



**September  
2024**

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Policy Created: April 2024  
Date Reviewed: September 2024  
Review: As required

## AIMS AND ETHOS

Sullivan Upper School is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with difficult experiences.

Our school will endeavour to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death as well as to support those who are personally affected by it.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support that some pupils, or members of staff, require. Where the impact of the grief is more complex, referral to more specialist support may need to be considered.

## RATIONALE

Sullivan Upper School is aware that 1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen-years old has been bereaved of a parent or sibling. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person.

Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

It is important that children are helped to understand bereavement in clear and unambiguous ways and given opportunities to experience the full range of emotions that may accompany a bereavement within a safe and supportive atmosphere.

## OBJECTIVES

- To provide a framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement.
- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after a bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- To identify key staff within school.
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 1 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



September  
2024

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

### Death of a member of the school community (pupil or staff member).

1. The member of staff who receives the news should inform the Principal or Vice-Principal (Pastoral) as soon as they become aware of the death.
2. The Critical Incident Management Policy will be consulted and the appropriate steps will be taken from the policy on how to proceed.
3. The Principal should make contact with the family to express the condolences of the School. Factual information will be obtained to avoid any unnecessary speculation. Some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not.
4. The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will take overall responsibility. In the absence of the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) will deputise.
5. The Principal or the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will liaise with the family. The best person to liaise with the family may depend on the specific situation and relationship with the pupil/family. A decision will be taken if another member of staff is better placed to liaise with the family.
6. There will be a formal staff briefing as soon as possible to let members of staff know about the death. If the death occurs outside of school hours/during holiday periods, the Critical Incident Plan Flowchart will be utilised. The school is aware that the indiscriminate spread of news via social media may mean that some members of the school community hear the news before others. The school is also aware of the impact of hearing the news via text message/social media/email so all efforts will be taken to try to minimise this.
7. A decision will be made on how and where pupils will be told. Depending on the circumstances, when delivering news to pupils we will consider doing this in smaller groups with a familiar adult. If a pupil has died, it may be more appropriate to share the news with their class/year group first. A script will be prepared when delivering sad news. Staff should not be afraid or surprised to show emotion, this is a human reaction. A limited break in the timetable will be facilitated for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out. It is important that normal school routines are maintained. Although school can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, some flexibility may be necessary. Bereaved young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to leave a classroom and take time out in a safe space can be very welcome.
8. A safe place and time to grieve will be provided. Pastoral support from relevant pastoral staff will also be available in the safe space.
9. The most vulnerable pupils will be identified and given the support they might need.
10. The Principal will share the news with parents and Governors via ParentMail as soon as possible, if required. Guidance will be provided on supporting bereaved children.
11. If press are involved the Principal will liaise with the Media.

## FUNERALS

Our school will:

- Find out the family's wishes and how they wish the school to be involved. This includes if the family would like members of staff and/or pupils to attend, or if they would like a representative to attend the funeral.
- Consider the cultural and religious implications if appropriate;
- Send cards/flowers if appropriate;

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 2 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



**September  
2024**

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

- Identify which staff and pupils may want to attend. Enable the person(s) who had the closest relationship with the child/staff member to attend the funeral - this would usually be the current Form Teacher but may be a staff member who had worked closely with the family in a previous class, and be able to have absence to attend.
- Identify the practicalities of issues such as staff cover to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so.
- A decision may have to be made on whether the school will close.
- Consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral, and how they will be supported/supervised.

### **SUPPORT FOR PUPILS**

Not all children and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners; they most often need familiar people who care. Pupils will react to bereavement in a variety of ways; no two reactions are the same. Personality, family support and life experiences will all impact on children's responses. Adults often wish to shield children from pain and distress. Experience and research have shown, however, that children are best supported by having the incident acknowledged in an appropriate way rather than having it ignored.

It is important to be available and receptive to pupils, to listen to them, to empathise with them and normalise their emotions, thus enabling the development of healthy coping strategies.

### **SUPPORT FOR STAFF**

Supporting bereaved pupils can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. All staff are provided with relevant information from support services.

Our school will:

- Support bereaved staff and acknowledge they may be struggling with their own reactions and emotions while supporting pupils;
- Plan for informal mutual support to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.
- Give people time to attend the funeral, if appropriate.
- Offer general training for all staff.
- Be aware of all supporting information and resources available.

### **REMEMBERING**

The school will consult the family of the person who died about any plans for a memorial or other tribute.

If a decision is taken that there will be a temporary tribute/book of condolence the temporary location for this needs to be safe, accessible and ideally where pupils can be supervised. Staff and pupils should be consulted before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 3 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



September  
2024

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## SUPPORTING A BEREAVED PUPIL TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

It is important to plan for a pupils return to school following the death of a family member. Our school will:

- Acknowledge what has happened
- Ask our pupils how we can help
- Be flexible and understanding
- Create a supportive environment
- Maintain routine
- Listen with our eyes ears and heart.

