



# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

2024-2028

MAT Board Approval:	April 2020
Last Review:	May 2024
Next Review:	Summer 2028
Member of Staff Responsible:	Mrs Claire Roberts

## Our Vision

'To Love, To Learn, To Serve' sums up the DoWMAT's vision for those who come together to create the MAT, enabling all to flourish both as individuals and in community with each other; living life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

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## Our Values

### To Love

The New Testament sums up the entire law as a call to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Galatians 5:14). The Bible teaches that we are only able to love because God first loved us (1 John 4:10). This love is expected to characterise the way in which the DoWMAT operates, makes decisions, builds relationships, and carries out its day-to-day business: each person putting the needs of others before their own, with a commitment to the flourishing of all. The exposition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that love is patient, kind, forgiving, generous, humble, trusting, respectful, hopeful, resilient and enduring. Those who learn and work in the DoWMAT, and all who come into contact with it, can expect to experience that love in the way that they are treated.



### To Learn



The DoWMAT is a Christian learning community that is committed to enabling all to live a life of freedom and transformation as a result of the hope and wisdom that learning brings. Learning is at the heart of the Church of England’s vision for and commitment to education. Growing in wisdom is celebrated in the Bible and all are exhorted to listen, to seek guidance, to acquire knowledge and to learn discretion (Proverbs 1: 1-6), largely through human relationships and interactions. Jesus’ teaching, as summed up in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10), describes human beings who are learning to live a life that is characterised by humility, compassion, mercy, righteousness and peace. The learning that takes place within the DoWMAT is expected to be recognisably rooted in these godly characteristics and focused upon enabling the holistic development of people who are made in the image of God.

### To Serve

Service and servant leadership, was a striking feature of the way in which Jesus lived his life. The example he gave to his disciples in washing their feet (John 13:1-17) provides us with a role model for the way in which we should seek to live in community with others. Putting the needs of others before our own, supporting people in their growth and development as holistic human beings, enabling people’s gifts and talents to come to the fore as a result of our service to them are all defining characteristics of the way in which the DoWMAT operates. In serving others and meeting their needs through generosity of spirit, we manifest God’s grace and love for others (1 Peter 4:8-11).



These core values underpin all aspects of our Trust as we strive to make a positive difference to the lives of all DoWMAT pupils whilst they are at school and in later life. Through these values, we can be sure our community is one of hope; a place of transformation and trust, where all are treated with respect and dignity.

**OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONALS | COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS | STRONG SYSTEMS | CONFIDENT LEARNERS**

## Contents

STATEMENT OF INTENT / AIMS .....	3
1. Legal Framework .....	3
2. Roles and Responsibilities .....	4
3. The Initial Response .....	5
4. Informing Staff and Governors .....	6
5. Informing Pupils .....	6
6. Informing Parents.....	7
7. Funerals and Remembrance Activities .....	7
8. The Media and Social Media .....	7
9. Support for Pupils Who Have Experienced a Significant Bereavement.....	8
10. Support for all Pupils Following the Death of a Peer or Familiar Member of Staff .....	8
11. Support for the Family .....	9
12. Support for Staff .....	9
13. Other Considerations .....	10
14. Managing Transitions.....	10
15. Teaching about Bereavement and Grief .....	11
16. Monitoring and Review.....	11
Appendix 1 .....	11
Appendix 2 .....	12
Appendix 3 .....	14

## STATEMENT OF INTENT / AIMS

At the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our academy community at different times, whether this is the death of a pupil, member of staff or a family member. We understand the importance of informing and providing support for pupils, staff, Local Academy Board members and the wider community during and after bereavement. In line with our Christian values and those of the Church of England Vision for Education all care, at what is undoubtedly a distressing time for families, will be delivered with the highest levels of understanding, respect and compassion.

This policy provides a framework for how this support may be delivered and outlines how the academy / Trust will respond to these sensitive situations.

**NB.** 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 academy will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

For the purpose of this policy, ‘death’ includes stillbirth.

Therefore, the aims of this Bereavement Policy are as follows:

- To provide a framework for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To share clear expectations about the way the academy will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To meet the needs of all its children and staff and to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain much needed support.
- For children to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by sensitive staff.

## 1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. 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  
DfE (2018) ‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’  
DfE (2019) ‘Keeping children safe in education’  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) ‘Good Work Plan’  
The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018

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

Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'  
Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death' Samaritans (2017)  
'Help When We Needed it Most'  
Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools' Information Pack'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy  
Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy  
Behavioural Policy  
Anti-bullying Policy  
Disciplinary Policy and Procedure  
Leave of Absence Policy

## 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. The Trust Board and the **CEO** will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy.
- Reviewing this policy with the **Headteachers** on a **regular** basis to ensure its effectiveness.

