Morton Academy
The best in everyone™
Part of United Learning




# Bereavement Policy

## September 2026

**DOCUMENT CONTROL**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Author/Contact** | M McClelland | |
| **Version** | 06 | |
| **Status** | Approved | |
| **Publication Date** | November 2026 | |
| **Review Date** | September 2027 | |
| **Approved/Ratified by:** | Local Governing Body | Date: November 2026 |
| **Distribution:**<br><br>Morton Academy staff<br><br>PLEASE NOTE, this version of the document contained within the Policy Folder on the 'V' drive in the Policy Folder is the only version that is maintained.<br><br>Any printed copies should therefore be viewed as "uncontrolled" and as such, may not necessarily contain the latest updates and amendments. | | |

| Version | Date | Comments | Author |
|---|---|---|---|
| 02 | May 2022 | Updates to process of sharing information in conjunction with United Learning. Changes to protocol of attending funerals. | MRI |
| 03 | Feb 2024 | No changes required. | MRI |
| 04 | Sep 2024 | Some minor changes to wording around staff attendance to funerals and some more clarity on exam board notification. | RMG |
| 05 | Sep 2025 | Some minor changes to guidance for leaders supporting colleagues in returning to work following a significant family bereavement. | RMG |
| 06 | Sept 2026 | Reviewed – no changes | MMC |

**BEREAVEMENT POLICY STATEMENT**

The death of a student, a close relative of a student or a member of staff can be traumatic for staff and students alike, at Morton Academy we understand that this may be the first time a student may have experienced loss as well as the first time that staff may have to respond in a professional capacity. It is inevitable that at some time the academy will be required to support members of the student or staff body who are going through difficult and challenging times following the loss of a loved one. The main aim of this policy is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the support and care that is given to the individual as well as the wider school community following the bereavement are provided with a level of quality support which meets their needs and wishes during this time.

**LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES**

Morton Academy Bereavement policy statement links to the following policies:

- United Learning Parental Bereavement Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Equality policy

**AIMS AND PRINCIPLES**

The main aims of this policy statement are to ensure there are clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with the death of a student, member of staff or member of their families. It also aims to support academy procedures of managing the difficult circumstances of a high profile death and/ or tragic events in the news.

The principle objectives are that:

- All governors, teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff will have an understanding of how the Academy plans to support the health and wellbeing of the school community in light of bereavement.

- All governors, teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff will know what the Academy policy states in terms of planning for possible bereavements, communications with family and staff and how to make use of curriculum opportunities to discuss matters of life and death.

- All parents and students will know that the Academy has policies in place to support them during times of loss and bereavement and will understand the process of communicating with them regarding their wishes and how to communicate their loss to the wider school community or in working with the media.

- All stakeholders will understand and know where to seek support from specific signposting with external agencies and charities such as Winston's Wish or Child Bereavement UK.

**FOLLOWING A BEREAVEMENT**

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise:

- That grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- That differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

**<u>In the event that we are made aware of the death of a close family member of a student:</u>**

The member of staff who has been made aware should discuss with the family and the student how they would like this to be approached.

The member of staff should then alert a member of the senior leadership team.

A designated member of staff who has an appropriate relationship with the student should then be allocated as a liaison between home and school. They should ensure they communicate the student's and family's needs in a timely manner.

The Principal should then use this information to plan the way in which the communication is passed to the student/ staff body. This should be done consistency and with accuracy as to avoid 'playground whispers'.

It is acknowledged that this will be different in each case depending on the students' needs and wishes as well as other issues such as SEN or cultural needs.

On the students return to school they will be offered a designated member of staff to talk to and the opportunity and space to discuss in a smaller setting.

If it is necessary, a phased return to support the student during the grieving process will be considered if it is in their best interest.

It is important that staff also receive accurate and timely information to reduce unnecessary anxiety through unnecessary painful comments: 'Can you ask your mum to call?'; 'Why have you been off?'; 'You failed to meet a homework deadline'.

Exam dispensations should be sought if appropriate.

Any other close links to the student (relatives, close family friends that are staff or students, or other far-reaching contacts) should also be acknowledged and supported as best we can.

The student and family should be signposted to external bereavement services such as Child Bereavement UK or Winston's Wish, in school students should be offered support from our Mental Health team and SEN/ pastoral care team if necessary.

**In the event of the death of a student:**

On hearing of the death of a student the Principal should meet immediately with SLT and key members of the pastoral team to plan the school's response. Decisions as to which group(s) of pupils should be informed will need to be made. e.g. classmates, close friends, year group, friends of brothers and sisters of the deceased. The Principal should also inform their Regional Director who will be able to co-ordinate specialist support for the academy and/or family.

With great sensitivity, one of the above staff should be assigned to ascertain the circumstances of the death. Where possible he/she should discuss with a close family member how the school will be dealing with the bereavement.

As soon as possible the Principal should inform all staff about the student's death. Staff should also be given details as to which groups of students will be informed, and when and how this is to occur. They should be advised of the details that the students will be told. It should be strongly emphasised that normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible. It may be advisable to cancel any extra curricular events during this time to allow staff and students space and time to grieve.

All staff should be vigilant and provide immediate information to the Principal/ SLT about any students showing signs of trauma or distress who may also need support.

Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the deceased's family. The Principal should ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral in keeping with the wishes of the deceased's family. If students are attending there should be staff available for support and supervision. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

Should the death be of interest to the media then the Principal must formulate any response in conjunction with United Learning. This will involve the Central United Learning team. It may be necessary to advise staff and students not to speak to the media and to avoid making innocent comments that might be misconstrued. This will be done with sensitivity and care.

Where appropriate the Academy should inform relevant external groups such as exam boards of the death. It may be less traumatic for parents if results etc. were sent to the school, in the first instance. If time permits this should be discussed with the deceased's

family. The academy will follow the specific guidance published by JCQ and the DfE regarding these communications which would normally happen during the tables checking exercise A note should be placed on SIMS to indicate the limited number of staff able to contact the family during this time.

Any memorial or tribute should be discussed with the family. All items still in school belonging to the student should be returned to the family when it is appropriate to do so.

**In the event of the death of a Member of Staff:**

On hearing of the death of a member of staff the Principal should meet with members of the SLT to plan the school's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. Decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made. Governors and HR should also be informed.

Adequate support for staff and pupils must be available. Students should be given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and feelings, specialist support and strategies should be used for students who have SEND needs or those who are in particular distress.

Staff should ensure that conversations with students remain respectful and professional and usual safeguarding guidelines should be followed.

In general staff members will be able to support each other but it may be appropriate to consult United Learning to provide more specialist resources such as counsellor or mental health support.

Staff should be given a space in school where they can go for quiet reflection or to take a moment to share their thoughts and feelings with colleagues.

Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the deceased's family. The Principal should ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral in keeping with the wishes of the deceased's family. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

In all cases the Principal should attend as a mark of respect.

**In the event of the death of a Close Relative of a Member of Staff:**

The death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff needs to be dealt with sensitively. It is essential that the member of staff is supported throughout the immediate period of mourning and on his/her return to school.

On hearing of the death the Principal must meet with other members of the SLT to decide how other members of staff are to be informed. (If e-mail is to be used to give any details, e.g. time of funeral, then it is essential that the staff member does not receive the e-mail.)

The Principal should contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey his condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.

It is unlikely that many of the pupils will have to be informed but if so the Principal, in conjunction with the SLT will decide on the appropriate method(s) to be used.

Attendance of staff (and any pupils where appropriate) at the funeral should, where possible, be discussed with the staff member. If pupils are attending the funeral (the family member was also a student or member of staff at the academy) they should be closely supervised and supported by experienced staff such as a member of the Pastoral Team.

The Principal should ensure that as many staff as possible who wish to attend the funeral are allowed to attend in keeping with the wishes of the deceased's family. This may involve putting special timetable arrangements into place. It is important however that the school should operate as normally as is possible.

The Principal or other nominated member of SLT should attend as a mark of respect.

On his/her return to work the SLT and other close colleagues must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances. The SLT link should aim to ensure that the academy is aware of the colleague's wishes before recommencing employment. This should be done with sensitivity and care.

**Working with the Media**

If a death occurs that has a high media profile such as a RTC, murder, suicide or death of a terminally ill member of the academy community, only the Principal should comment. There should be a designated message written in agreement with the Governors, United Learning and the family affected where appropriate. Staff should be made aware of this protocol and restrict comments to the media unless given permission by the Principal.

**Dealing with tragic events in the news**

In order to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students during tragic worldwide or close community news, it is important that the process of acknowledging these events is decided at SLT with a clear plan of how to recognise and support the impact it may have. In the event of terrorist attacks, the academy should ensure that tutor time and Personal Development lessons are suspended in order to give students an opportunity to discuss their feelings about it and consider the Fundamental British Values and Prevent strategy at an age appropriate level. Where possible a 2 minute silence should be observed. Staff should reassure students that these events are rare and relay information regarding what the police and other public services are doing to increase safety. In the event of a tragic death of a high profile figure, particularly through suicide, opportunities where possible should be given for students to discuss these issues in a safe and open way.

**Safeguarding/ Staff Training**

At all times the priority remains to safeguard or staff and students, along with their families, and any disclosures or concerns during this time should be referred through CPOMs or to the DSL.

Staff training on bereavement will be completed annually with opportunities taken to enhance Educare training through other support networks.

**Memorial/ Remembrance**

It may be that a memorial is appropriate, and this may take the form of a Book of Remembrance, the planting of a tree, a plaque in memory or other means.

Consideration should be taken to how long it would remain with the academy, how it would be moved and whether the same would be able to be applied for any future bereavements for parity.

We acknowledge that special days such as Mother's Day and Father's day may be particularly difficult and additional support should be available.

**Support available:**

https://hub.unitedlearning.org.uk/policies-guidance/Staff-Wellbeing/confidentialcare/Pages/default.aspx

Confidential Care is an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by an external company called CIC. it is a confidential and independent service that provides support to all employees. It includes emotional and practical assistance for life events, such as having a family, moving house, looking after elderly relatives, relationship issues, bereavement, legal and financial difficulties.

www.winstonswish.org.uk – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

Child Bereavement UK - bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss.

www.juliesplace.com – a support resource for bereaved siblings.

BBC - Information and Support: Child bereavement Information on the way bereavement affects children.

http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/ An organisation offering bereavement support.

https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about-cbn federation of organisations to offer support for dealing with loss.