



The Manor
Preparatory School

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Date policy reviewed:	1 May 2020
Date of next review:	1 May 2022
Person(s) responsible for review:	SLT (Deputy Head Pastoral)

Contents:

- **Bereavement Policy**
- **Appendix 1: Organisations offering bereavement support and advice**
- **Appendix 2: Coronavirus Related Critical Incidents in Schools - Oxfordshire County Council Briefing and Guidance**
- **Appendix 3: OSCB Joint Agency Communication Protocol in the event of an unexpected Child Death**

1. Rationale

We understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times and that when the loss is of a member of the school community, such as a child, family member or staff member, it can be particularly difficult.

Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school.

This policy provides guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy will guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

The Manor is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of our pupils, families and staff. We work towards this in all aspects of school life, providing an ethos, environment and curriculum to support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, including through death or divorce.

This policy is likely to be reviewed in response to staff experiences of dealing with bereavements and should be treated as a working document to support our community.

2. Rights of Children and Adults

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, this source should be 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 this does not mean it is not being felt
- 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 as long as they are in keeping with the Fundamental British Values
- 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 child's far reaching contacts

3. The Management of Bereavement in School

Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school, we are committed to providing practical, emotional and ongoing support to families.

In the event of a critical incident, Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service will offer support to the SLT. The approach taken is founded on helping schools manage the immediate aftermath of an event, including advice and support around communication, practical arrangements and managing emotions.

Death of a parent or somebody close to a child:

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant staff who have contact with the child to ensure that they are supported pastorally and that their emotional needs are taken into account in staff interactions with them at school. The age of the child will be taken into consideration when deciding on the best course of action to follow. Teachers should ensure that this information is passed on when the child moves to a new class or school.

Staff should remain aware in the following weeks, months and years of any significant days and potentially difficult topics for children who have experienced the death of somebody close to them, for example, Mother's Day. Children may need ongoing support throughout their time at The Manor and after this.

Death of a pupil:

Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- If a parent has telephoned the school directly, the person answering the phone will put them through to the Head or, where they are not available, the next most senior member of staff on site
- Where death occurs in the holidays, at weekends or during periods of school closure, families are likely to contact the Head, Head of Section and/or Form

Teacher. In this instance, the member of staff who receives this communication will immediately contact the Head and the Head will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information

Sharing information:

It is important to discuss and come to an agreement with the parent(s) regarding the timing, breadth of circulation and wording of any communication, before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community.

There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it through word of mouth. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the grief by leaving people feeling marginalised.

The following people should be considered:

- Current school staff not in school that day
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- The School Nurse
- Chair of Governors
- Other professionals who work with the child e.g. Counsellor
- Other parents. If children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children. Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but who may not have been informed by the family.

The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Head following consultation with the relevant teaching staff. For example, with different ages of pupils, there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. Research shows that even very young children experience loss and grief, so our youngest will be affected although the expression of this will vary widely.

It is important that staff avoid adding worry. For example, if the child died in hospital, we would not want to give children a fear of hospitals. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help, such as that the child was in pain and is now free of pain, this can be used to help alleviate sorrow.

Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge. They must not feel they need to hide their own sadness from children but a balance should be maintained.

During prolonged periods of school closure, the Head may communicate information about the death to parents via email and give age-appropriate guidance on how parents should address this matter with their children with links to support

organisations (see Appendix 1). This should only be done if the family have agreed for this action to be taken.

The funeral:

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private
- The Head and/or Deputy Heads will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport
- The Head should discuss with staff whether flowers will be sent and/or a collection made
- Cultural and religious implications need to be considered, so long as they are in keeping with the Fundamental British Values
- If parents of the bereaved wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be made possible

4. Memory Assemblies

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

It may also be helpful for pupils and staff to contribute to a Memory Book in accordance with their own feelings and in their own time. A book could be left in a private place for people to add to as and when they so wish. The bereaved family's wishes must come first. Whilst it is important to place a limit on the amount of time available for individuals to make their contributions, it is also important to recognise that grief can take longer to manifest itself for some and opportunities must be given to share this appropriately at any time.

During prolonged periods of school closure, it may be deemed appropriate for the Head to post a video to the school community to the Parent Login section of the website. This should only be done in agreement with the child's family.

