Westfield Nursery School Bereavement Policy

Date policy last reviewed: May 2025

Signed by:

_____	**Headteacher**	**Date:**	_____
_____	**Chair of governors**	**Date:**	_____

Added May 2026
-Updated reference to relevant 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
-Added links to suicide support

Contents:

Vision & Statement of Intent & Objectives

1. Legal Framework
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. The Initial Response
4. Informing Staff and Governors
5. Informing Pupils
6. Informing Parents
7. Funerals
8. The Media and Social Media
9. Support for the Family
10. Support for Staff
11. Support for Pupils
12. Specific Circumstances
13. Children's Understanding of Death: Two Years to Five Years Old
14. Children's Grief
15. Accepting the Child's Experience
16. Time to Grieve
17. Talking to children
18. Key Points to Remember
19. Do's and Don'ts
20. Specialist Help
21. Behaviour and SEMH Issues
22. Remembrance Activities
23. Managing Transitions
24. Teaching about Bereavement and Grief
25. Staff Training
26. Monitoring and Review

Appendices

1. Feelings which may be experienced when someone is bereaved
2. Different Cultures and Beliefs
3. Books which can be used to support young children
4. Sudden and Traumatic Death and Bereavement

Vision
At Westfield Nursery we aim to deliver against our vision ‘Inspired beginnings, outstanding futures.’

Statement of Intent
Westfield Nursery School is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and 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 time of death or dying. Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve.

We understand bereavement is faced by members of our school community 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.

Please note: 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.

Objectives
Bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. This policy will provide guidelines to be used following a bereavement. The aim is to:
-Be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens.
-Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively, and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

5. 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
- Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018
- The Parental Bereavement Leave Regulations 2020

This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- 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 (2021) 'Help When We Needed it Most'
- Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools' Information Pack'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy
- Reviewing this policy with the headteacher on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness

The headteacher 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

Staff will be responsible for:

- Undertaking bereavement support training as required
- Supporting the headteacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy
- Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as directed by the headteacher
- Making referrals for pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support
- Seeking support as appropriate

The media spokesperson will be responsible for:

- 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

7. 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 headteacher or the most senior member of staff available.

If the school is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the headteacher will contact the family by phone.

The headteacher 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 appropriate.

If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the headteacher will inform 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 headteacher will ask the member of staff if they would like this to be communicated to any of their colleagues. If it is decided the death will be communicated, the headteacher 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 headteacher will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided the death will be communicated, the headteacher will discuss with the family 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.

The headteacher will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police, and will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable.

In the event of the death of the headteacher, the school business manager will be responsible for the duties outlined above.

8. 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 headteacher as soon as practicable. Absent staff and governors, including part-time 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 headteacher 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
- Designate a member of staff as media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media as required
- 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 headteacher will create the script, with input from the family.

Informing Pupils

The headteacher 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 headteacher will strongly recommend to the family 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 headteacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.

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

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.

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 who they can go to in school for support.

Funerals

If appropriate, the headteacher will discuss with the family whether any staff or governors are able to 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 who may want to attend.

The headteacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed during the funeral. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

The Media and Social Media

Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family. Only the appointed media spokesperson will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff and governors will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.

Staff and governors will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the headteacher. If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the headteacher and/ or media spokesperson will release a statement on the school's communication systems, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.

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.

Support for the Family

The headteacher 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 headteacher will invite the family into the school 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 may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sending a letter of condolence
- 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 headteacher, and may include the following:

- Ensuring the staff member is supported by their colleagues
- Organising bereavement leave

Any member of staff who loses a child under the age of 18, or suffers 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; if the staff member has been employed at the school for at least 26 weeks up to the end of the 'relevant week' (i.e. the week, ending with a Saturday, immediately before the week of the death or stillbirth), they will be able to claim Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (SPBP). Staff should seek advice from the schools HR provider regarding time off.

All staff members will be offered the opportunity to speak to the Headteacher or other nominated staff member one-to-one. Staff members will be given information about the internal 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 headteacher 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

If the family choose a pupil attends school immediately after a bereavement 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 family during their absence. The headteacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.

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

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 staff in their class.

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. making a card.

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.

Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live or 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 staff will meet with the pupil fortnightly. 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 safeguarding 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. The headteacher, their family, and other relevant staff members 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 headteacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

Suicide - The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours. The headteacher, 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 the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming. Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any pupils and staff who require it.

