**Willow Primary Academy**

**The Piper Centre**

**Bereavement Policy**

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| Willow Primary Academy  The Piper Centre –  Taking PRIDE in *all* we do  Promoting Positivity, Nurturing Respect, Celebrating Individuality, Fostering Determination, Striving for Excellence  **Policy Review Schedule**  **Date agreed:** September 2023  **Next review due:** September 2027  **Distributed to staff:** September 2027  **Signed by SLT:** P Hales  **Signed by chair of governors:** W Ward |

**RATIONALE**

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community – a child or staff member.

We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and guiding principles need to be outlined and developed in an objective manner. This guidance will deal with bereavement following the death of a school pupil or staff member and will also address the procedures which will be followed should a child become terminally ill or die whilst at school and should be read in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive – “Guidance for Educational Settings when a Child Dies”.

This bereavement guidance is based on practice that has grown over time with the far too frequent bereavements we have suffered in Gloucestershire. This is practice that has been seen to have been supportive and helpful by those affected.

**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.
* That 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.
* That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

**THE MANAGEMENT OF BEREAVEMENT IN SCHOOL**

The purpose of this guidance is to give all staff a confidence in recognising grief and adopting a particular procedure or knowing how to respond. It should be noted that a universally accepted procedure outline or approach will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. To this end, the school will maintain a list of staff who have indicated a willingness to offer support in this way.

One of our main concerns must inevitably be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

**Upon notification of the death of a pupil:**

The school may be notified in an infinite number of ways. Past experience has shown that if death occurs during school hours parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site. Alternatively we may receive notification through the Child Death Review Team or the Safeguarding in Education Team.

Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the Child Death Review Team or the Safeguarding in Education Team will contact the school on the next working day. If in school holidays, the Child Death Review Team or the Safeguarding in Education Team will contact the school using the emergency contact list held by Gloucestershire County Council.

In that instance the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

**Dissemination.**

If school is in session, the Headteacher will inform the SLT and admin staff as they need to help in the next part of the process. The Headteacher will then immediately inform the child’s class staff. Where possible the SLT will move into cover the class to allow staff to come out and be told together.

These staff then need to be given as much time as they need to process the news and start to grieve. Some may need to be allowed to go home (if this is necessary it would be with full pay). A space will be dedicated to these people and to anyone else in the school who had a close relationship with the child.

If necessary cover will be arranged for the class whilst the Head begins the process of informing other classes – those with staff closest to the child first. This is never easy in a busy school. These two functions may overlap as staff may need to be taken from one class to manage the ‘bereaved class’.

It may be practical to call a teacher out of a class and ask them to let their staff know. Where the child is less known to the class this may be appropriate.

Telling the other pupils will be a decision for the Head and the class teachers. With different aged pupils there will be different decisions made. The teacher of the class with the loss may be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class.

We will also ensure we to tell Governors, Taxi Drivers, Escorts and Bus Drivers if appropriate.

Where it is felt that the children will understand the Head will visit the classes, usually with a photo of the child, and let the pupils know what has happened. The finality of death cannot be diminished, however if there are mitigating circumstances that may help, such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain, this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. The Head must try to avoid adding worry – if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals for example. Children must be told that while they may feel sad they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief.

Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge. This is not a time to propound one’s own religious beliefs.

**MEMORY TABLE**

Once sure that all relevant people have been informed the Head might consider setting up a memory table in the front entrance. If other siblings attend the school, the Headteacher will check with the family first. This might include a photo of the child, and may also have a candle, flowers, a helium balloon – whatever is relevant and appropriate for that child, depending on age gender etc. Consideration might be to have a memory book for anyone to come and write their favourite memories of the child. The book is open to anyone – staff, students, parents, taxi staff etc. Parents who do not live near are given the opportunity to send a message to be pasted in the book. People who have written in these books appreciate this chance to ‘say goodbye’. Parents who have received the books have been delighted by it and have spoken of how it has helped over time to read the comments. Photographs will also be added. Traditionally the book is passed on at the funeral and this is the natural time for the table to be taken down.

