

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

## Mission Statement

WeST holds a deep seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the children and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose

At WeST, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our Trust and schools' communities at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors and the wider school and Trust community during and after bereavement.

This policy applies in the following circumstances:

- The death of a pupil
- The death of a pupil's parent
- The death of an employee's family member
- The death of an employee

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 Trust or school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

### Employee's responsibilities

- Engaging in any bereavement support/training arranged following discussion and agreement with the line manager.
- Seeking support from the Trust or school as appropriate.
- Supporting colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

### Line manager's responsibilities (this should be the Headteacher, Principal, Director or delegated senior member of staff)

- Supporting the wider implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate (e.g. NHS, social workers, police).
- Informing governors 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 school, Trust or community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.

### The media spokesperson's responsibilities (this person will be identified and agreed by the Trust)

- Liaising with the media as required.
- Monitoring media and social media activity regarding the death.
- Respecting the family's wishes in relation to what information can be provided to the media.

- Where appropriate, maintaining liaison with police (e.g. in the event of murder/suicide)

### 3. How this applies to national guidance and requirements

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 (current version) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (current version) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (current version) '[Steps to take following the death of a colleague in children's services: Actions for employers and providers following a coronavirus \(Covid-19\) related death of a carer or colleague across children's services.](#)'
- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 'Good Work Plan'
- HSE (current version) '[Reporting of accidents and incidents at work: A brief guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations \(RIDDOR\).](#)'
- HSE (current version): '[Incident reporting in schools \(accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences\): Guidance for employers.](#)'
- The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020
- Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018

### 4. The Initial Response

- a) If the family or member of staff contacts a WeST school to inform them of a death, the member of staff that receives notification will refer the matter to the Headteacher/Principal or the most senior member of staff available.
- b) If the school/business unit is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, the Headteacher/Principal or Director (or their delegate) will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.
- c) The Headteacher/Principal/Director (or their delegate) will gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information will be communicated to the school / Trust community and how.
- d) If a death affects an entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of school staff, the Headteacher/Principal (or their delegate) will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible.
- e) If the death affects an individual member of staff, e.g. the death of a relative, the line manager 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 line manager will discuss with the staff member what information will be communicated and how they would like it to be delivered.

- f) If a death affects an individual pupil, e.g. the death of a parent, the Headteacher/Principal of the school (or their delegate) will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Headteacher/Principal (or their delegate) 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.
- g) If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to the school 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.
- h) The Headteacher/Principal / line manager will contact any other agencies as required, e.g. the police and the Local Authority for Educational Psychologist support.
- i) The Headteacher/Principal will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.
- j) In the event of the death of a Headteacher/Principal, a Director of School Improvement or the CEO will be responsible for the duties outlined above.
- k) In the event of the death of a member of staff or pupil that is covered by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)(see appendix 1 for guidance) the responsible person for Health and Safety in the school/college/workplace must report it to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- l) In the event of the death of a colleague that is related to coronavirus (Covid-19) the DfE are asking schools/colleges to report it to them (see appendix 2 for guidance).

## 5. Informing Staff, Pupils and Governors

### Informing staff

- a) In a school setting, staff and governors will be informed of the death before pupils.
- b) All staff will be invited to a meeting by the Headteacher/Principal as soon as practicable. For non-school based cases the line manager will notify the other team members in an appropriate manner, for example in a team meeting or individually. Be aware that some staff may have been particularly close to the deceased pupil/staff member
- c) Absent staff, including part-time and peripatetic school staff where applicable, will be identified so they can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged. Consider contacting staff to whom the deceased may have been close to but who have left the school.
- d) Any information provided to staff during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.
- e) During the meeting, the line manager will:
  - Explain what happened leading up to the death.
  - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
  - Allow time for staff to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
  - Utilise the agreed media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media as required.
  - Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and schools governors / Trustees.
  - For schools, discuss the arrangements for informing pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.
- f) School staff members who will be responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions.
- g) The Headteacher/Principal will create the script, with input from the family.

### Informing governors (schools)

- h) Governors will be informed of the death before pupils.
- i) The Headteacher/Principal will inform the governors by arranging an exceptional Local Governing Body meeting or by other means if more appropriate.
- j) Any information provided to staff during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.