Liaison with the media will be handled in line with the media and social media section of 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

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 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.

Traumatic Bereavement - A traumatic loss is one that is sudden and unexpected and often results from horrific or frightening circumstances. This includes death from violence/ crime, suicide and deaths through alcohol and drugs. A traumatic loss can give rise to special problems and specialist support should be advised. Where a death involves murder or manslaughter - The headteacher will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened. Age-appropriate support will be offered to the pupil. See Appendix 4

Children's Understanding of Death: Two Years to Five Years Old
During their development between the age of two to five, children do not understand that death is irreversible. For example, a four-year-old child may be concerned that although nanny was dead, she should have come home by now. This example illustrates how children at this stage do not understand the finality of death and nor do they understand what the term "dead" means. As the cognitive understanding of children in this age range is limited, they can sometimes demonstrate less of a reaction to the news of the death and might promptly go out to play on hearing the news of the death.

Children aged between two and five years old have difficulty with the abstract concepts surrounding death. For instance, they might be confused as to how one person can be in a grave and be in heaven at the same time. They will become further confused if they are told that the deceased person is simply sleeping and this in turn could make them fearful of falling asleep or seeing anyone else asleep. If they have been told that the person who has died has gone on a long journey, they may await their return. If they are told the person is lost they may have increased fears about getting lost or losing something or someone.

At this age bereaved children can become involved in omnipotence or magical thinking. This refers to the concept that bereaved children believe that their actions, inaction, words, behaviors or thoughts are directly responsible for their loved one's death. This form of thinking is not exclusive to this particular age group and can be experienced by many bereaved children. It is essential that you explain to the bereaved child that the death was not in any way their fault or responsibility. The need to reassure the grieving child that nothing they said / didn't say, did or didn't do caused the death is paramount.

Children's Grief
For many children, the death of a parent, caregiver, sibling, or grandparent is an experience they are faced with early in life. Sometimes people think a child or young person who is bereaved at a young age will not be greatly affected, as they are too young to understand the full implications of death. This is untrue and unhelpful. Even babies are able to experience loss. A baby cannot cognitively process the implications of the bereavement but that does not mean that they do not feel the loss. See Appendix 1 Emotions which can be experienced when grieving.

Accepting the Child's Experience
Children need to be given the opportunity to grieve as any adult would. Trying to ignore or avert the child's grief is not protective, in fact it can prove to be extremely damaging as the child enters adulthood. Children and young people regardless of their age need to be encouraged to talk about how they are feeling and supported to understand their emotions.

It is also important to remember that children grieve in different ways. Grief is unique and therefore it is not wise to assume that all children and young people will experience the same emotions, enact the same behaviour or respond similarly to other grieving children. A child's grief differs from that of an adult's grief because it alters as they develop.

Time to Grieve
Children often revisit the death and review their emotions and feelings about their bereavement as they move through their stages of development. Children and young people do not have the emotional capacity to focus on their grief for long periods of time and therefore it is not uncommon for grieving children to become distracted by play. This is a protective mechanism which allows the child to be temporarily diverted from the bereavement.

Bereaved children need time to grieve and in order for them to address the bereavement they need to be given the facts regarding the death in language appropriate to their age or level of comprehension.

Talking to Children
It is understandable that many caregivers are reluctant to talk to the child or young person about the death as they do not want to cause distress or fear. Children and young people

who are bereaved need to know that their loved one has died, how they died and where they are now. Failure to be honest with the grieving child or young person means that their grief is not being acknowledged and this can cause problems later on.

If the bereaved child wants to ask questions about death and what dying means, answer them truthfully and if you do not know the answer to a specific question don't be tempted to make the answer up. Assure the child or young person that although you do not know the answer to their question you will find out for them.

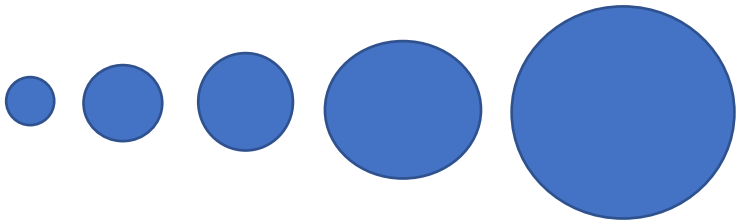
Children need answers to questions such as
-Who died?
-Where did they die?
-When did they die?
-Why did they die?
-What happened next? (funeral)
They need enough information to answer their questions and enough detail to match their developmental stage. They need to be able to revisit and update the information as they mature.

