Nourishing the fitrah of each unique child

Bereavement Policy

"***Indeed, to Allaah we belong and indeed to Him we shall return***."
(Surah Baqarah, The Cow, 2:156)

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Bereavement Policy

At Unique Academy, we aim to ensure that all pupils feel safe and included when with us. Our ethos is Islamic, and we aim to work alongside with our parents to ensure that children achieve the best of their abilities.

We know that around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person[1].

Although bereavement is a normal part of life this experience can make children more vulnerable; children may also process the bereavement by expressing emotions as anger, fear, guilt, self-blame or demonstrate hostile behaviour. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Unique Academy is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, trustees and visitors within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how Unique Academy can best prepare for, and responds to, bereavement in the school community. We recognise that there is no time limit to the grieving process and that everyone will process bereavement in different ways and support will be given depending on the stage of their grief.

We recognise that members of our school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish.

Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- PSHEC education policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Offsite Educational visits policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Single Equality policy
- Mental health and wellbeing policy
- Health and safety policy

[1] Winston's Wish https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/

Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to pupils and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school and the wider community.

Our Charter For Bereaved Children

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

B	**Bereavement support** Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	**Express feelings and thoughts** We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	**Remember the person who has died** We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	**Education and information** All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We might not be able to explain *why* it has happened, however, we will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the Halaqah and PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	**Appropriate response from schools** Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow pupils without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.
V	**Voice in important decisions** We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral.

E	**Enjoyment** We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	**Meet others** We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences, if they wish.
E	**Established routines** We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	**Not to blame** We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	**Tell the story** We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened in their own time. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

Safeguarding, Confidentiality And Recording

At Unique Academy, we follow our safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

If a child is suffering from loss, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school systems record when a child has experienced a close bereavement.

Roles And Responsibilities In Dealing With Bereavement

The role of the trustees is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum

- ensure that approaches to bereavement reflect our school's Islamic ethos
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the local authority in the case of a sudden and unexpected death – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. link Educational Psychologist and alongside relevant colleagues and line managers
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- keep the trustees appropriately informed

The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff as appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

We are aware that the staff might also impacted and on bereavement experience of children and will also be supported to process their feelings

Procedures

Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness but this does not lessen the grief.
In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely manner
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as a local hospice
- look to involve community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

Following A Bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- the class teacher to record the information she has using the schools 'welfare/concerns form' and present this to the Headteacher.
- the Headteacher/SLT will allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child/children and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

Following A Sudden And Unexpected Death – Homicide

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

In cases such as this, Unique Academy will take an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Further support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website: https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/

Equality And Inclusion, Values And Beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

Supporting Staff

Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: the local community leaders, GP and Cruse Bereavement Care http://www.cruse.org.uk/.

We will ensure that staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

Staff Training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers training courses and also a free online training course for school staff.

Curriculum

Children explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as life cycles, as well as through English.

We will also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

Death of staff

The first member of staff who is informed of the death of a colleague will inform the head teacher immediately. A staff meeting will be held immediately and once staff has been informed a school assembly will be immediately called to explain to pupils in a way that they can understand and allow time for them to ask questions, answers will keep in mind confidentiality.

Pupils may wish to say something about the person who have died within their class and are encouraged to talk about their feelings and share memories; other staffs members must be alert to signs of distress in children. Colleague will be given the space to also talk about their feelings; the headteacher will be first point of support and will respond to requirements of time off and consideration given to additional support if required.

Consideration should be given regarding how best to support those staff members and children who have been particularly affected by the death and support will be needed for the teacher appointed to take over from the person who has died. The headteacher will also acknowledge the needs the need for additional support and the trustee are positioned to provide support.

Additional Support And Links

National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: http://hopeagain.org.uk/ A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Local support services

Support for bereaved children and young people

Hounslow Bereavement and End of life support care: https://www.careplace.org.uk/Services/14405

Hope Again: https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/
A website designed for young people by young people. Where young people can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief and feel less alone.

Grief Talk: https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/grieftalk/
A free helpline from Grief Encounter providing instant, confidential advice and support for bereaved children and young people. Service also available via online chat and email.

Winston's Wish: http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/

Supporting bereaved children and young people up to the age of 18 through a whole range of activities, including a helpline, online chat service, group work, residential events and resources.

Royal College of Psychiatrists:
https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/death-in-the-family---helping-children-to-cope-the-impact-on-children-and-adolescents-for-parents-and-carers
An information page on how a death in the family can effect a child or young person.

Support for bereaved parents

Twin and Multiple Birth Association (TAMBA): https://www.tamba.org.uk/bereavement
Support for parents and carers of multiples who have lost a baby or babies during a multiple pregnancy or at any stage after birth.

Still and neonatal death charity (SANDS): https://www.sands.org.uk/
Support for anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth

Miscarriage Association: http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/
Support for anyone who have been affected by miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or molar pregnancy.

The Lullably Trust: http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/
Support for anyone affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child

Child Death Helpline: http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk/
Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child, from pre-birth to the death of an adult child, however long ago, and whatever the circumstances.

The Compassionate Friends: http://www.tcf.org.uk/
Support after the death of a child of any age from any cause. The site also has specialist information and advice on grieving the loss of a disabled child

Child Bereavement UK West London support centre: http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/
Offers face to face support for families where a baby or child has died.

Cruse Bereavement Care: http://www.cruse.org.uk/
Providing one-to-one telephone support to anyone who has suffered bereavement.

Grief Encounter: http://www.griefencounter.org.uk/
Supports bereaved children, families, professionals and schools with website resources and a helpline.

Support for those with additional needs

Bereaved people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD): It can be difficult to discuss death and bereavement, and to help a child or adult with autism to cope with a death. Every autistic person, and their level of understanding, is different. You will need to adapt any approach or guidance for the person concerned. Child Bereavement UK offers a guidance video on how to provide support.

National Autistic Society also provides information and recommended books and resources to use.

Bereaved people with a learning disability: Everyone's level of understanding can be different but if you're concerned about how to explain a death to someone with a learning disability, Mencap has created a guide that maybe with some simple online resources which you may find helpful.

The Downs Syndrome association have also published a guide that can help carers and professionals.

What to do when someone dies: step by step**:** https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies
Check what to do after a death - how to register the death, notify government departments and manage financial issues.
Get help with funeral costs**:** https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments
You could get a Funeral Expenses Payment (also called a Funeral Payment) if you get certain benefits
Age UK information guides and factsheets**:**
https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/information-advice/guides-and-factsheets/
Information guides and factsheets.
Caring for your dying relative at home with COVID-19 **:**
https://www.hospiceuk.org/docs/default-source/echo/covid-19-echo/covid-19_care-at-home_guide_final.pdf?sfvrsn=2
Hospice UK have formulated a COVID19 guide to nursing your dying relative at home. This guidance is produced to help support people who are caring for someone who is dying at home from COVID-19 infection.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) if you're affected by terminal illness**:**
https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus
If your family member or friend is living with a terminal illness, or if you have a terminal illness yourself or worried about coronavirus. Some people living with a terminal illness may be at higher risk of experiencing more serious complications from coronavirus. You may also be worried about whether services, like nursing care or social services, will be available. This site has some general information that you may find helpful.
Further support is also available from:

- At A Loss - Dealing with bereavement and grief during the Covid-19 pandemic**:** https://www.ataloss.org/
- National Association of Funeral Directors - COVID-19 Funeral Advice**:** https://nafd.org.uk/funeral-advice/
- Mind Resources**:** https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/about-bereavement/