



Bereavement Policy

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VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Author/Reviewer	Substantive changes since the previous version
V1	Sept 23	DD/JC/GB	Updated policy for ONE Academy Trust. Merges the previous WAT & Believe policies.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bereavement is experienced by us all at different times in our lives, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community.
- 1.2 This policy provides a framework of how ONE Academy Trust, and the schools within the trust, will respond professionally, sensitively and compassionately to provide support and manage these difficult and sensitive situations.
- 1.3 At the forefront of this policy, the wishes of the bereaved family will always be sought and considered in our response.
- 1.4 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including the following:
 - Children Act 1989
 - Employment Rights Act 1996
 - Equality Act 2010
 - DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
 - DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'
 - The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020
 - Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018
- 1.5 This policy has been created with regard to the following guidance which is recommended for further reading:
 - [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 - 'Schools' Information Pack'](#)
- 1.6 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school/trust policies:
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Anti-bullying Policy
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Staff Leave of Absence Policy
 - Acceptable Use of IT (including use of Social Media) Policy

2. Monitoring and review

- 2.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years as a minimum by the HR manager and approved by the CEO.

3. The initial response

- 3.1 When communicating the news of a death to staff, pupils, parents/carers, or members of the wider school community the headteacher (or the CEO where the death is of a central team employee or their family member) will establish the family's wishes with regard to what information will be communicated, to whom and how this is to be done.
- 3.2 If the death of a pupil's family member occurs whilst a pupil is at school, the headteacher will follow the wishes of the family, ensuring sensitivity and care is provided to the pupil. Where appropriate, the headteacher may need to contact external agencies.

Informing staff/governors/trustees

- 3.3 Staff and governors/trustees will be made aware of the death of a pupil or staff member before pupils are informed, and always in line with the family's wishes. The headteacher/CEO will provide a sensitive and factual statement, to ensure the information shared is clear and communicated consistently. Staff may be distressed and should be encouraged to seek support from the trust's external wellbeing services provision.

Informing pupils

- 3.4 The headteacher/CEO will discuss with the family about whether they would like all pupils to be informed about the death and what approach will be taken. The headteacher/CEO will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed, how this will be done and what information will be provided to ensure that the communication is age-appropriate.
- 3.5 Pupils will be given time to ask questions, share their feelings and appropriate support will be provided to pupils as needed.

Informing parents/carers

- 3.6 The headteacher/CEO will have a discussion with the family about whether any or all parents need to be informed about the death. Where it is agreed to inform parents, sensitive communications containing basic factual information will be distributed including informing parents/carers how the school is supporting pupils and who to direct any queries or concerns to.

4. Funerals

- 4.1 If appropriate, the headteacher/CEO will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors, or pupils can attend the funeral. With the family's approval, the headteacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral and, in exceptional circumstances, may result in a partial or full school closure.

5. The media and social media

- 5.1 Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- 5.2 Staff and governors/trustees and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements or post any information about the death on social media.
- 5.3 If any members of staff are found to have shared any information about the death to the media, or on social media, that has not previously been agreed or is inappropriate, false, or malicious, this will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

- 5.4 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 school's Behaviour Policy.
- 5.5 If information about the death is circulated on social media before the school makes an official statement, the headteacher/CEO will release a statement, with the agreement of the family.
- 5.6 If staff, governors, or pupils find any false, negative, or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, this must be reported to the headteacher/CEO.

6. Support for pupils

- 6.1 For pupils who have experienced a significant bereavement (e.g. the death of a family member), a member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be designated to act as their main point of contact and support.
- 6.2 The headteacher will liaise with the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school and agree any additional support for the pupil, based on their needs and wishes. The pupil, where it is deemed appropriate, will be a part of discussions regarding communicating about the death and how this is done.
- 6.3 If a pupil chooses to return to school immediately after a bereavement, staff members will be made aware that the pupil may not be able to work to their usual capacity, and allowances will be made for this. The designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is coping when they are at school.
- 6.4 If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, the designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence.
- 6.5 The headteacher, designated staff member, pupil, and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school.
- 6.6 Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and any concerns should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

7. Support for the family

- 7.1 The headteacher/CEO or the designated staff member will be the main point of contact between the school/trust and the family and will liaise with the family to discuss how the school/trust can best support them.
- 7.2 The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.
- 7.3 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
 - Giving the family the opportunity to collect personal belongings
 - Inviting the family to a commemorative event held by the school.
 - Creating memorials such as
 - memory books

- displays
- webpages

8. Pupil behaviour following bereavement

8.1 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

7.2 The designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving in school. Any challenging behaviour demonstrated by the bereaved pupil will be dealt with sensitively and in line with the schools' Behaviour Policy.

