



## DRAFT BEREAVEMENT POLICY

### For Approval at LGB February 2023

<b>Signature of Head of School:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Signature of Chair of Governors:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
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# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

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## 1. RATIONALE

A death can affect the school community in many differing ways. Adults and students benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

At The Albany we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. We provide opportunities within our setting for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. We believe that the relational ethos of the school provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in a supportive manner. Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs. By adopting a planned and considered approach the school can support the emotional wellbeing of the child, family and staff.

This policy highlights our response to death of a student, a member of staff or family members of staff and students.

## 2. AIMS

- To provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To meet the needs of all our students and staff and to be a place that both student and family can rely on and gain much needed support.
- For the whole school community to work together, with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.
- For staff to have time and space to work through their own feeling and become aware of the needs of the students.
- For students to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by sensitive staff.
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- The family will feel supported and be given an opportunity to express their feelings of loss.

## 3. GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will provide a framework for informing staff, governor and students following a death.

### 3.1 INFORMING STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF A DEATH IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- Where possible discussion should take place with family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school.
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible, with factual information including all part time staff. A staff meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable and absent staff will be identified. Arrangements will be made to inform absent staff over the telephone.
- Senior leadership team will be prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural response.

- Senior Leadership team will be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent/carer or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Advice for families will also be provided of support services available to them.
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary. Staff should also be signposted to the Schools Advisory Support Service for additional support.
- Where the death is of a student or staff member, where possible all staff that have requested to attend the funeral or memorial service will be released from class.

### 3.2 INFORMING STUDENTS OF A DEATH IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Anyone of our students can experience grief and loss.

- It is important to use clear language, talking about death rather than using euphemisms as this makes the situation clearer and avoids confusion and misunderstanding.
- Where the death is a student or a member of staff, students in the same group as the community death should be informed first. This would ordinarily be by the class teacher supported by a member of SLT. The relationships students have with the adults is important here.
- Given the nature of The Albany community, all other students should then be informed by their class teacher and SLT support where available. This may be done by merging appropriate groups to ensure support is available.
- A letter should go to families within school the same day if possible (Appendices B & C).
- Staff are provided with guidelines of how to inform students (Appendix D).
- Time and space will be provided
- Staff will be as honest as possible about their own feelings and experiences and talk about their relationship with the person.
- A bereavement support pack will be available for classes to access.

### 3.3 ONGOING SUPPORT

- The family and staff will be given an opportunity to celebrate the life of the student/ staff member with commemorative activities in school, should this be desired by the family of the deceased.
- School will provide ongoing support students to explore their feelings and memories through identified activities. (See Appendix A for on line links).

### 3.4 SUPPORTING STUDENTS OF A DEATH OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

When school is informed of a bereavement that is linked to a school student eg. family member, close family friend, pet:

- The family should be asked how The Albany can be involved to support the child and family.
- It should be explained to the family how The Albany can provide resources to support the student.
- Both parties will monitor any changes in student's behaviour and share any information.

## 4. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

- Health and Safety Policy
- Business Continuity Plan

## 5. APPENDIX A: USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- <https://www.winstonswish.org> – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.
- <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> and a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss.
- <http://bereavement.lgfl.org.uk/default.html> - Child Bereavement UK together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL) user friendly resource including tips on managing social media.
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5F7e\\_W7pLa4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5F7e_W7pLa4) The Memory Tree. Helping my children through the loss of their mother
- <https://www.thesource.me.uk/search-for-help-support-and-services/when-someone-dies/>

### Wellbeing and Mental Health Links

- <http://schoolwell.co.uk/coronavirus-resources-for-wellbeing-and-mental-health>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- <https://www.kooth.com/>
- <https://www.thesource.me.uk/health/emotional-health-and-wellbeing-hub/>

## 6. APPENDIX B: LETTER FOR PARENTS INFORMING THEM OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF OR STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL

Dear Parents/Carers

We have some very sad news to share.

Unfortunately, we need to inform you of the sad death of one of our community, [Name] a *student/member of staff*. [Name] had been a member of our community for [insert length of time] and will be sadly missed.

We've been in contact with the family to express how sad we are about this news and to offer our support. Understandably, the family is still coming to terms with what's happened and appreciates having some privacy for now.

You can express your condolences by [insert the method requested by the family, e.g. by post, and insert an address or direct families to send condolences to the school to be forwarded to the family].

