



HEARTS ACADEMY TRUST

Bereavement Policy

Adopted: May 2023
To be reviewed: May 2026

HEARTS Academy Trust is committed to providing a happy, caring and safe learning environment for all within a value led context, where everyone feels valued and grows in confidence and independence.

We promote **HAPPINESS** through a creative, exciting and practical curriculum, which generates a love of, and interest in, learning and a resilience and hope which supports us through challenging times.

Great value is placed on pupils' self **ESTEEM** which is developed through a positive and motivated attitude to learning, a healthy lifestyle, good social skills, self-discipline and a positive self-image.

We promote the highest standards of **ACHIEVEMENT** in all areas of the curriculum and help all pupils to fulfil their potential regardless of gender, race or ability.

We foster **RESPECT and RESPONSIBILITY** for all by establishing good relations between the school, home and community. Pupils are taught respect for themselves, others and the environment. They are also taught to take full responsibility for their own choices and responsibility for themselves and their community.

We encourage **TRUTH** and honesty in all aspects of school life – relationships, work and the curriculum and learn to trust and accept others' individuality and uniqueness.

We develop **SPIRITUALITY and SERVICE** so that calm, quiet, reflective times which support deep thought are part of school life and beauty is appreciated. We promote a service culture that reflects our duty to support and show compassion to all members of the community and not just ourselves.



Children at the HEART

Introduction

Within our school communities there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their loss, or sometimes the death of a member of staff or a pupil may have an impact on the whole school community. Whilst we would hope to not encounter such circumstances, we have this bereavement policy in place so we can be proactive, rather than reactive, in these very sensitive situations.

Usually, support and understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of our school, along with that provided by their family and friends, may be all the bereavement support most children or staff require. However, we recognise that referral to more specialist support may be necessary where the impact of grief is more complex.

Aims and ethos

As we recognise that most children and adults can be effectively supported through bereavement and loss by those with whom they already have relationships, we want to equip school staff and others to respond effectively and confidently to a death in the school community. It is important too that we recognise that everyone experiences bereavement and grief differently and that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Therefore, it is our aim:

- to provide appropriate support to pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after a bereavement
- to provide a safe and calm environment for pupils and staff
- to ensure there is effective communication between home and school and to provide parents with information on how to access other support (if it is required)
- to work with the local authority and other partners as appropriate

The role of trustees

- To adopt the policy and ensure its implementation and regular reviews
- To ensure there is a whole trust approach to supporting emotional wellbeing

The role of the Head of School

- To have oversight of support required and provided, liaising with external agencies as appropriate
- To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned, or appoint an appropriate member of pastoral team
- To refer any media enquiries to the trust press officer
- To keep the local advisory board and Executive Headteacher informed
- To ensure staff are appropriately trained around bereavement and undertake actions set out in this policy (such as how to share sad news with pupils). Senior leaders may deputise the role of the head teacher should the event mean the head is unable to complete this role
- To seek support and advice from pastoral and outside agencies relevant to supporting the bereaved and the head of school's own well being

The role of the Local Authority (LA)

- To advise and support school staff as required
- To signpost to referral pathways and other means of support
- To provide information, guidance and support for all schools (available on Essex Schools InfoLink)

The role of staff

- To provide a safe and calm environment for all
- To act as a 'trusted adult' to support pupils and proactively enable them to have the time and space to talk
- To monitor the wellbeing of their pupils, identify concerns and escalate where additional support may be required
- To ensure any safeguarding concerns referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, in line with the child protection policy
- To seek support and advice from pastoral and relevant outside agencies, supporting both their own wellbeing and signposting the bereaved.

Procedures following a bereavement

1. Wherever possible (and if deemed appropriate), the Head of school will attempt contact with the bereaved family before taking **any** other action. This is to ensure any communications to the wider school community (and the media) are factual, avoid rumour or confusion and are aligned with the family's wishes. Where it has not been possible to establish contact with the family, and news of the death is already in the public arena, the Head of School will need to manage this and will do so, taking advice from the Executive Headteacher and senior mental health lead
2. The Head of School will inform staff of any death and agree how the information will be shared with pupils and the wider school community in a supportive and age-appropriate way.
3. The Head of School will prepare a communication to all parents/carers to inform them of the death and advice about how to support their child, should they be affected include signposting to specialist agencies and contact details of HEARTS mental health team
4. The Head of School and trust press officer will agree a statement for the media, where this is required, linking with the local authority as appropriate
5. The Head of School will adapt the school day and timetable if necessary to enable appropriate support to be provided. This support may be from school staff and/or from other appropriate external agencies, or the local authority Education Psychology Service

6. The Head of School will make arrangements in school for a book of condolence and/or an area where flowers may be placed if the Head of School considers it appropriate. Other memorial events may be planned in due course
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance will be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances
8. The Head of School and staff will monitor the wellbeing of all pupils identifying any concerns and escalating where additional support may be required
9. The school will record any concerns about a child's wellbeing to ensure any future school is aware that additional support may be required

For support:

[HEARTS mental health team](#)

[Education support partnership](#) (for staff)

[Cruse bereavement care](#)

[Winston's wish](#)

[Child bereavement UK](#)

[Lullaby Trust](#)

[Support bereaved children training](#)