How do we explain 'dead' to a young child?
Children need concrete information about what it means to be dead, such as
-the heart has stopped
-the whole body does not work anymore
-the person cannot come back to life
-nothing hurts for the person anymore
-they cannot breathe, see, hear
-they don't need food, drink, or warmth

Talking to children about death is a process, not an event. Follow children's cues… if they are fidgeting and distracted stop. If is okay not to have all the answers and to explain this… you could say 'I'm not sure I'll have a think about that.'

Children will need support to manage the feelings they have. They need to be supported to think about:
-what are my feelings?
-where do I feel it?
-when do I feel them?
-how big is the feeling?

You can use 'props' to support these discussions about feelings such as an emotion's dial or feelings spots.



Children may need to channel anger e.g., scrunching paper or bursting water balloons.

Children need to adjust to life without the person they have lost.
-Keep routines wherever possible
-Look for opportunities to help the child feel safe
-Keep memories alive (memory box, photographs, personalized stories)

See Appendix 2 Different Cultures and Beliefs
See Appendix 3 Books to read with children

Key Points to Remember

- Babies can experience feelings of loss
- Be honest with the bereaved child or young person
- Avoid using metaphors for death
- Every child's grief is unique
- Encourage the child to talk about the death and how they feel
- Children may 'revisit' the death and review their feelings about the bereavement as they develop
- Use language that is appropriate to the child's age and level of comprehension.

Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Be there for the person who is grieving
- Accept that everyone grieves in their own way, there is no 'normal' way
- Encourage the person to talk
- Listen to the person
- Create an environment in which the bereaved person can be themselves and show their feelings, rather than having to put on a front
- Be aware that grief can take a long time
- Mention useful support agencies such as Cruse Bereavement Care

Don't:

- Avoid someone who has been bereaved
- Use clichés such as 'I understand how you feel'; 'You'll get over it; 'Time heals'
- Tell them it's time to move on, they should be over it - how long a person needs to grieve is entirely individual
- Be alarmed if the bereaved person doesn't want to talk or demonstrates anger
- Underestimate how emotionally draining it can be when supporting a grieving person
- Make sure you take care of yourself too

What Can You Say?

Be honest. Acknowledge the news by sharing your condolences, saying how sorry you are that their friend or relative has died. Remind them that you are there for them, as much as you can be. Don't worry too much about saying exactly the right thing. The feeling will come across and it is more important that you say something than that you find the perfect words. Here are some suggestions if you are finding it difficult:

- I don't know what to say but I am so sorry to hear this news
- I am so sorry for your loss – you are in my thoughts
- I'm so sad to hear this and I'm here if you need to talk

Specialist Help

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">NHS
The NHS website has information on bereavement
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Support is still available from GP's, NHS 111, NHS hospitals and mental health services.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Samaritans
Telephone: 116 123
Website: https://www.samaritans.org/</td><td>Childline
Telephone: 0800 1111
Website: https://www.childline.org.uk/</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Bereavement Advice Centre
National Information Helpline: 0800 634 9494 Monday-Friday 9.00am-5.00pm Website: www.bereavementadvice.org</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cruse Bereavement Care
Telephone: 0808 808 1677 (free helpline)
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk
Website: https://www.cruse.org.uk/
Local: bedfordshire@cruse.org.uk</td><td>Child Bereavement UK
Telephone: 0800 02 888 40
Website:
https://www.childbereavementuk.org/</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Chums Bereavement Service Bedfordshire 3-18 years
Phone:01525 863924
Email: info@chums.uk.com
Website: http://chums.uk.com/</td></tr>
</table>

UK Trauma Council Creating a world that nurtures and protects children and young people following trauma Website: https://uktraumacouncil.org/		
Suicide Prevention Transforming harmful online searches into a journey of hope. Discreetly intercepting flagged search terms and signposting to free, 24/7 mental health support https://www.ripplesuicideprevention.com/	**Suicide Prevention** for those at risk or worried about someone https://stayalive.prevent-suicide.org.uk/	**Suicide Prevention for Men (not immediate support)** https://andysmanclub.co.uk/

Behaviour and SEMH 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 not affect 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.