2.2. The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate, including the vicar, Diocesan Director of Education, or Archdeacon as a first point of contact for bereavement support for the school community.
- Informing Local Academy Board members 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 community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary advice to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.
- Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death.
- Making referrals for pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support, as required.

2.3. All staff members will be responsible for:

- Supporting the Headteacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as appropriate or as directed by the Headteacher.
- Undertaking any bereavement support training as may be available.
- Seeking support from pastoral staff, as required.

### 3. THE INITIAL RESPONSE

- 3.1. If the family or member of staff contacts the academy 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.
- 3.2. If the academy is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the **Headteacher** will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit to offer condolences and support.
- 3.3. 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 academy community and how.
- 3.4. If a death affects the entire academy, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the **Headteacher** will inform staff and pupils, whilst being sympathetic to the family's views – in line with Sections 4,5 and 6 below.
- 3.5. 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 that 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.
- 3.6. 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 academy community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the **Headteacher** will discuss with the family, and the pupil if possible, what information will be communicated and how the family would like it to be delivered.
- 3.7. If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at the academy, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to the academy to inform the pupil of what has happened and to take them home. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for a member of staff to take the pupil home.
- 3.8. The **Headteacher** will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the clergy, Diocesan Education Team, police, bereavement counsellors or support agencies.

- 3.9. The **Headteacher** will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the academy timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.
- 3.10. In the event of the death of the **Headteacher**, the **CEO** will be responsible for the duties or the delegation of duties outlined above.

#### 4. INFORMING STAFF AND GOVERNORS

- 4.1. Staff and Local Academy Board members, to include part-time and peripatetic staff will be informed of the death as soon as possible, where appropriate, and preferably before the pupils are informed. Any information shared will have prior approval from the family.

#### 5. INFORMING PUPILS

- 5.1. If the death affects the whole academy, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the **Headteacher** will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole academy, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of pupils.
- 5.2. The **Headteacher** will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.
- 5.3. Staff members responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with guidance by the **Headteacher**, regarding what pupils should be told and how to approach difficult questions.
- 5.4. It is important that children are informed of a death in an age appropriate manner. Guidance and scripts that may be useful when informing children can be found in *Appendix 1*.
- 5.5. Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff who is familiar to them.
- 5.6. Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- 5.7. Any questions asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- 5.8. Pupils will be told who they can go to in school for support. Parents will be advised of all avenues of internal and external support which they can access, if they feel it appropriate.
- 5.9. Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. This may 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

## 6. INFORMING PARENTS

- 6.1. The **Headteacher** will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.
- 6.2. If the death affects the whole academy, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the **Headteacher** will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole academy, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.
- 6.3. The **Headteacher** will compose a letter to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to. For example, letter templates please see *Appendix 2*.

## 7. FUNERALS AND REMEMBRANCE ACTIVITIES

- 7.1. With the family's approval, the **Headteacher** will arrange for the academy to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, if appropriate.
- 7.2. The **Headteacher and Chair of the Local Academy Board** will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- 7.3. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.
- 7.4. Should any remembrance activity be planned, the family will always be consulted prior to the event. All events of this nature must be respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

## 8. THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- 8.1. Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- 8.2. Only the Headteacher will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, Local Academy Board members and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.
- 8.3. Staff, Local Academy Board members and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. Should any member of the academy community see anything concerning on social media regarding the death, the Headteacher should be informed at once.



## 9. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED A SIGNIFICANT BEREAVEMENT, E.G. OF A FAMILY MEMBER

- 9.1. A member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact.
- 9.2. Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, taking into account the following:
  - The circumstances surrounding the death.
  - 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?
  - Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.
- 9.3. If a pupil chooses to attend 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.
- 9.4. If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, the designated staff member will make regular contact with them during their absence and appropriate arrangements will be made for their return to the academy; this may involve a phased return.
- 9.5. Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

## 10. SUPPORT FOR ALL PUPILS FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A PEER OR FAMILIAR MEMBER OF STAFF

- 10.1. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.
- 10.2. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of pastoral staff.
- 10.3. Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the Headteacher who will assess what support might be required in collaboration with pastoral staff.
- 10.4. Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:
  - Inability to concentrate.
  - Lack of motivation.

- Tiredness and irritability.
- Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks.
- Inability to take others' feelings into account.
- Anger, frustration or aggression.
- A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
- Anxiety.
- Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them.
- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness.

10.5. A list of External Support Agencies is available in *Appendix 3*.

## 11. SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

11.1. The **Headteacher** will be the main point of contact between the academy and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role, where appropriate.

11.2. The **Headteacher** will invite the family into the academy to discuss how the academy can best support them.

11.3. Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support could include the following:

- Sending a letter of condolence.
- Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the academy.

## 12. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

12.1. 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 offered.