It should be ensured, as far as possible, that seeing this table on entry to the school, is not the first way people close to the child are informed of the death.

**THE FUNERAL**

The Headteacher will make sure that all staff are asked if they wish to attend the funeral. It may be that the school could not run safely if everyone were granted their wish and in that case difficult decisions will be made according to how close people are to the child and family.

The Head, or in their unavoidable absence, the deputy, will always attend as a mark of respect.

The memory book will be taken to the funeral and passed on to the parents.

**REFLECTION**

Following a bereavement within the school community, it is only to be expected that many members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of a calm environment in which to meet with other colleagues and spend some time in reflective mode. One such means of accomplishing this would be to allocate a specific room e.g. the Meeting Room for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.

**MEMORY ASSEBLIES AND MEMORY ROLL**

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. This can happen when staff feel strong enough to participate. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend, and tears cannot be helped, but they must not break down in front of the children.

The school will maintain a list of those pupils who have passed away whilst still at school. This list of pupils can form the basis for an assembly of remembrance at which we can talk about and remember our friends and keep their memories alive.

**IF A CHILD DIES IN SCHOOL**

*The school has a first aid members on staff that are fully first aid trained on site at all times and they will be called if staff have concerns about a child’s health at any level.*

If staff have concerns they will contact the school trained first aider who will call an ambulance or call an ambulance themselves. This decision can be taken by the first aider. If first aider requires a second opinion they will talk to the Head or most senior team member on site. We will ensure that there are always 2 members of staff with the child/young person if unwell. The trained first aider will always stay with the child/young person and the second person will do the running.

The first aider will assess the situation and request the ambulance service – your first aider should not leave the child if unwell /needing resus – they should ask someone else to call 999 whilst they commence care of the child/young person – resuscitation/ administering epipens etc **(please refer to Appendix 1 – Ringing 999 for an ambulance, a guide for education)**. The person calling the ambulance will immediately inform the Headteacher or most senior member of staff on site.

The first aider, Headteacher or most senior teacher available as appropriate to that situation will then telephone the parents and agree that they will meet the ambulance at the hospital or come to school.

If the child stops breathing the trained school staff will administer CPR and use the defibrillator that is on site.

**Once the paramedic/ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the paramedic’s decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered**. **If the parents have given the school an Advanced Care Plan to be followed in the event of death occurring e.g. no resuscitation this protocol will be handed to the paramedics**.

Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them, although staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent travelling in a car alone.

Even if it is obvious that a death has occurred in school, the procedures outlined above must still be followed as a nurse/first aider is unable to confirm a death – that is the responsibility of a doctor/senior paramedic.

If the parents have not arrived at school, once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child’s family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Headteacher.

The school, will notify the Local Authority if there is a death in school.

The above procedures and protocols will then apply as for a death out of school.

**IF A CHILD DIES ON A SCHOOL TRIP.**

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on a trip, then the adult with the child or the trip leader should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher. The school will take the responsibility of contacting the parents.

Again, once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.

The off sites visits protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed.

The Local Authority must be informed and the Headteacher will do this.

The above procedures and protocols will then apply as for a death out of school.

**ON GOING SUPPORT**

**For staff:**

The Council’s Occupational Health Team are responsible for the health and wellbeing of staff and can offer group or individual sessions from a member of their counselling team for any staff member(s) affected by the death of a pupil or colleague. This support is available to all schools and free to those that subscribe to the Occupational Health service (a charge to cover costs may apply to non subscription schools). In addition if school purchase the Employee Assistance Programme this can offer support by telephone in emergencies 24/7.

To find out more contact Occupational Health on the number shown in the Useful Contacts section.

The Educational Psychology Team, Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning and Safeguarding in Education Team all offer support in times of bereavement.

**For Pupils:**

Experience has shown that most pupils can be supported by the school staff, and that each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach. *The school nurse can help some pupils understand.* The Educational Psychology Team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

Social Stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss and the Autism Team have some generic stories and will help staff produce specific stories as needed.

The PSHE co-ordinator will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss.