Our school will offer:

- A routine, which can have a stabilising effect;
- Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one;
- Time for the pupils to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment);
- Regular communication with home, providing reassurance about behaviour and general well-being, ensuring the child or young person is managing their grief;
- Access to appropriate resources via Class/Form teacher
- Preparation time for children and young people to discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved child or young person returns to school;
- Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be related to the death;
- An individual link person to support the pupils when necessary;
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

### Before a child returns to school after the death of a parent or sibling:

1. The member of staff who receives the news should inform the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) and the Principal's P.A. as soon as they become aware of the death.
2. The Principal should make contact with the family to express the condolences of the School and share that the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will be in contact to offer support to the young person before they return to school. [This will include consulting the pupil on how they wish the bereavement to be managed when they return to school.] Find out if the family would like a representative to attend the funeral. If practicalities (including staff cover) permit, the Principal, Vice-Principal (Pastoral), Head of Year/Form Teacher will attend the funeral.
3. The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will inform the Year Head, Form Teacher and other relevant members of staff.
4. The Year Head should make a short note of the death and its cause including the date and place it in the pupil's file.
5. The Year Head should inform the School Office to:
  - a place a red sticker on the pupil's file
  - b up-date the card index system
  - c add a 'Quick note' to SIMS

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 4 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



**September  
2024**

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## When a child returns to school after the death of a parent or sibling:

1. Depending on the pupil's wishes, the Form Teacher will meet the pupil at the start of the first day back to provide reassurance and remind the pupil that should they feel emotional there are channels of help to talk to if they wish to use them eg School Nurse, Form Teacher, Year Head, other identified staff or indeed any member of staff.
2. Unless parents advise the school otherwise all the teachers who teach the pupil may discreetly acknowledge the death when the child returns (even if it is only a few words). It is important to acknowledge a death to show the teacher cares whilst also being mindful that the pupil is trying to return to the school environment.

## LONGER TERM SUPPORT

### The Form Teacher

- keeps a record of significant dates for the bereaved pupil ;
- will communicate with the family/carers and pupil;
- will monitor the progress (both in learning and emotional wellbeing) of the pupil
- will keep the Head of Year briefed.

### The Head of Year

- is responsible for passing on details of the bereavement at transition points as the pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support;
- will discuss allocation to form class/academic classes with the relevant Vice-Principal as vulnerable pupils may need additional support, particularly on transition.

### All staff

Significant dates or anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day, etc. may be particularly difficult. Therefore, regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping. The grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. There may be changes in their behaviour so it is important that all relevant staff monitor the pupil closely.

Bereaved young people can find change difficult, so preparing them in advance (where possible) may help them to voice their worries and ease the process.

## SUPPORTING A BEREAVED STAFF MEMBER

The school wishes to support staff who are going through a period of bereavement and loss.

### Before a member of staff returns to school

1. The Principal will contact the member of staff involved to offer support and convey the condolences of the staff.
2. The Principal will inform staff regarding the funeral arrangements.

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 5 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



**September  
2024**

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

3. A representative from the school will attend the funeral. Requests to attend the funeral should be given to the Cover Manager. The practicalities of issues such as staff cover will be identified to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so.

### When a member of staff returns to school

1. As a general rule it is better to acknowledge the death of a relative than to ignore it. However, the Principal will advise members of staff of the person's wishes.
2. The school will be sensitive to the tasks that the person will be asked to undertake when they return.
3. A useful contact for bereaved staff is Inspire

**0808 800 0002**  
**workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org**

### **DEATH, GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT IN THE CURRICULUM**

Teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. Key Stage 3 pupils complete a bereavement unit as part of the Pastoral programme. Parents/Carers will be informed in advance as this will help to gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson. Recently bereaved pupils will be given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.

### **STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and mutual support for each other. All staff received bereavement training during 2023/2024. New staff are provided with training and resources as part of the Induction programme.

We will ensure members of staff update their skills and knowledge as required. All staff will be reminded that they have access to support from Inspire.

### **INCLUSION AND EQUALITY**

Our school recognises that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures concerning death and that there may be different expectations of the bereaved pupil and family. We will try to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Pupils and staff will be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

### **RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA**

Some incidents and deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, may attract media attention. All members of staff will be advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Principal, who will make a considered response.

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 6 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024



September  
2024

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

The Bereavement Policy relates to and complements other school policies as listed below:

- Managing Critical Incidents Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pupil Attendance Policy
- Staff Attendance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Partnership with Parents policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Religious Education

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every three years in consultation with staff and pupils. Consideration will be given to any developments and will take into account the learning from ongoing practice and experience. Any changes made will be shared with the staff and presented to the Board of Governors for approval.

O:\Private2\POLICIES\Pastoral and Discipline Policies\Bereavement Policy - September 2024.docx	First Approved by Board of Governors : //
Printed: 17/10/2024 page no. 7 of 7	Reviewed by Board of Governors: 30/09/2024