**Bereavement Guidance for Educational Establishments**June 2021

**• Rationale:**

When a person is bereaved, it means that a loved one, or someone else important to them, has died. We tend to use the term ‘bereavement’ to describe the period after someone has died in which people who cared about them are grieving.  However, loss and grief are not always associated with bereavement. It can also be the consequence of: being looked after; separation or divorce within a family; parental imprisonment; family employment or military service overseas and/or moving house or school.

Data on childhood bereavement is not currently collected, however using sources such as mortality figures and census data it is estimated that more than 100 children are bereaved of a parent every day in the UK. It is also estimated that every 1 in 29 school aged children have experienced the death of a parent or sibling, that is one in every average class.

The following guidelines are based on an exemplars developed by Child Bereavement UK, Aberdeen City Council, Highland Council and Angus Council. Additional information and resources can be accessed at [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

It is important that all staff feel confident in supporting pupils, supporting each other and implementing these guidelines. To this end it is desirable that the whole school staff have some awareness of bereavement through a whole school training if possible, that would at minimum include awareness raising and familiarization of the contents of these guidelines and the advice contained within it.

Certain life events involving significant change are seldom predicted or prevented from happening. The better schools can prepare for and plan their response to a range of events, the less enduring the effects will be. As such, schools and support agencies should feel confident when responding to such events and should ensure that the needs of pupils are met.

**• Objectives**

The core intentions of this policy are:

* To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
* To ensure effective communication and clarify the available supports between school, family and community
* To identify key staff within school and the Local Authority and clarify the available supports.

**Section 1 - The death of a pupil or member of staff**

**• Roles and responsibilities**:

The Head Teacher:

* has overall responsibility for the guidelines and their implementation
* liaising with the Named Person, Parent Council, Local Authority (QIO), the Educational Psychology Service and other relevant outside agencies

The Head teacher in collaboration with the Named Person will:

* Be first point of contact for the family/child concerned
* Keep staff and Parent Council informed
* Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
* Consult with the Aberdeenshire Communication Team and QIO regarding responses to media enquiries
* Consult with QIO regarding specific school context arrangements

If a death or significant event occurs during a weekend or holiday period the Head Teacher should inform the QIM / QIO.

The role of promoted staff and supporting agencies (including i.e. Educational Psychology Service, School Counsellors):

* To have bereavement support training (Appendix 2) and cascade learning to other staff
* In collaboration with the Educational Psychology Service and / or school Counsellor Service advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways (as appropriate) and help with the identification of more complex grief.
* Provide ongoing help and support for pupils and parents / carers

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| **Bereavement Checklist for Schools** | |
| **Preparatory Work** | |
| Senior Management Teams in Schools to have regular discussions (minimum annually) with School staff around bereavement support and school policies and consideration given to the development of individual response plans |  |
| Appropriate training should be offered to all staff on topics such as loss, change, bereavement and critical incidents. |  |
| Including bereavement and loss in the personal, social and emotional development curriculum may be helpful. Aspects of the Health & Wellbeing Curriculum can be adapted. |  |
| **The First Few Days** | |
| Contact with the family of the deceased is made by the Head Teacher and the family’s wishes regarding communication with others is respected. |  |
| All staff should be informed of the event and of the family’s wishes about communication at the earliest possible opportunity. All staff to be mindful of the religious and cultural beliefs of the family. |  |
| The QIO and any involved agencies, such as health or social work, should be informed. |  |
| Consider whether it is appropriate for the school to send a letter to all families at the earliest opportunity after consultation with the deceased’s family (Appendix 1). |  |
| If parents/family wish for pupils to be informed, then staff should consider how best to do this |  |
| School staff to contact EPS or SLT to support any communication difficulties to ensure any information is clearly and appropriately delivered in accordance with individual pupil need |  |
| Staff, children and parents or carers affected by the death should be offered ongoing support as appropriate. |  |
| Schools to consider the best approach for the class or groups of pupils directly affected by the bereavement. School staff to consult with EPS for advice. |  |
| A book of remembrance and a letter box for letters and drawings could be put in place for pupils and staff to share memories with the family of the deceased. |  |
| A plan should be in place for how siblings or family members are supported (if appropriate) when they return to school |  |
| **Medium Term 7 days-a month** | |
| Update school records to reflect change in circumstances |  |
| In consultation with family; funeral attendance to be identified |  |
| Identify practicalities of attendance at funeral e.g. staff cover and the Head Teacher could represent the school community |  |
| Monitor needs of pupil / staff directly affected by bereavement on return to school |  |
| Monitor needs of all pupils and staff affected by the bereavement |  |
| Ensure support is available through listening and answering questions as well as the option to seek further guidance and support from agencies e.g. Educational Psychology |  |
| Consider how to remember the deceased person taking into consideration the views of the family and discuss with QIO |  |
| **Longer Term one month or more** | |
| Appreciate that bereavement is a unique and specific process to each individual going through it |  |
| Consult with family about approaching external agencies of further support is required |  |
| Be mindful of special dates e.g. anniversaries, Christmas, birthdays |  |
| Monitor any changes in behaviour of the person who has been bereaved as more therapeutic support or counselling may be required |  |
| Address bereavement and grief in Health and Wellbeing curriculum |  |
| Monitor the wellbeing of the supporting staff and support as appropriate |  |
| SLT review school bereavement policy annually to ensure it is meeting the needs within a school specific context |  |

**Appendix 1: Letter Templates**

Template letters can be found: [Education and Learning (sharepoint.com)](https://aberdeenshire.sharepoint.com/sites/Arcadia/services/Pages/Education%20and%20Children's%20Services/Education%20and%20Learning/default.aspx)

**Appendix 2:**

**Resources to support Children and Young People through Bereavement:**

**Seasons for Growth:**

Seasons for Growth is a small group programme that can be implemented in schools that aims to strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people aged 6-18 who are dealing with significant changes by:

* Exploring the impact of the change and loss on everyday life
* Learning new ways to respond to these changes

Further information can be found [**www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk**](http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk)

**Helpful websites:**

[**www.childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people**](http://www.childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people)

[**www.childbereavementuk.org**](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

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

**Training:**

ALDO Course: ‘Supporting Children and Young People through Bereavement and Loss’

**Related Aberdeenshire Policies:**

[Death in Service Procedure](https://arcadialite.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/DISProcedure.pdf)

[Death in Service Resource Pack](https://arcadialite.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/HR/DISResourcePackCoverSheet.pdf)