Winston’s Wish provides specialist bereavement support services, including for bereavement by accident or illness, after suicide, murder or manslaughter and deaths that occur in the military. Their experienced bereavement support team provide bereaved children and families with the tools to come to terms with their grief.

The Educational Psychology Team, Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning and Safeguarding in Education Team all offer support in times of bereavement.

**For the family:**

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents’ wishes.

It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on-going links. Each family will be different, however the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

**THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF:**

In general the same principles and procedures apply as they do for the death of a pupil, however if the death is unusual or there are suspicious circumstances it is best to take advice from the Police and Coroner before information is cascaded.

In addition to the above the school will notify the Local Authority/Academy Trust as employer and the DfE.

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/informing-dfe-of-the-death-of-a-colleague-across-childrens-services](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/informing-dfe-of-the-death-of-a-colleague-across-childrens-services#_blank)



Appendix 1

Ringing 999 for an ambulance, a guide for education

It is always better if someone who is with the patient can ring 999, so you will need to get a telephone to the patient or get the patient to a telephone.

This is important for a variety of reasons, if the call is about an illness the call handler may want to know if there is a rash, what their breathing sounds like, any rapid swelling of the lips, face throat or tongue, does their skin feel a normal temperature etc. If the call is about an injury the call handler may ask questions like, is the limb cold, pale or blue, can the patient weight-bear, are there pins and needles in the limb, any bleeding etc.

When you first ring 999 you will go through to an emergency operator who will ask you what service you require (Police, Fire, **Ambulance** or Coastguard)

The South Western Ambulance Service uses a triage tool called Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS). MPDS is an International Academy of Emergency dispatch computer based operating system that provides a suite of clinical protocols for triaging 999 calls based on the symptoms reported when calling. Calls are prioritised so that patients with life threatening conditions receive the fastest response. The ambulances are only sent on lights and sirens to the most serious conditions, thus minimizing the risk to other road users and the public.- (NB a fire engine might be deployed depending on quickest response).

When you are connected to the ambulance service you will initially be asked if the patient is breathing, you will then be asked if they are awake, or if there is any serious bleeding. If the patient is awake & breathing you will be asked what the problem is, at this point we only want to know a brief summary of what is happening, i.e. “they have injured their ankle”, “they have breathing difficulties” etc. and how this has happened.

You will then be asked to confirm the address of the emergency.

The call will then be triaged; in order to do this effectively we need to speak to either the patient or someone with the patient and we will also want to know the age of the child.

The call handler will carry out a safe effective assessment of the symptoms reported, as the clinical assessment progresses; each answer determines the next question to be asked.

Obviously these questions will vary depending on the symptoms and condition of the patient so it really requires the patient or someone with the patient to answer these questions.

By answering these questions it enables us to prioritise the call response. We may get a clinician (Paramedic, nurse or doctor) to call you back who will assess further & also might ask you if the school or the parents are able to transport the patient to hospital, Doctors surgery or Minor Injury Unit (MIU) following the assessment.

# If, when asked is the patient conscious and breathing, you answer no to either then this could potentially be life threatening, and an ambulance will be dispatched immediately or diverted from a lower priority call.

**If someone is not breathing the call handler will talk you through what you can do to help, this will include instructions on how to commence Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and will require you and the phone to be next to the patient. You will be asked to put the phone on loudspeaker and will be asked to shout out the chest compressions as you give them, so the call handler knows what is happening.**

**Do not stop CPR as soon as the Paramedics arrive as they will require a few seconds to assemble any equipment required.**

**Important – you don’t need to be First Aid trained, all instructions will be given by the call handler.**

If the child has an Advanced Care Plan these will have been shared with ambulance control and are part of their drop down so advice may not be given for basic life support.

List of online resources and information

Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service - <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/educational-psychology-service-eps/>

[www.ghll.org.uk](http://www.ghll.org.uk) – *the website of Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning*

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) – *a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community*.

