

# Mill Lane Community Primary School & The Windmill Community Nursery



## Bereavement Policy

Mill Lane School & the Windmill Nursery are fully committed to supporting all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances. Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a mentally 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 a time of death or dying.

We will endeavour, to the best of our ability, to work in partnership with parents to provide children with support to manage the effects of bereavement and to maintain their emotional well-being.

This policy links to the school Emergency Plan, Visits and Behaviour policies and outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances to include:

- Ensuring that there are designated, named members of the school staff who will provide support to children and/or staff before (where applicable) during and after bereavement
- Enhancing effective communication and clarifying the pathway of support between school, family and the community
- Setting out how to inform children/colleagues about a death and what to do if required to tell a child that someone close to them has died
- Identifying key staff within the school and LA and clarifying the pathway of support that will be offered to staff/children if they have been bereaved
- Setting out clear procedures in respect of what to do in the case of a crisis or disaster situation on school premises or on a school trip (see Emergency Plan & Visits Policy)
- Ensuring that all staff members are trained and are able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief – SLT to discuss how to respond to behaviours which may be exhibited as a result of grief and how to manage these in conjunction with the Behaviour policy.
- Ensuring that the contact details of local and national support agencies specialising in bereavement such as Cruse Bereavement Care and Child Bereavement UK are available (see links at end of this policy)

### Rationale

- Every 22 minutes in the UK a child loses a parent, this equates to around 111 children a day
- Teachers in a Primary school are certain to encounter students who have been deeply affected by bereavement
- 1 in 29 children aged 5-16 year has lost a parent or sibling and many others have lost grandparents
- It is thought that 92% of children in the UK will experience bereavement before the age of 16
- There is no fixed pattern to how a child will grieve
- The 'Five Stages of Grief' (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) can be used as a way of starting to understand what the child or young person may be experiencing

### The role of the Governing Body

- To approve the policy and ensure it is implemented

- To review the policy

### **The role of the Headteacher**

- To keep the Governing Body informed
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To refer media enquiries to Oxfordshire County Council Press Office
- To be the first point of contact for the family/families & child/children concerned
- To keep the Governing body fully informed

### **The role of the Local Authority**

- To advise & support staff
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief
- To manage media enquiries through the Press office
- The Educational Psychology service offer support to schools – Catherine Roderick  
[educationalpsychologycentral@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:educationalpsychologycentral@oxfordshire.gov.uk) (07825274103)

### **Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of a staff member or child**

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations
- Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance
- Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them
- If it is appropriate, and with the agreement of the deceased's family a letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed
- The school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable, as this also offers a sense of security and familiarity
- Staff affected by the death will be offered support
- In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances
- Where necessary, the Headteacher will work with the School Counsellor and OCC Press Office to prepare a press statement

### **Staff Support**

It is important that staff feel confident in delivering support for children and mutual support for each other and for implementing this policy. If possible, bereavement support training will be sourced for staff as required and the advice and guidance of the School Counsellor will be sought. Staff will have opportunities to speak with the school counsellor or a bereavement trained member of staff and will also be referred to LA wellbeing provision.

### **Breaking news to Staff, Children & Families**

This is usually done when a member of staff or a child has died and would not usually be appropriate when a single child/family has experienced the death of a parent or close family member.

- Headteacher or member of the SLT will speak to the family to offer condolences and support and to ascertain what the family would like to happen. Family will be given details of a school contact
- Prioritise obtaining of factual information

- Inform all staff immediately (including lunch supervisors/peripatetic staff etc) ideally before children are told
- SLT to decide how and when children will be told, having first identified any vulnerable children and considered what additional support they may need
- Children should be told as soon as possible, ideally in familiar groups by an adult who is someone they know (staff may need guidance on words to use and approach to take)
- If possible, send a letter to families on the same day (see templates in appendices)
- Consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter

### **The first few days**

Map out the first few days after an incident.

- It is usually best to have minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required.
- Consider what the school approach will be if pupils or staff are too upset to attend lessons.
- If it is a teacher who has died, what will happen to his/her class?

### **Funeral**

- Establish whether the family would welcome involvement of members of the school community or if they wish to keep it private
- Identify which members of staff and/or pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport
- Decide if flowers are to be sent and/or a collection made
- Take into account any cultural or religious implications
- If necessary, a familiar member of staff could talk to the child regarding expectations of the funeral

### **Support for a bereaved child**

#### **Return to School of a bereaved child**

- Consider a home visit, return interviews, prior to the pupil returning to school
- Ensure that the appropriate staff are aware and prepared
- Inform peers and prepare them on how to support their classmate

Not all children will need the support of specialist practitioners; they will need support from familiar people who care.