12.2. 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 not left on their own.
- Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered.
- Organising bereavement leave – this will be offered in line with the DoWMAT Leave of Absence Policy.

12.3. All staff members will be offered the opportunity to take up pastoral support, if this is available and provided with information about the internal and external support they can access.

- 12.4. Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or share these concerns with the Headteacher.

### 13. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 13.1. For certain circumstances, specific measures may need to be implemented on an individual basis, for instance where a family member or a pupil has a life-threatening illness or is not expected to live. In all such circumstances, any support will be tailored appropriately, with great understanding and respect for the family's wishes.

- 13.2. Should the academy be informed of the **suicide** of a pupil, parent or member of staff, the following will need to be taken into consideration:

- The need to agree any information to be shared about the cause of death with the family.
- If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the Headteacher will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- Any information distributed to the academy 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.
- Research indicates that pupils that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff will report any concerns about pupils to the **Headteacher** and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

- 13.3. The academy 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.

- 13.4. The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any academy activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.

- Pupils who experience a significant bereavement can be at risk of developing social and emotional issues. Staff will report any concerns about pupils to the **Headteacher** and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

### 14. MANAGING TRANSITIONS

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- 14.1. Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded.
- 14.2. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:
- If the pupil moves school.
  - When the pupil moves to secondary school.
  - If the pupil moves class.
  - When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher.

## 15. TEACHING ABOUT BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

- 15.1. Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death.
- 15.2. Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching.
- 15.3. Bereaved pupils and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required.
- 15.4. Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.
- 15.5. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

## 16. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 16.1. This policy will be reviewed regularly by the **Trust Board, the CEO** and the **Headteachers**.
- 16.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **Summer 2028**.
- 16.3. Any updates to this policy, in the meantime, will be communicated to all staff members.

## APPENDIX 1

### GUIDELINES ON HOW TO INFORM CHILDREN

Remember it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important we model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear.

- Be honest and factual.

- Use clear language – use the person’s name, do not use euphemisms like ‘passed away’ or ‘lost’ use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death (even if that is the death of a pet).
- Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- Acknowledge some days will be harder than others.
- Do not expect to go straight into maths, allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical outlet.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

### Suggested Scripts to Use When Someone Dies:

*“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. \_\_\_\_\_, NAME / ROLE, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that \_\_\_\_\_ died yesterday in hospital”.*

*“Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday \_\_\_\_\_, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.*

## APPENDIX 2 TEMPLATES

These are two examples of a letter to parents. Please feel free to change them according to the needs of the situation.

*Dear Parents*

*Your child’s class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name>, who has been a <teacher, TA, Lunch time supervisor...> at this school for <number> years.*

*Our thoughts are with <Name's> family at this time and in an effort to try and respond to his/her death in a positive, all children have been informed.*

*The children were told that <Name> died from an <asthma attack> on <Date>. A number of pupils have been identified as being asthmatic and <Name>, the School Nurse has today reassured them that it is unusual for a person to die from asthma.*

*When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but should you wish, we are able to put you in touch with external support which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in.*

*The funeral details will be forwarded to you in due course. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's class teacher.*

*Yours sincerely  
Head Teacher*

*Dear Parents*

*Your child's class teacher has had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.*

*They were told that <name> died from an illness called <cancer>. Sometimes people who have cancer can get better, but other times people die from it. <Name> had been ill with <cancer> for a long time and died at home yesterday.*

*When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion - these are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but should you wish, we are able to put you in touch with external support which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in.*

*The funeral details will be forwarded to you in due course. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's class teacher if this is the case.*

*Yours sincerely  
Head Teacher*

## APPENDIX 3

### EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

[autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx](https://autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx) – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

[childbereavement.org.uk](https://childbereavement.org.uk) – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk) - Childhood bereavement.

[childline.org.uk](https://childline.org.uk) - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

[crusebereavementcare.org.uk](https://crusebereavementcare.org.uk) - All aspects of bereavement.

[griefcounter.org.uk](https://griefcounter.org.uk) - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

[hopeagain.org.uk](https://hopeagain.org.uk) - Specifically for young people aged 12-18.

[supportline.org.uk](https://supportline.org.uk) - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

[papyrus-uk.org](https://papyrus-uk.org) - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

[seesaw.org.uk](https://seesaw.org.uk) - Grief support service for children and young people.

[sands.org.uk](https://sands.org.uk) - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

[teenissues.co.uk](https://teenissues.co.uk) – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

[theredlipstickfoundation.org](https://theredlipstickfoundation.org) – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

[uk-sobs.org.uk](https://uk-sobs.org.uk) - Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.

[Widowedandyoung.org.uk](https://Widowedandyoung.org.uk) – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

[winstonswish.org.uk](https://winstonswish.org.uk) - Help for grieving children and their families.

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