### Informing pupils

- k) The Headteacher/Principal will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.
- l) If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Headteacher/Principal will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of pupils. Consider carefully which groups of children will or will not be told e.g. it may not be relevant/appropriate to tell nurse or reception children

- m) The Headteacher/Principal will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.
- n) Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff that is familiar to them at the same time.
- o) Resources e.g. assemblies and recommended reading are available.
- p) Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs 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
- q) Staff responsible for informing pupils will use an agreed form of words; scripts will be provided to them.
- r) To ensure all pupils are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which to use for which year group.
- s) Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- t) Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- u) Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

#### Informing pupils in a large group

- aa) If it is not possible to inform pupils about a death in small groups, the Headteacher/Principal, in communication with the family, will decide if it would be appropriate to inform pupils in a large group, e.g. during an assembly.
- bb) Where an individual pupil has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to attend the assembly and, if they do not want to be involved, appropriate support will be arranged for the pupil during and after the assembly.
- cc) The Headteacher/Principal will tell the family and, where relevant, the bereaved pupil exactly what they will say and to whom.
- dd) The Headteacher/Principal, with support from relevant staff, will deliver the information to pupils.
- ee) After pupils have been informed, they will go to their classrooms and be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told.

#### Informing parents (schools)

- ff) The Headteacher/Principal will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.
- gg) If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Headteacher/Principal will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be



informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.

- hh) A nominated member of staff 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.

## **6. Death in Service (Employee)**

The death of an employee can be a traumatic experience for those who are left to deal with the loss of a colleague. The information below provides guidance to assist employees who are faced with the difficult situation of a colleague dying. It outlines the steps that the Trust and its employees should take following the death of a colleague.

### Making final salary payments:

It is imperative that Human Resources are notified of the death at the earliest opportunity, in order that they can support with payroll/pension processes and prevent any additional distress that could occur as a result of late notification to payroll.

- a) The payroll provider will be asked to determine whether or not the deceased is due any outstanding wages. This includes basic salary and any other remuneration accrued and owed to the deceased. The deceased's estate will also be entitled to be paid in respect of accrued holiday that was untaken at the time of death.
- b) The payroll provider will calculate the deceased's final salary payment and pay it to their personal representative. HR (Central Team) / School Business Manager (SBM) (schools) should obtain proof that the individual (normally the executor of any will) is the deceased's personal representative. It should obtain a receipt on behalf of the estate. The payroll provider will complete a P45 form, indicating that the employee has died.
- c) HR / SBM should consider whether or not to deduct any sums owed to the Trust by the deceased, such as loan repayments, from the final salary payment.
- d) HR / SBM should ensure that any letters enclosing payslips or forms that are sent to the deceased's family/next of kin are not addressed to the deceased.

A surviving spouse/civil partner or other dependants of the deceased may be entitled to receive a payment under a survivor's pension, if the deceased was a member of a pension scheme. The next of kin/appointed family member should be contacted to establish pension benefits and to also establish if there is a will.

If the staff member was in a pension scheme, a death certificate will be required. The next of kin should be contacted to request the death certificate. The School Business Manager or Human Resources will contact the pension fund and follow the guidance provided. If the staff member was not in a pension scheme then a death certificate is not required.

### Other practical issues following the death of an employee

- a) The line manager should ask the deceased's family/next of kin whether they wish to pack up their belongings or would prefer a close work colleague to do so instead.
- b) Cause of death may need to be considered when obtaining the equipment especially if the individual passed away due to a viral infection. In this scenario the school / Trust would need assess the risk appropriately.
- c) It is important to ensure at the appropriate time (especially where remote equipment has been used frequently) that ICT support is tasked with suspending the deceased member of staff's IT account and emails are delegated as appropriate. This is not only to protect the security of the school and Trust systems, but also to help manage ongoing communications within the school and also externally.
- d) For any death related to an incident which has the potential to give rise to a claim against the Trust, the appropriate insurance company should be notified.

## **7. Funerals**

- a) If appropriate, the line manager will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral.
- b) With the family's approval, the line manager will arrange for the Trust to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff (and pupils if applicable) may want to attend.
- c) The Headteacher/Principal and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for a school to be fully or partially closed.
- d) Transportation to and from the funeral will be arranged for staff (and pupils), as appropriate.
- e) Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

## **8. The Media and Social Media**

- a) Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- b) Only the appointed media spokesperson will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.
- c) In the event that staff are approached directly regarding the death, they should give the following statement: "I am deeply saddened by the news. Please contact the school or the Trust directly".
- d) It should be made clear that staff, governors and pupils must not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the Headteacher/Principal.
- e) If information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the Trust / school making an official statement, the line manager / Headteacher/Principal and media spokesperson will release a statement on the Trust's / school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.
- f) Comments and other activity on Trust / school-posted social media statements will be monitored and moderated by the media spokesperson.

- g) If staff, governors or pupils find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the Headteacher/Principal / line manager.
- h) If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- i) If a pupil is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line the school's Behaviour Policy.