[www.acorns.org.uk](file:///C:\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\2XU0XCDS\www.acorns.org.uk) – *the website of Acorns Children’s Hospice, our local Children’s Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers.*

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)-*a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss*

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/> *An organisation offering bereavement support*

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> *federation of organisations*

[www.gscb.org.uk](http://www.gscb.org.uk) *– the website of Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive*

<https://ticplus.org.uk/> *Tic Plus supports young people with issues such as depression, anxiety, bereavement, bullying, anger, relationship problems, low self-esteem and self-harm.*

<https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/coronavirus-connection-hub/schools/> *- the website of the Diocese of Gloucester*

Useful Contacts

Child Death Review Co-ordinator

[cdop@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:cdop@gloucestershire.gov.uk) or 01452 426228

Gloucestershire County Council Occupational Health

[ohu@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:ohu@gloucestershire.gov.uk) or 01452 425073 option 2

Gloucestershire Safeguarding in Education Partnership

[gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk) or 01452 426221

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

[childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk) or 01452 426565

Books on Bereavement

*GRANPA*John Burningham (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3)  
Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

*GRANDAD, I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU*De Bode and Broere ( Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8)   
A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

*WHEN DINOSAURS DIE*L & M Brown (Little, Brown, 1996, hb, ISBN 0-316-10197-7)   
Charming busy anthropomorphic pictures of dinosaurs illustrate topics and questions and a range of answers about death: Saying Goodbye; Customs and beliefs about death; Why do people die? What does "dead" mean? It is also quite acute psychologically, acknowledging that disbelief, anger, fear, and sadness are common feelings when someone dies. Expensive, but attractive and appealing to children.

*REMEMBERING GRANDAD*Sheila and Kate Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)  
A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.   
  
*LIPLAP'S WISH*Jonathan London and Sylvia Long (Chronicle Books, 1994, ISBN 0-8118-0505-0)   
Liplap the rabbit's grandma has died, and his mother tells him of the rabbit legend that "long ago, when the first rabbits died, they became stars in the sky. And to this day, they come out at night and watch over us. And they remind us that our loved ones shine forever in our hearts… When Liplap asks if a star might be his grandma, his mother replies, "I think you could wish it were." Could be considered "twee" and lacking honest engagement with the subject,

*FRED*Posy Simmons (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)   
When Fred the cat dies his owners, Nick and Sophie, attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

*LIFETIMES*Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9)   
full title: *Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between*– a beautiful way to explain life and death to children. This book places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time.It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants. For people. For birds”. Whilst not exactly comforting, it tells the truth, puts death in perspective, Don't let the rather murky cover put children off - it belies the attractive illustrations within of plants and creatures, alive and dead.

*BADGER'S PARTING GIFTS*Susan Varley (Collins Picture Lions, pb, 1992)   
An old favourite, a charming illustrated book in which a very old and much loved badger dies. The forest animals gather and reminisce about the important part Badger played in their lives, and as time passes memories of Badger make them smile. These memories were different for each of them, including very recognisable things like a favourite recipe or showing someone how to knot a tie - Badger's "parting gifts.

*WE LOVE THEM*Martin Waddell (Walker Books,1990, ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)   
Death is seen very much as part of life in this nicely illustrated story of life in the country, which conveys the idea that life goes on and that old creatures give way to young ones. But it is a bit too matter of fact about loss - barely is the old dog dead than the children have found a new one, is there an implicit message that dead pets (and people?) are easily replaced.

*GRANDMA'S BILL*Martin Waddell (Macdonald Young Books, pb, ISBN 0- 7500-0307-3)   
Bill's grandma is a widow, and he learns about her "other Bill" by looking through her photo album with her. A bit too stereotypically suburban and middle class for general appeal perhaps. Some like its ordinariness, gentleness and factual accuracy, and couldn't fault what it had to say about death and living on in memories and in the family.

*I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU*H Wilhelm (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985)   
A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated.

*I FEEL SAD*(Wayland, ISBN 0-7052-1406-6)   
Not specifically about death, but about different ways of expressing sadness. Could be a useful opening for a conversation about a bereavement, or about coping with feelings.

*A BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR DANIEL*  
Juliet Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)   
This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly",