



**Cabot**  
Learning  
Federation

CLF  
Bereavement  
Guidance:  
pupils and  
family  
members

---

Cabot Learning Federation  
Date Adopted:  
Implementation Date:





## Contents

1	Background.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2	Rationale.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3	Aims .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4	Roles and responsibilities .....	4
4.1	The Trust Board and Academy Council .....	5
4.2	The Principal.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3	All staff and volunteers .....	6
4.4	Parents/Carers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5	Procedures.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## 1 Background

At XXX Academy, we believe that the key to becoming a great school is to ensure that all students have access to a happy, challenging and safe learning environment. To achieve this, we need to nurture a partnership with parents and students that is based upon openness, mutual respect and the highest expectations of all. Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

## 2 Rationale

This guidance refers to the bereavement of a child or family member within a school community. 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. Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Guidance in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

## 3 Aims and principles

**The core intentions of the guidance are:**

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and Academy Trust, and clarify the pathway of support.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/1> ). All intentions of this guidance endorse

that aim, as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

## Principles

### Following a Bereavement, we believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- be given space and time to grieve
- be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

### We recognise that:

- grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- the death of a child or family member has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and/or their family member and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

## 4 Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 The Trust Board and Academy Council

- To be made aware of the guidance and to seek assurance regarding the implementation of the document. In the case of the Trust Board, seek additional assurance regarding how the guidance is kept up to date.

### 4.2 The CLF Executive Team

- To act as a support for the Principal and Academy, signposting to relevant resource and support as appropriate.
- To update the guidance in response to new legislation, new resource or change in circumstance.
- To report to the board as necessary.

### **4.3 The role of the Principal**

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To ensure Academy staff are aware of the guidance and have access to appropriate training and support to follow the guidance.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the Academy Council fully informed of any bereavements that significantly impact on staff or pupils and then share the process for support during a bereavement.

### **4.3 The role of the DSL**

- Ensure any relevant student records are updated using CPOMS and relevant information is shared with appropriate staff.
- Make new referrals to appropriate external agencies when the need for support is identified (i.e. Early Help, External Counselling services)
- To provide opportunities for students and staff to talk to someone if required (i.e. school Counsellor, learning mentor etc)
- Share information with existing relevant external agencies (social worker when appropriate) to ensure opportunities of support are provided
- Provide information that can be used by staff and students as advice and guidance.

### **4.4 The role of pastoral staff (including e.g. spiritual advisors, school counsellors, mentors)**

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools.

### **4.5 All staff and volunteers**

All staff, including contractors and agency staff, and volunteers are responsible for:

- Maintaining an understanding of this guidance
- Implementing this guidance consistently
- Ensuring that any bereavements are dealt with sensitively.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

- **Procedures**

Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Principal and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

If there are significant facts that have been established around the death, for example, suicide, then additional support will be tailored to meet the needs of those grieving.

Communication about the death will be in line with the family's wishes and will be a collaborative act.

Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. Consideration of siblings and family members within the school community should be made.

A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.

The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances. Cultural dimensions will be considered.

Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Principal, supported by the Executive leadership team.

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. For example, on leaving or joining the Academy.

NB: Many of the guidelines in this guidance are only appropriate when the school community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a pupil or another staff member. Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a pupil experiencing the death of a parent.

Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual pupil should still be given careful consideration. If a child has been bereaved it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss, where possible. If the child is of an appropriate age and level of



understanding, talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.





## Appendix 1: Suggested templates for letter to parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

### Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of , a pupil in . died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her. When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you. We will be in touch soon to discuss arrangements we can make as a community to remember XXX by.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

### Sample letter to bereaved parents:

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of XXX's death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his friends and classmates. He/She was a much-loved member of our school family. If we can do anything to help as you plan XXX's funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of XXX's that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Principal

**Sample letter on death of a staff member:**

Dear parents

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement.

I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk).

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours.....

Principal