- Offer the child(ren) the opportunity to speak with school pastoral support/designated adult
- Keep a routine, providing a sense of normality
- Offer a safe place, away from an emotional intense atmosphere
- Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent)
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment)
- Regular correspondence with home, providing assurance about behaviours and general well-being, will ensure the child is managing the grief
- Access to appropriate resources via Bereavement counselling, Healthy Schools or other support agencies
- An individual link person to support the child(ren) when necessary
- A suitable place in school for children who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support (e.g. school counsellor/nurture room)
- Ensure that the information is passed to the next class/school as part of transition

### **Monitoring & supporting children**

- Support may need to be offered to other vulnerable children.
- The anti-bullying message needs to be reiterated and monitored closely.

- Therapeutic books should be readily available to assist with counselling. These can be found in the Red Kite Room.

### **Monitoring & supporting staff**

- We recognise that supporting bereaved children will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. A list of outside agencies that may offer help, both in the short and long term will be shared with staff
- We will give staff time to attend the funeral if appropriate
- Staff will be made aware of available resources and time to become familiar with these.

### **Support for bereaved families of a member of staff or a child who has died**

We will:

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer our support
- Send a letter of condolence from the school
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people
- Give the parents and/or family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who died
- Send a representative to the funeral
- Hold a collection or send flowers, as appropriate
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance book, this will be returned to the parents at an appropriate time and the children informed where it has gone

### **Useful Websites**

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

[www.cruse.org.uk/](http://www.cruse.org.uk/)

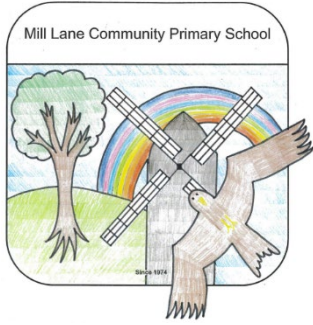
<https://earlyyears.buckscc.gov.uk/eyfs-best-practice/bereavement/>

**Date of Review:** April 2024

**Next Review:** April 2026

**Signed on behalf of Governing Body:**





# Mill Lane Community Primary School & Windmill Community Nursery

Head Teacher: Miss T van der Ploeg  
Mill Lane Chinnor Oxfordshire OX39 4RF  
Telephone: 01844 352106 Email: [office.2465@mill-lane.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2465@mill-lane.oxon.sch.uk)  
[www.mill-lane.oxon.sch.uk](http://www.mill-lane.oxon.sch.uk)

Date

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of <Name>'s death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you are going through.

The school community at Mill Lane will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and classmates. <Name> was a very valued member of our Mill Lane community and he/she will be greatly missed.

If there is anything that we can do to help with <Names> funeral service, please do let us know.

Please be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way. We are here for you.

With sympathy, yours sincerely,

<Name>

Headteacher



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Dear Parents

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

<Name> was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her. When someone dies it is normal for their friends to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

You may also find these books/videos useful:

Reasons to Stay Alive, Matt Haig

On Grief and Grieving, by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRTRABhJTbo>)

This too Shall Pass, by Julia Samuel

Grief Works, by Julia Samuel

A Manual for Heartache, by Cathy Rentzenbrink

Grandad's Island, by Benji Davies

Michael Rosen's Sad Book

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4WOo0Lsr14>)

In the next few weeks we will be arranging a memorial service in <venue> to celebrate <Name's> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Headteacher



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**Date**

Dear Parent

I am so very sorry to have to inform you that a much-loved and valued member of staff, our friend <Name> has sadly died.

The children have been told *<ideally just before home time – take into account likely distress of staff>* and many have been distressed to hear the news. No-one wants to see the children upset, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children to deal with bereavement. I am sure that parents will also be very saddened by the news.

Children react in different ways to bereavement, and may show sadness, denial and anger. They may also wish to ask questions; this is normal and healthy. If you should need support and advice yourself, please take a look at our Bereavement Policy on the school website, which has useful support contact information. We will of course, be available in school as well.

We will share further information about the funeral with you as soon as it is known. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague and member of our Mill Lane community.

I am sorry to be the bearer of this very sad news and I appreciate that this will have an impact on the whole Mill Lane community, which <Name> valued so much.

We are very grateful for the supportive and thriving partnership which we have with parents and trust that, together, we will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many of them, a very new experience in their lives.

<Name> will be hugely missed and our thoughts are with his/her family at this time.

<Name>

Headteacher