixPlk&utm_content=87429211&utm_source=hs_email
- Supporting staff: https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/manage-and-support-your-staff/coronavirus-supporting-staff-through-illness-and-bereavement/?uuid=d2278e44-adce-453c-b151-dc35afdd8a42&token=a3656c5a-cc94-4353-bebb-5987db81fb05&utm_campaign=KSL%20engagement%20-%20Spring%202020&utm_medium=email&hsmi=87429211&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9FoUcMKegusldebENG3p8AEIxR181BGYUyLB9ILDkv9i_3Vb99bb5JAiSRJe8soeUMY2hj&utm_content=87429211&utm_source=hs_email