## 9. Support

### Support for the family

- a) The Headteacher/Principal/ line manager will be the main point of contact between the Trust / school and the family, or will appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary.
- b) The Headteacher/Principal will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them. A home visit can be undertaken if the family prefer this option in line with the home visiting policy.
- c) The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.
- d) 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 school / Trust
  - Providing the family with the Support Options for Family Members document.

### Support for staff

- a) 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 put in place.
- b) The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the line manager / Headteacher/Principal, and may include the following:
  - Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own
  - Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered (schools)
  - Arranging for work to be covered (Central Team)
  - Organising bereavement leave.
  - A designated room, which may be the staffroom, will be made available to staff where they can go during break and lunchtimes to meet with other staff and share their thoughts and feelings.
- c) Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or speak to the line manager.

- d) An employee with any concerns about the grieving process impacting on their work performance should discuss this in confidence with either their line manager / Headteacher/Principal or, for members of the Central Team, the Human Resources Department, to ensure that any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary are discussed and put in place. In addition, to ensure that the employee is supported in their return to the full range of duties and responsibilities that they had prior to the bereavement or their duties and responsibilities are adjusted (as necessary) with the prior agreement of line manager/Headteacher/Principal.
- e) The Trust recognises that the majority of people do not require counselling to cope effectively with their grief. However, for employees wishing to avail themselves of professional help in coming to terms with a significant loss, they should contact the support helplines (details available on the intranet, or via the School Business Manager).

Support for pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member

- a) A member of staff who is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be made aware of who the staff member is.
- b) The Headteacher/Principal or an appropriate member of staff will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school.
- c) Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes.
- d) When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:
  - The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
  - 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?
  - Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
  - The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
  - Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.
- e) The pupil will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate.
- f) If a pupil chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and 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.
- g) If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told.
- h) The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence.
- i) The Headteacher/Principal, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.

- j) If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam, the Headteacher/Principal will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations apply.
- k) Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **10. Bereavement/Compassionate Leave and Pay (Employees)**

- a) WeST acknowledges that bereavement leave is intended to support employees in the immediate period around the death of a relative. However, the process of grief, the natural reaction and adjustment to loss and change may take a significant time and will be personal to each individual.
- b) Staff who lose a child under the age of 18, or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy, irrespective of how long they have worked at the Trust, will be given a minimum of two weeks paid parental bereavement leave. This applies to:
  - i. A biological parent
  - ii. An adoptive parent, if the child was living with the employee
  - iii. An employee who lived with the child and had parental responsibility for them, for at least 4 weeks before the child died
  - iv. An 'intended parent' – due to become the legal parent through surrogacy
  - v. The partner of the child's parent, if they live with the child and the child's parent in an enduring family relationship.
- c) Staff may take bereavement leave as either a single block of two weeks, or as two separate blocks of one week, each taken at different times across the first 56 weeks after their child's death.
- d) Any member of staff who loses a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or during maternity leave, will not lose their entitlement to maternity leave and pay.
- e) In the event of the death of more than one child, the bereaved parent(s) will be entitled to a period of two weeks for each bereavement to run consecutively.
- f) To take parental bereavement leave the parent(s) should give notice of when they want to take the leave, whether for 1 or 2 weeks and the date of the child's death. This does not need to be in writing and in the first 8 weeks (56 days) since the child's death the leave can commence as soon as notice is given. The line manager/Headteacher/Principal will facilitate this during initial contact in a way that minimises distress. If the employee(s) wish(es) to take leave after the first 8 weeks they should give one weeks' notice to either take leave or cancel leave. Cancelled leave can be taken later by giving notice again.
- g) In order to qualify for statutory parental bereavement pay, WeST acknowledges a qualifying employment period of 26 weeks. However, for employees with service of less than 26 weeks, full pay will be granted for this leave. Where statutory bereavement pay applies full pay will be inclusive of this payment.
- h) If the employee(s) were on another form of statutory leave when the death of the child happened then the parental bereavement leave should be taken once the other leave has ended. This includes if the other statutory leave is for another child. If an employee's

parental bereavement leave is interrupted by another form of statutory leave then they can take the remaining parental bereavement leave once the other leave has ended although the parental bereavement leave must be taken within 56 weeks of the death of the child. Parental bereavement leave can be taken between blocks of shared parental leave.

- i) For those who qualify for Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay they will need to provide written notice to their line manager/Headteacher/Principal that they wish to claim this pay within 28 days of starting leave of their name, their entitlement to Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay, the start and end dates of the period they want to claim Statutory Bereavement Pay for and their relationship to the child. Where there is more than one period of leave separate written notice should be provided. This notice can also be used as notice of an employee's intention to take leave. No further evidence of the bereavement is required or should be requested. The line manager/Headteacher/Principal will try to minimise distress in requesting this written notice by making it as easy as possible for the employee(s) to provide it (i.e. both letter and email are acceptable). On receipt they will make arrangements for a copy of the notice to be provided to their payroll provider.
- j) Staff who lose a close relative (other than a child) i.e. husband/wife, civil partner, partner, parent, grandparent, sister/brother, parents-in-law or nominated next of kin, may take up to 5 working days paid compassionate leave, to be taken at or around the time of death.
- k) There may be circumstances in which staff wish to attend the funeral of someone who was not a close relative. Unpaid leave to attend the funeral may be granted on discussion with an employee(s) line manager and at the discretion of the Headteacher/Principal/CEO.

## **11. Behaviour Issues (Pupils)**

- a) 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
- b) The pupil's designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home.
- c) Where appropriate, any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behaviour Policy. It is helpful to retain routines and consistency; however, care should be taken to ensure that the Behaviour Policy is still appropriate under the circumstances and adapted as necessary.

- d) A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
- e) Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the local school behaviour/anti-bullying policies, taking into account the pupil's needs and circumstances.
- f) All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to pastoral staff who will put appropriate support in place.

## 12. Specific Circumstances

The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the Trust / school community and individual pupils; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.

### a. Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live (pupils)

- i. If a pupil's family member has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school / Trust aware of the situation and the school / Trust will ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- ii. A designated member of staff will meet with the pupil, as agreed with the family, to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.
- iii. All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to the Headteacher/Principal who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

### b. Pupils with a life-threatening illness

- i. Pupils with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.
- ii. The Headteacher/Principal, the pupil and their family, and other relevant staff members (e.g. a member of pastoral staff) will decide how to share the news that a pupil is terminally ill with the school community.
- iii. Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.
- iv. If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the pupil will be identified and the Headteacher/Principal will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

### c. Staff with a life-threatening illness

- i. Staff with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible with due regard to medical advice.

- ii. If felt appropriate, the Headteacher/Principal, the member of staff and their family, and other relevant staff members will decide how and when to share the news that a member of staff is terminally ill within the school community.
- iii. Other members of staff will be informed about how they can best support the member of staff in the most appropriate way. This will be in line with the wishes of the member of staff.
- iv. The Headteacher/Principal will arrange for discussions to take place with the member of staff about ways in which the school can support them. This may include but is not limited to seeking HR advice, pension advice, occupational health advice and support from a counselling service. Where sickness absence is a factor due regard will be taken of the WeST Managing Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

d. Suicide

- i. The Trust / school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.
- ii. The line manager, or other appointed member of staff, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.
- iii. If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school / Trust community, the school / Trust will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.
- iv. If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the line manager will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- v. Staff will be told about the death first, in line with section 3.2 of this policy. If the reason for the death is to be communicated to the school community, when speaking about the death staff should be encouraged to avoid using the phrase 'committed suicide' as this can cause distress and be unhelpful as it implies an illegal act. The phrases 'having taken their own life' or 'died by suicide' are more tactful and compassionate alternatives.
- vi. The script that staff will use to inform pupils of the death (where applicable) will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the way the death occurred.
- vii. Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any pupils (where applicable) and staff who require it.
- viii. A designated room, which may be the staffroom, will be set up where pupils (where applicable) and staff can go to if they are struggling with the news.
- ix. Liaison with the media will be managed by the media spokesperson.
- x. Any information distributed to the school / Trust 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.
  - xi. Research indicates that pupils who 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/Principal and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
  - xii. Any memorial activities conducted by the Trust / school will be held within an appropriate amount of time; following this, any memorial material will be given to the family.
  - xiii. Staff and pupils (where applicable) will be warned about the risks of un-moderated online memorials (e.g. those on social media), such as their comments becoming public without their permission and online memorials attracting negative comments.
- e. Cultural and religious behaviours
- i. The school 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.
- f. Forces' families
- i. The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.
  - ii. Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change.
  - iii. Bereaved forces' pupils will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated area in school that the pupil can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

### **13. A death involving murder or manslaughter**

- g. The line manager will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.
- h. A designated staff member will be available to talk to the pupil (where applicable) to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.
- i. Research indicates that pupils who have been bereaved due to murder or manslaughter can be at significant risk of developing Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Any concerns relating to the pupil will be addressed in line with the appropriate school policies.
- j. Media personnel will not be permitted onto a school site at any time.

#### **14. Remembrance activities**

- i. Following a death in the Trust / school community, the Trust / school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly.
- ii. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.
- iii. All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, and where applicable, Central Team members, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities.
- iv. All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

#### **15. Managing transitions (pupils)**

- k. Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded.
- l. 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

#### **16. Teaching about bereavement and grief (pupils)**

- m. 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.
- n. 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.
- o. 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.
- p. 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.
- q. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs.

## **Appendix 1: Deaths that fall under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations**

Only in very limited circumstances will an incident need to be reported to the HSE under RIDDOR and incidents involving the death of a member of staff or pupil are thankfully very rare. The guidance in this appendix covers the unfortunate circumstances in which the death of a member of staff or pupil is reportable under RIDDOR. It does not cover the full circumstances in which an incident might be covered by RIDDOR. Full guidance on this is available on the [HSE website](#).

RIDDOR requires employers and other in control of premises to report certain accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrence arising out of or in connection with the work.

### **A1.1 Who should report?**

The duty to notify and report rests with the responsible person for Health and Safety at the school, college or workplace.

### **A1.2 Who should the death be reported to?**

General advice about how to report is available on the HSE RIDDOR web pages. All incidents can be reported [online](#) via the HSE website and there is a telephone number for reporting fatal and specified injuries only (Tel: 0345 300 9923).

For incidents on school premises involving members of staff, pupils or visitors, HSE is the enforcing authority and RIDDOR reports should be submitted to them.

### **A1.3 Injuries and ill health to people at work resulting in death**

Under RIDDOR, the responsible person must report work related accidents that result in death without delay. This includes injuries caused by physical violence.

Employers must report occupational diseases when they receive a written diagnosis from a doctor that their employee has a reportable disease linked to occupational exposure. These includes the following that have the potential to be fatal:

- Occupational asthma, eg from wood dust and soldering using rosin flux;
- Any occupational cancer
- Any disease attributed to an occupational exposure to a biological agent i.e. there is reasonable evidence that exposure was as a results of a person's work

If a worker dies as a result of the occupational exposure to coronavirus (Covid-19) this must be reported under RIDDOR as a work-related death due to exposure to a biological agent. This

means that RIDDOR only applies where exposure to the virus was as a result of a person's work. There must be reasonable evidence that a work-related exposure caused the worker's death.

#### **A1.4 Incidents to pupils a resulting in death**

Injuries that result in the death of a pupil or visitor who are involved in an accident at school or on an activity organised by the school must be reported under RIDDOR if it arose out of or in connection with a work activity.

Examples of incidents that would be considered to be as the result of a work activity in a school include but are not restricted to:

- The condition of the premises or equipment was a factor in the incident e.g. where a pupil slips because a member of staff had polished the sports hall floor and left it too slippery for sports, there was badly maintained sports equipment in the playground;
- There was inadequate supervision to prevent an incident, or failings in the organisation and management of an event e.g. where particular risks were identified, but no action was taken to provide suitable supervision.

Violence between pupils is a school discipline matter and not reportable under RIDDOR, as it does not arise out of or in connection with a work activity.

RIDDOR only applies to activities taking place in Great Britain. Any incident overseas is not reportable to the HSE.

Pupils who are on work experience or a work placement are deemed to be employees for the period of the placement. In these circumstances, the employer, as the responsible person, should report a death that arises out of or in connection to work.

There is no requirement to report a death or a pupil as a result of disease (including Covid-19) as RIDDOR only applies to occupational exposure, that is, as a result of a person's work.

#### **A1.5 Recordkeeping**

You must keep a record of any reportable death under RIDDOR for at least three years after the incident.

## **Appendix 2: Reporting a coronavirus (Covid-19) death to the Department for Education**

The DfE are asking schools/colleges to inform them in the unfortunate event that a colleague dies as a result of coronavirus (Covid-19).

They request the following details about the member of staff who has died are emailed to [CSCcovid.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gov.uk](mailto:CSCcovid.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gov.uk) :

- Name
- Job role
- Employer
- Local authority which they worked in, if applicable
- Date of death
- If coronavirus (Covid-19) was confirmed or suspected

Schools/colleges are encouraged to tell family, friends and colleague of the person who has died that they are submitting this information.

There is no legal duty for schools/colleges to submit this information to the DfE. However, this information will help the DfE to take appropriate steps.

If you have any queries about submitting this information to the DfE they have asked that your email them at [CSCcovid.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gov.uk](mailto:CSCcovid.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gov.uk)

## POLICY HISTORY

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact / Responsibility for Policy	Version/ Implementation Date	Review Date
21/12/2020	New Trust policy.	Trust HR Team	21/12/2020, Version 1	November 2022