7.3 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 raise their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will put appropriate support in place.

9. Specific circumstances

9.1 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 pupil or member of staff is terminally ill

9.2 If a pupil or staff member has a terminal illness, they or their family are requested to make the school/trust aware of the situation and the school/trust will ensure the appropriate support is in place.

9.3 The headteacher/CEO will liaise with the staff member or their family as appropriate, to decide how to share information with the school community.

Deaths resulting from suicide, murder or manslaughter

9.4 In cases where a suicide, murder or manslaughter is confirmed or suspected and the family do not want the headteacher/CEO to release information about the cause of death, this request will be respected.

- 9.5 If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the headteacher/CEO will take advice from the police and other external agencies before proceeding with any communications.
- 9.6 Liaison with the media will be handled in line with paragraph 4 of this policy. The media will not be permitted onto the school site and staff, governors and trustees must not respond to any media questions.
- 9.7 Dealing with a death in such tragic circumstances is likely to cause distress, anxiety and sadness within the school community. Staff will be supported and encouraged to access the trust external wellbeing services where required. Pupils will be provided with appropriate support at school and any concerns regarding the mental health of pupils will be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- 9.8 Research indicates that pupils that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff must be vigilant and report any concerns about pupils to the DSL and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made.

10. Cultural and religious beliefs

- 10.1 The school/trust will ensure the cultural and religious beliefs relating to a death are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected and also when agreeing on an appropriate amount of bereavement leave.

11. Remembrance activities

- 11.1 Following a death in the school community, the school may wish to conduct some remembrance activities such as a remembrance assembly. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activity being planned and will be invited to take part.
- 11.2 Any remembrance activity will be planned so that it is respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

12. Managing transitions

- 12.1 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

13. Teaching about bereavement and grief

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect any bereaved pupils they are teaching.

- 13.3 The families of bereaved pupils 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.
- 13.4 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.

14. Staff training

- 14.1 Whole-school training sessions to share knowledge on how to deal with bereavement will be built in to the professional development timeline.

Section 2 – Bereavement Support for staff

This section of the policy outlines the trust's approach when supporting staff members who have suffered a bereavement.

15. Bereavement leave for staff

Paid leave

- 15.1 Bereavement impacts everyone differently. Bereavement leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their distress and the practical arrangements related to a death.
- 15.2 The following guidelines set out the paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances. Not all employees will need to take the full allowance, and some employees will need additional time, depending on their relationship with the person who has died and the circumstances of the death.
- 15.3 In the event of the death of an immediate relative (spouse, civil partner or partner*, parent/step-parent, child**/step child, sibling, or a person with whom the employee is in a relationship of domestic dependency) up to **five working days** paid leave will be granted.
- 15.4 A maximum of **two days** paid leave will be granted on the death of a mother/father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren or son/daughter-in-law.
- 15.5 A maximum of **one day of** paid leave will be granted on the death of an uncle/aunt for attendance at the funeral.
- 15.6 In exceptional circumstances, up to **three days** paid leave may be granted on the death of someone outside the immediate family (as set out above). These circumstances would include (but are not limited to) situations where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or has to travel abroad to attend the funeral.
- 15.7 An employee should notify their line manager of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at the latest, on the first day of absence. In exceptional circumstances, applications for bereavement leave will be considered after the first day of absence. Line managers have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined above. Bereavement leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Parental bereavement leave/pay

15.8 To qualify for Parental Bereavement Leave and Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay, you must meet the criteria both as a parent (including if you had day to day responsibility for the child) and an employee. You might not be eligible for both, depending on your circumstances.

*Partner includes someone with whom the employee is co-habiting but is not the employee's spouse or civil partner.

