



# **One In A Million Free School**

## **Bereavement Policy**

### **2025/26**

All One In A Million Free School Policies have been devised to ensure that:

- OIAMFS core values are at the heart of all we do: compassion, honesty, integrity and excellence
- Students from all backgrounds and all abilities are welcome
- Each student has the opportunity to flourish and achieve or exceed their potential
- We value the individuality of each student within the context of membership of our community
- We are committed to raising educational attainment and improving our students' life chances
- We provide an environment in which all students will be self-aware, self disciplined and confident
- All students will understand how to make a positive contribution to our community
- We support academic, creative and personal achievement through our focus on Sport, the Arts and Enterprise.

Approved by: Full Governing Body; Jane Hobbs, Principal

Last reviewed: April 2023

Next review: April 2026

## **Bereavement Policy**

One In A Million Free School is an inclusive school which strives to ensure that all students are and feel safe both in school and within their community. Our Core Values of Compassion, Honesty, Integrity and Excellence focus on an approach to engaging with young people positively and ensuring that their safety and well-being is paramount.

Around 26,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children and young people more vulnerable. 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.

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

This policy is for all staff, students, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the 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 Bereavement Policy supports us to provide effective support to students 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, OIAMFS is always 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, the council's families, children and learning department and the wider community.*

Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy, One In A Million Free School have adopted the Winston's Wish Charter For Bereaved Children and will display this in school.

B	<p>Bereavement support</p> <p>Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. OIAMFS will signpost them to specialist support if needed.</p>
E	<p>Express feelings and thoughts</p> <p>OIAMFS 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.</p>
R	<p>Remember the person who has died</p> <p>OIAMFS understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. All staff will support them to share special and difficult memories.</p>
E	<p>Education and information</p> <p>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. OIAMFS will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.</p>
A	<p>Appropriate response from schools and colleges</p> <p>Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. OIAMFS will provide training to ensure this happens.</p>

V	<p>Voice in important decisions</p> <p>OIAMFS 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 and remembering anniversaries.</p>
E	<p>Enjoyment</p> <p>OIAMFS will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.</p>
M	<p>Meet others</p> <p>OIAMFS will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.</p>
E	<p>Established routines</p> <p>OIAMFS will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.</p>
N	<p>Not to blame</p> <p>OIAMFS will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.</p>

T	<p>Tell the story</p> <p>OIAMFS will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.</p>
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## **Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording**

OIAMFS follows the school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the student remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

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

To retain the trust of students 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 trauma, 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, CPOMS/SIMS, to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

## **Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement**

**The Role of the OIAMFS Governing Body is to:**

*Approve the Bereavement Policy and ensure its implementation;*

*Ensure the policy is reviewed 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 are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs;*

*Ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.*

**The Role of the OIAMFS Principal 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 and Governing Body in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide;*

*Be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected;*

*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, liaise with external agencies;*

*Keep the Governing Body appropriately informed;*

*Deal with media enquiries.*

**The Role of all OIAMFS Staff is to:**

*Access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if 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 OIAMFS Principal and Senior Leadership Team*

*Teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of Coaching Team Leader*

*Inform the OIAMFS Principal at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community.*

**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.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the OIAMFS Principal/SLT 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 student;*

*Keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion;*

*Explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations;*

*Look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family;*

*Explore what support for those affected might look like in practice;*

*Arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support appropriately;*

*If appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community;*

*If appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death.*

**Following a bereavement**

OIAMFS 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 OIAMFS will:**

*Contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours;*

*Consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process;*

*Find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school;*

*Allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required;*

*Prepare a press statement, with support from the council's communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (Principal);*

*Inform staff of the death before students are informed, recognising that some students may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared 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 students 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;*

*Make appropriate changes to the school timetable / practices to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation.*

**For the funeral OIAMFS 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 students 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
- Organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and students
- Be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

**After the funeral OIAMFS 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 or young person
- 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 students 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 those most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.
- Be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. OIAMFS will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points.
- Signpost families to bereavement support.

**Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide**

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide. As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death and work in partnership with the Local Authority and other appropriate external agencies.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the students but should be based on and reinforce:

- Facts (not rumours)

- An understanding that death is permanent
- An exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected Death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal
- An understanding that, with support, people can cope
- An understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual • An awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help • An understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- Is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- Does not include details of sensitive information
- Does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- Takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as ‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended his / her life’ rather than ‘committed suicide’ or ‘successful suicide’, and saying ‘attempted to end his / her life’ rather than ‘unsuccessful suicide’ or ‘failed attempt at suicide’.

Following a sudden and unexpected death

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. 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.

OIAMFS will take an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened as it is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. OIAMFS will also ensure that all those involved are suitably supported and signposted to the resources which external agencies may be able to provide.

Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

OIAMFS recognises that there are a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support students.

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

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. OIAMFS will consult specialist services where appropriate.

#### Supporting staff

##### Support for bereaved staff

OIAMFS is aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, OIAMFS will ensure that 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: their GP or staff counselling, information and advice *from external agencies*

OIAMFS will work within our leave of absence policy to ensure that staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

OIAMFS staff who are managing 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

OIAMFS will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy.

#### Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of elements of our PSHE curriculum. It may also be addressed through cross-curricular opportunities, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.