When someone dies it is normal for friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, confusion and anger. The staff will be able to help answer any questions your child may have and will be supporting them through this sad time.

We'll be in touch soon with details about:

- How we'll come together as a school to celebrate [name]'s life
- How we'll provide support for students as they grieve

If you have concerns about how your child is coping with this news, please contact the school for support. We are very happy to help.

Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org> and Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> also have useful information you can access to support your child at this time.

Yours faithfully

Darryl James  
Headteacher



### Letter to parents about the death of a student

Adapt this template in line with what you've agreed with the bereaved family – for example, about how much information they're happy for you to share and whether/how they wish to be contacted with condolences.

**Note:** In the event that the family ask us not to share information about their bereavement, the Headteacher will discuss with the family the need to provide factual information to our students and their families to avoid speculation and will agree the line the school will take.

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Dear Parents/Carers,

We have some very sad news to share.

We've just learned that [name], a student in [name of class], has died [brief details of the cause, if appropriate, e.g. in a car accident, of complications arising from the coronavirus].

We've been in contact with the family to express how sad we are about this news and to offer our support. Understandably, the family is still coming to terms with what's happened and appreciates having some privacy for now.

You can express your condolences by [insert the method requested by the family, e.g. by post, and insert an address or direct families to send condolences to the school to be forwarded to the family].

Please share this news with your child now, so they can hear it from you rather than from their friends or through social media. We regret that we can't be there to break the news ourselves.

We'll be in touch soon with details about:

- How we'll come together as a school to celebrate [name]'s life
- How we'll provide support for students as they grieve

If you have concerns about how your child is coping with this news, you can contact your child's class teacher in the normal ways or contact a member of the senior team (you have previously been sent our contact numbers).

Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org> and Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> have useful information you can access to support your child at this time.

Thank you for your help and understanding at this difficult time.

Yours faithfully

Darryl James

Headteacher

### Letter to parents about the death of a staff member

Adapt this template in line with what you've agreed with the bereaved family – for example, about how much information they're happy for you to share and whether/how they wish to be contacted with condolences.

Note: If they ask you not to share any details, or news of the death at all, you'll need to make a judgement call and find a balance between respecting the family's wishes, and supporting your pupils and preventing harmful speculation.

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have some very sad news to share.

We've just learned that [name], a [insert role, e.g. teacher] in [name of class], has died [brief details of the cause, if appropriate, e.g. in a car accident, of complications arising from the coronavirus].

We've been in contact with the family to express how sad we are about this news and to offer our support. Understandably, the family is still coming to terms with what's happened and appreciates having some privacy for now.

You can express your condolences by [insert the method requested by the family, e.g. by post, and insert an address or direct families to send condolences to the school to be forwarded to the family].

Please share this news with your child now, so they can hear it from you rather than from their friends or through social media. We regret that we can't be there to break the news ourselves.

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Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org> and Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> have useful information you can access to support your child at this time.

Thank you for your help and understanding at this difficult time.

Yours faithfully

Darryl James  
Headteacher



### Guide for how to inform students

When you talk to bereaved children

- **Listen and validate** – children often don't recognise their feelings as grief. Let them know that whatever they're feeling is normal and okay
- **Acknowledge their fears** – children's fears, no matter how irrational, are real and we can't take them away. Just knowing that someone they trust is listening to them is helpful
- **Reassure, but only as much as you can do so honestly** – for example, a child whose family member has died from COVID-19 will quite rationally be afraid of other family members dying. It's unhelpful to try to calm a child's fears by saying that won't happen when it already has, and it can diminish the child's trust in you. Rather, acknowledge the possibility but counter with facts about how rare this is
- **Check their understanding** – children can be very literal, and what might seem obvious to us may not be so clear to them. As you talk to them, regularly check that they understand what you've said
- **Share your own feelings** – it's okay to let children know that you're also sad and upset. It can be reassuring that what they're feeling is normal

### If the bereaved child is struggling to express themselves

Grief is overwhelming at any age, and children may struggle to express what they're going through. You can get the conversation started by:

- Sharing 'Lost for Words' (<https://www.winstonswish.org/lost-for-words-book/>) a free e-book of advice by grieving children for grieving children.
- Sharing 'Thunks on Death' a set of cards designed to open discussion about death and grief <https://www.winstonswish.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Winstons-Wish-thunks.pdf>
- Completing memory book (<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-bereavedchildren-and-young-people>) (see under the heading 'Resources for children and young people')