The headteacher will ensure all staff members are aware of the lasting impact bereavement can have on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education. All staff members will remain vigilant to signs a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil

Remembrance Activities
Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities. 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 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
- 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.

Staff Training
All staff will receive training in bereavement support as required.

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 headteacher who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.

Monitoring and Review
This policy will support those who have suffered a loss. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the governing board and headteacher. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff members and all relevant stakeholders. The next scheduled review date for this policy is May 2027.

Appendix 1
Feelings which may be experienced when someone is bereaved

Anger: Sometimes bereaved people can feel angry. This anger is a completely natural emotion, typical of the grieving process. Death can seem cruel and unfair, especially when you feel someone has died before their time. People may also feel angry towards the person who has died, or angry at themselves for things they did or didn't do or say to the person before their death.

Depression: Many bereaved people experience feelings of depression following the death of someone close. Life can feel like it no longer holds any meaning and some people say they too want to die.

Guilt: Guilt is another common reaction. People who have been bereaved of someone close often say they feel directly or indirectly to blame for the person's death.

Longing: Thinking you are hearing or seeing someone who has died is a common experience and can happen when you least expect it. "Seeing" the person who has died and hearing their voice can happen because the brain is trying to process the death and acknowledge the finality of it.

Pain: Feelings of pain and distress following bereavement can be overwhelming and very frightening.

Shock: It may take a long time to grasp what has happened. The shock can make people numb, and some people at first carry on as if nothing has happened. It is hard to believe that someone important is not coming back. Many people feel disorientated - as if they have lost their place and purpose in life or are living in a different world.

Worry: There are many signs of worrying including experiencing restlessness, feeling "edgy", being easily tired, having difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension and difficulty sleeping. Any of these may be experienced following a bereavement.

Appendix 2
Different Cultures and Beliefs

Our school functions within a multi-cultural society, in which various beliefs, religious and non-religious, require to be taken into account. Respect for the differing needs, rituals and practices is essential when acknowledging a death. It is this diversity that enriches our lives.

Not everyone will belong to a faith tradition and assumptions will not be made.

Christianity
Christians believe that there is just one God and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They believe that Jesus died on the cross (The Crucifixion), and that three days later, God raised him from the dead (The Resurrection). Christians believe in an afterlife and the idea of resurrection but the details around what happens at the time of death and afterwards, varies within the different denominations. For some, as soon as a person dies, he or she is judge by God and will immediately go to Heaven or Hell, dependent on how good or bad a life they led. For Roman Catholics, there is a half-way place called Purgatory, where an impure soul can stay until fit to enter Heaven. Others believe in the Day of Judgement, when the world will end, and the dead will return to life to be judged by God. Within the different Christian denominations, there are many variations on what happens at a funeral. When someone dies, the body is taken to an undertaker who will carry out the necessary preparations for the body to be laid out. This is to enable those who wish to view it before it is placed in a coffin. The funeral, organised by an undertaker, is about one week after the death. This usually takes place in a church, but sometimes a crematorium, or a combination of the two. The coffin will remain closed. Wreaths or bunches of flowers may be placed on the coffin. It is traditional to wear black, but this custom varies. If held in a church, the funeral service may include a Holy Communion, Eucharist, or Mass. The body will either be buried or cremated, dependent on the wishes of the deceased and the family. A churchyard grave is often marked by a headstone but for a cremation, the family may choose a more informal way to mark where the ashes are buried or have been scattered.

Islam
Muslims believe in life after death when, on the Last Day, the dead will come back to life to be judged by Allah. The good will reside in Paradise, the damned in Hell.
Muhammad teaches that all men and women are to serve Allah and that they should try to live perfectly, following the Qur`an. Devout Muslims believe that death is a part of Allah's plan and open expressions of grief may be viewed as disrespectful to this belief. As cremation is forbidden, Muslims are always buried, ideally within 24 hours of the death. Ritual washing is usually performed by the family or close friends at the undertakers or mortuary. They will wrap the body in a clean cloth or shroud. The coffin is often very plain as traditionally one would not be used. The grave is aligned to enable the head of the deceased to be placed facing the holy city of Mecca. Muslim graves are unmarked but to meet UK requirements, a simple headstone is used as a compromise. There is an official mourning period of three days when the family will remain at home and be brought food by friends and relatives. For forty days after the funeral relatives may wish to make regular visits to the grave on Fridays.

