

# Bereavement Policy

## The Blue Coat Church of England (Aided) Infant and Junior Schools' Federation



***Love God, love others***



***Let your light shine***

Believing, celebrating, succeeding

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*"I can do all this through him who give me strength" Philippians 4:13*

# **Blue Coat Federation Bereavement Policy**

**2020**

## **RATIONALE AND AIMS**

This policy aims to outline the basic principles and procedures that underpin our approach to supporting members of the school community with bereavement. Bereavement affects everybody at some time, and as a close community, our school aims to provide the best support for its members during times of bereavement. The recent global situation regarding the Coronavirus pandemic has brought issues surrounding bereavement to the very heart of our community. In recognition of this the Blue Coat family of schools aims to support all families affected in any way during this time.

We recognise that each bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved. We will have suitably trained staff in school who understand the complexities surrounding bereavement, and can help support families at times of bereavement to ensure that the school does what it can to best meet the needs of the bereaved.

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 bereavement within a safe and supportive atmosphere. The school recognises the importance of long term support for those who are bereaved, and will endeavour to provide opportunities for memorials and remembrance where appropriate.

Lucinda Adlington, Assistant Head Teacher for Inclusion and Anthony Orlik, Head Teacher will be responsible for the management of bereavement across the Federation. Jane Edgar-Lane Pastoral Mentor (Blue Coat Junior School) and Angela Barrington (Blue Coat Infant School) will be the key points of contact for pupils and families.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Information Gathering**

To best support staff and pupils during times of bereavement it will be necessary to ascertain sensitive and potentially distressing information regarding the nature of an illness or cause of death. We will always ensure that any meetings with families are conducted in a comfortable, private space, in an unhurried atmosphere. Information will need to be shared with other members of staff where appropriate, and sometimes with pupils, and we will always be clear

with parents/carers beforehand about how we will respect confidentiality and share information sensitively

### **Terminal Illness**

In the case of a terminal illness Jane Edgar-Lane (BCJ) or Angela Barrington (BCI) will be the main point of contact with the family throughout the illness. These members of staff will support the family regarding school procedures to support them during the illness and will help keep the pupil informed about events at school during any prolonged periods of absence. They will liaise with Lucinda Adlington who will oversee support given.

Mrs Edgar-Lane or Mrs Barrington will also support the pupil during their time in school, and be available to the family before, during and after the death. Mrs Adlington will co-ordinate attendance at the funeral, and any memorials the family may wish the school to facilitate. In turn these members of staff will be given close support by the Head Teacher.

If a member of staff becomes terminally ill, the Head Teacher will co-ordinate all the support & necessary actions.

### **Rumour and Speculation**

At times of bereavement it is important that rumour and speculation are avoided. We will take time to talk to the affected family or staff member about the circumstances surrounding the bereavement. Knowing the background will help us provide the best support for those affected by the bereavement. We will discuss with the family the extent to which the circumstances should be shared with other staff members and pupils, in order to provide the best support for the grieving child.

### **Informing others**

At the time of bereavement, and with family consent, the appropriate staff will be informed in a safe and supportive atmosphere. It will be conducted in a way that is most suitable to that particular bereavement.

To help pupils understand bereavement we will typically aim to inform groups of children of the death of a pupil or staff member in small groups, supported by staff with whom they are familiar. We will allow children to ask questions, and will endeavour to answer factually and using unambiguous language to help all children to understand what has happened. Mrs Edgar-Lane or Mrs Barrington will monitor & provide further support if required. We will seek to involve the bereaved family in these decisions, and will offer to draft a letter to parents/carers explaining the situation.

In the event of a pupil being bereaved of a loved one or close friend we will discuss what the pupil has already been told in order to provide clarity and consistency for the pupils. Where there are religious considerations we will also seek the views of family, and endeavour to

respect those beliefs. Mrs Edgar-Lane /Mrs Barrington will be a mentor to the pupil and encourage the pupil to feel free to express themselves when and how they choose, by providing time-out space and a range of activities and channels through which the pupil may express their feelings if they wish.

In the event of a death of a member of staff, pupils, staff & parents will be informed in a sensitive way & again, support will be offered to all members of the school community.

### **Support**

Where a member of the school community has died, the school will endeavour to provide additional space and time for those staff or pupils most likely to be particularly affected. Support would be provided by our Learning Mentor; however, for more specialised support, Mrs Adlington would also immediately contact a local support agency to request additional support in school. Contact details of local and national support agencies are attached.

Staff will be expected to be particularly vigilant regarding the emotional wellbeing of pupils close to the deceased.

We will ensure long term support for the bereaved pupil by keeping a diary of significant days and ensuring that this information is communicated (with consent) to the pupil's next school. We will endeavour to include the child in commemorative days such as mother's/father's day, by sensitively providing time for reflection and remembrance where appropriate.

### **COVID – 19 Response**

We are aware of a number of families that have suffered bereavement due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As bereavements relating to this illness occurred during a period of school closure there may be other families affected that school staff are currently not aware of. If a member of the school community becomes aware of a bereavement they should endeavour to inform Mrs Adlington immediately, who will record details of the bereavement and ensure the appropriate support is offered to the child and family. Once it is deemed safe for schools to re-open all children, regardless of bereavement, will undertake work to address their emotions, thoughts and feelings about the pandemic to ensure a positive transition back to school and secure mental wellbeing. This work will be guided by resources from the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education as well as national support charities. Some of this work will also address strategies to deal with loss and bereavement.

### **Media Interest**

Where there is media interest no member of staff should engage with the media. All comments should be made through our Head Teacher or Chair of Governors if the Head is unavailable.

**In the case of a crisis or disaster situation on school premises or on a school trip, please refer to the Local Authority Emergency Unit.**

**LOCAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT AGENCIES**

<b>Walsall Bereavement Support Service (Adults)</b>	<b>01922 724841</b>
<b>SWING Bereavement Service</b>	<b>01922 645035</b>
<b>CRUSE Bereavement (Sandwell/Walsall)</b>	<b>0121 558 1798</b>
<b>Winston's Wish</b>	<b>08452030405</b>
<b>Child Bereavement UK</b>	<b>0800 02 888 40</b>