**Child includes children in respect of whom the employee is the adoptive parent and legal guardians and carers.

15.9 The Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018 entitles parents 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/trust, to two weeks statutory bereavement leave.

15.10 Employees have 56 weeks to take Parental Bereavement Leave. This starts from the date of the child's death.

15.11 The 56 weeks are split into 2 periods:

- from the date of the child's death or stillbirth to 8 weeks after
- to 56 weeks after the date of the child's death or stillbirth

15.12 Parental bereavement leave can be taken in two weeks leave in one block or as two separate blocks of one week.

15.13 Detailed below is the notice you are required to give before you take Parental Bereavement Leave. How much notice depends on when you are taking the leave.

0 to 8 weeks after the child's death or stillbirth	You must provide notice of your intention before you would normally start work on the first day of the week for the week or weeks you want to take off work
9 to 56 weeks after the child's death or stillbirth	You must provide notice of your intention at least one week's notice before the start of the week or weeks you want to take off work.

15.14 The notice provided must also include:

- the date of the child's death or stillbirth
- when you want your parental bereavement leave to begin
- how much leave you are taking - either 1 or 2 weeks

15.15 In addition to parental bereavement leave employees who have been continuously employed by the trust for at least 26 weeks up to the end of the 'relevant week' are entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay. The 'relevant' week is the week (ending with a Saturday) immediately before the week of the death or stillbirth.

15.16 To qualify for this payment employees must also:

- continue to be employed up to the day the child dies or is stillborn
- earn on average £120 a week before tax (gross) over an 8 week period
- provide the [correct notice and information](#) for Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay.

14.18 Employees can request Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay within 28 days, starting with the first day of the week they are absent from work due to their bereavement. To request this, employees are required to complete a special leave form including the following details:

- your name

- the dates of the period you want to claim Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay
- the date of the child's death or stillbirth

14.19 Employees are also required to complete a declaration form to confirm your eligibility for statutory bereavement pay which is available on the government website.

14.20 If any employee is unsure whether they meet the eligibility criteria for bereavement leave or bereavement pay, assistance can be provided by contacting the trust's HR manager or the SAAF payroll team.

Annual leave

14.21 In the event of a bereavement, an employee will be able to request unpaid leave or annual leave (dependent on the employee's contractual terms) at short notice to supplement their bereavement leave. Requests should be directed to the employee's line manager.

14.22 An employee who suffers a family bereavement while on annual leave can convert their annual leave into bereavement leave (up to the maximum days outlined in this policy) and take their annual leave at a future date.

Unpaid leave

14.23 Unpaid leave on compassionate grounds up to a maximum of four weeks may be granted after bereavement. An employee must seek approval from their line manager before starting unpaid leave.

16. Return to work

16.1 In certain circumstances, an employee may not be able to return to their full contractual hours of employment following the death of an immediate relative – for example, when the employee's grief is likely to impact on their ability to perform their role, or where new child care arrangements have to be sourced or responsibility for the care of an elderly parent has transferred to the employee.

16.2 In such instances, and where this is practicable, the trust will consider allowing the employee to return to work on a part-time or reduced hours basis if an employee requests this. Alternative duties may also be considered. Any such arrangement would need to be agreed in advance by the headteacher/CEO.

17. Employee support

17.1 The trust acknowledges that bereavement leave is intended to support employees in the immediate period around the death of a relative. However, the process of grief, the natural reaction and adjustment to loss and change may take a significant time and will be personal to each individual.

17.2 An employee with any concerns about the grieving process impacting on their work performance should discuss this in confidence with their line manager. Some reasonable adjustments may be required to support the employee in their return to the full range of duties and responsibilities that they had before the bereavement

17.3 The trust invests in external wellbeing services that employees can access, such as counselling and advice on financial issues. Some employees may feel they would benefit from professional

help in coming to terms with a significant loss. Employees will be signposted to these services, which are provided in the strictest of confidence.

18. Health and safety

- 18.1 Bereavement can have an impact on concentration, sleep, and decision-making. Any employee who is concerned about their ability to conduct their duties safely in the weeks following a bereavement must discuss this with their line manager.
- 18.2 The trust reserves the right to request an employee to meet with an occupational health clinician before resuming full duties.