Hinduism
Hindus believe in reincarnation and a cycle of rebirths. When a person dies, the soul is reborn in a new body, returning to earth in either a better or worse form. What a person does in this life will influence what happens to them in the next, the law of Karma. Those that have performed good deeds in this life will be reborn into higher order families, those whose behaviour has been bad will be born again as outcasts. A Hindu funeral is as much a celebration as a remembrance service. Hindus cremate their dead as it is the soul that has importance, not the body which is no longer needed. White is the traditional colour and mourners usually wear traditional Indian garments. If attending, it may be worth asking what appropriate dress would be. During the service, offerings such as flowers or sweetmeats may be passed around and bells rung so noise is a part of the ritual. The chief mourner, usually the eldest son, and other male members of the family, may shave their heads as a mark of respect. In India, the chief mourner would light the funeral pyre. Here, he will press

the button to make the coffin disappear and, in some instances, may be permitted to ignite the
cremator. Ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered on the River Ganges. In the UK, some areas of water have been designated as acceptable substitutes. The mourning period lasts between two and five weeks.

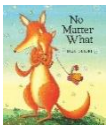
Sikhism

Sikhs believe the soul goes through a cycle of rebirths, with the ultimate objective being to reach perfection, to be reunited with God and, as a result, break the cycle. Thus, death holds no fear and mourning is done discretely. The present life is influenced by what happened in previous ones and the current life will set the scene for the next. The deceased is cremated as soon as possible after death. The coffin is taken to the family home where it is left open for friends and family to pay their respects. It is then taken to the Gurdwara where hymns and prayers are sung. A short service follows at a crematorium, during which the eldest son presses the button for the coffin to move behind the curtain. In India, the eldest son would light the funeral pyre and no coffin would be used. After the funeral, a meal may be held at the Gurdwara. The ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered. Here they may be sprinkled in the sea or river. The family remain in mourning for several days after the funeral and may listen to readings from the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book).

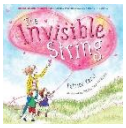
Buddhism

Buddhists believe that nothing that exists is permanent and everything will ultimately cease to be. There is a belief in rebirth but not of a soul passing from one body to another. The rebirth is more a state of constantly changing being rather than a clear-cut reincarnation. The ultimate objective is to achieve a state of perfect peace and freedom. Buddhists try to approach death with great calmness, and an open- minded attitude of acceptance. There are few formal traditions relating to funerals and they tend to be nonreligious events. Cremation is the generally accepted practice and the service is kept simple. It may be conducted by a Buddhist monk or sometimes family members.

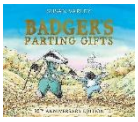
Appendix 3
Books which can be used to support young children
These are just some suggestions…

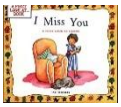
‘No matter what’- Debbie Gliori 

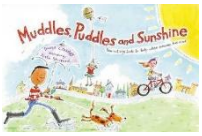
‘Always and Forever’- Alan Durrant

‘The invisible String’- Patrice Karst 

‘Goodbye Mog’- Judith Kerr

‘Badger’s Parting Gifts’- Susan Varley 

‘I Miss You’- Pat Thomas 

Mud, Puddles and Sunshine- Winston’s Wish 

A Shelter for Sadness- Anne Booth

Goodbye Mousie- Robie H Harris

Why do things die? Kate Danes

Appendix 4
Sudden and Traumatic Death and Bereavement

Definitions
Sudden death is a death by natural causes, traumatic death is a death by suicide

Roles and Responsibilities
Establish a critical incident management team consisting of:

Headteacher/ Chair of Governors - Overall direction and co-ordination including liaison with the emergency services, the LEA, media, governors, staff and parents/ carers (control and records of spending; allocation of roles to others depending on level of crisis)

Senior leaders- Pastoral care for students and staff; operational issues as directed; parent/visitor liaison

Procedure for dealing with the death of a pupil

- Confirm any information you have been given

(Check school records for date of birth of the child who has died: beware of children with the same/similar names/ Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion/ Be aware of religious and cultural considerations)

- Check school records

(Ensure that you have recognised any other relatives attending school (siblings with different surnames, cousins, step-family etc) who will need particular support. Where you know the pupil has siblings in another school it is worth contact that school to ensure they are aware.)

- Contact CBC communications team + confirm support available

- Contact bereaved family

-Make contact via a home visit with a colleague (or via a telephone call).
-Consider who you may speak to first. It is possible that parents/ carers may not wish to or be incapable of speaking with anyone at the time and may have asked someone to communicate with others on their behalf.
-Consider family dynamics, particularly for separated parents, step-parents etc. Whomever you speak with, offering condolences to the family on behalf of the school community is the most important step.

You need to ask/agree with the family:
- When/what to tell pupils (level of detail considering circumstances, what information the family wishes to be shared)
- How to inform the wider school community (pupils' parents/carers etc)
- Give your contact details/direct email/telephone number and agree when you will make contact again. There will be follow-up conversations about funerals/memorials.
Follow this up with a letter. The letter may update the family on when the rest of the school were informed, and any other practical issue ie; the child's belongings/books/photos that will be sent to the parents when they feel ready.
- Any religious/ cultural requirements

-Continue to liaise with the family e.g., by supporting plans for a memorial

- Arrange for the handling of donations

(Ask families about plans for donations and that any purchases/memorials/dedications are discussed and agreed sensitively with all concerned)

- Inform staff, governors, families

The initial briefing should:
- give a brief statement of factual information
- 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
-advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session.

- Maintain school routine + provide a 'safe space'

-Maintain the normal school day so that pupils are unsettled as little as possible.
- Review the school calendar for the next few months and cancel or rearrange any events that might appear inappropriate.

Research tells us that; "engendering feelings of safety, calmness, sense of self and community efficacy, connectedness and hope" (Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2010) is key to supporting children in coping with trauma and bereavement.

- Prepare to deal with the media

Do
-Respond to what and when questions if the facts are established
-Give information quickly and accurately
-Choose your own time when to report to the media
-Prepare and rehearse
-Quash rumours/ inaccuracies.

Don't
Reply to 'how' and 'why' questions unless you are clear about the facts of your answers
-Speculate
-Bluff or lie
-Make 'off the record' comments
-Make promises you cannot keep
-Make excuses or blame others
-Respond to 'blind quotes' (e.g. 'one of your staff tells me that…Do you agree?')
-Say 'no comment' – explain why you cannot comment
-Allow words to be put into your mouth (e.g. 'would you agree with that…')

Attendance at the Funeral
Some bereaved families may want a very private funeral; others may very much value the attendance of staff.

It is advisable to confirm what clothing to wear

For other staff/ children in the school it may be desirable to hold a special assembly or memorial service.

(People from different backgrounds and religions have different burial rites. Some, including Sikhs and Jews may hold funerals within 24 hours of death. There is not always time therefore to prepare staff for attendance.)

Procedures for dealing with a Pupil's Parent/ Carer or Sibling Death
In the case of a death in the young person's closest family, the headteacher or the class teacher should be informed. If the death happens while the young person is in school, a representative for the family, preferably a parent should be asked to come to the school to inform them.

The head teacher/ chair of governors should ask the family what information they want shared.

Representatives from the school will liaise with the family and attend the funeral.

The school should consider what extra support may be required.

The Death of a Member of Staff
If a member of staff dies suddenly, the guidelines presented above are, to a large extent, applicable to this situation. It is, however, especially important to include the following measures:
• If the death happens suddenly and unexpectedly, arrange for a meeting (debriefing) as soon as practically possible, where colleagues can talk through what has happened. The effects on staff and close colleagues will need to be carefully and continuously monitored.
• Try to establish continuity in the classroom as soon as possible. Staff in the class should be informed properly on how students and other staff are affected and which ones are most distressed.
• Use time with the class to talk sensitively about the replacement of the member of staff who has died.

Managing Bereaved Pupils Return to School
-Check a return date with parents/carers
-Arranging for a home visit if requested
-Maintaining contact between the home and the school
-Check what worries the pupils, and the parents have about re-entry and making appropriate arrangements e.g. visit to classroom; to the scene of the incident in which death occurred.
-Arrange for a ‘sanctuary’ a young person could go to if upset during the school day
-Making sure all staff who teach the young person are aware of the need for sensitivity
-Ensure there is not a ‘support vacuum’ during periods when the school is not open