5. If a child dies in school:

- If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health, they will contact the School Nurse
- In the case of a serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision will usually be taken by the School Nurse or a member of the SLT, although in the case of an emergency, any member of staff may contact Emergency Services. The Head or, in their absence, the most senior member of staff on site should be informed as soon as possible
- The School Nurse or Head will ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital

- If the child stops breathing, a first aid trained school staff member should administer CPR. In some cases, parents may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incidence. In rare cases, this may include a request that mechanical resuscitation is not administered. However, whilst the school respects the parents' preference in this matter, due to the statutory responsibility imposed on the school regarding 'duty of care', the need for school staff to administer manual CPR overrides such preference. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered
- Where parents have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring, this protocol will be handed to the paramedics
- Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible
- Once the child is placed in the ambulance, a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. The person will remain in regular contact with the Head and/or the Deputy Heads
- The school will notify the Local Authority if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to go through the Head, Chair of Governors and Local Authority

6. If a child dies on a school trip

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child, or the teacher in charge, should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Head. The Head will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions. The school will notify the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply.

7. Responding to the media

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. Members of staff should not respond to journalists and should refer all enquiries to the Head, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority.

8. Ongoing Support

For staff:

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection. The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room could be allocated for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised

that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing

- Access to one to one time with a line manager or member of SLT for support
- Access to counselling support from our school counsellor
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school (see Appendix 1)

During holidays and periods of school closure, the above support may be offered remotely via telephone and video calls.

For pupils:

- In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach for support and the school will facilitate regular opportunities for discussions with this member of staff to take place. During holidays and periods of school closure, this support may be delivered remotely and the guidelines for video calling in the Remote Teaching and Learning Policy should be followed
- The Head of PSHEE, KS1 PSHEE Coordinator and Deputy Head Pastoral will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss. During holidays and periods of school closure, online resources and ebooks may be provided to families
- The school counsellor can offer support to pupils who may need more help. During holidays and periods of school closure, this support may be delivered remotely

Help and support for children and young people who experience bereavement is best provided by a trusted, familiar adult as and when it is needed. In time, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. Oxfordshire County Council does not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereaved families - grief is a normal process and those who are grieving may need to be reassured that whatever emotions they are feeling are perfectly normal. There is no one process of grieving for all.

It is usually only when feelings remain overwhelming, over a period of weeks, when counselling support may become a more appropriate offer. Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier.

For the family:

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died
- Send at least one staff representative to the funeral in consultation with the family
- Hold a collection/send flowers as appropriate
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone. Please see point 4 above

- If the parents of the bereaved wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be made possible

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain ongoing links. Each family will be different and as such will have different needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information

If, after a period of time, there are members of the school community who are showing signs of continued distress, signposting to further support may be needed including access to professional staff support agencies.

9. Reintegration of a child into the school after losing somebody close to them

Please also see point 3 above.

- The school will talk to the family and the child, if age appropriate, to see what they would like to happen when they return to school
- Teachers should talk to the child's current peers attending school about how people are affected by grief and encourage them to share their own feelings. Ask about how they have coped with bereavement in their own lives and what has helped
- Discuss how difficult it may be for the bereaved pupil to come back to school. Ask how they would like to be treated if they were returning to school after a death. Acknowledge that people will have different preferences as to how they are treated. Some people may want to discuss what has happened, while others may want to be left alone. In general, bereaved students say that they would like others to treat them as before rather than being 'over-nice' to them. However, it is a delicate balance as they don't want people to behave as if nothing has happened at all
- Allow them access to a 'quiet room' where they can go to be alone and agree a way to communicate this such as a signal or exit card
- When they return to school, acknowledge their loss. E.g. "I'm sorry that (name of deceased) died. I know that you are sad."

10. The death of a member of staff

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. As a school we recognise that the loss of a member of staff will have a significant impact on the whole community.

In addition to the above, the school will notify the Local Authority as an employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Head will seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral should they wish.

11. Safeguarding

The Manor recognises that bereavement could agitate existing mental health issues or that grief and a change of circumstances may mean that a family are struggling to cope. Families and children will be monitored and supported regularly and where a Safeguarding concern arises, staff should follow the procedures outlined in our Safeguarding Policy.

12. Responsibilities

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in the event of a death of traumatic loss is the Head. In the event that the Head is absent, the Deputy Head Pastoral or Deputy Head Academic will take responsibility.

Their responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff

13. Staff Training

All staff are given access to online training through EduCare on 'Dealing with Bereavement and Loss'. Produced in partnership with Winston's Wish, the UK's first childhood bereavement charity, this course helps staff to understand what needs to be in place to support everyone involved with a bereavement in a school, including:

- the effects of grief on a child or young person
- how a death may impact school life, and how information about the death should be shared with pupils and staff
- how to manage potentially difficult topics and avoid unnecessarily painful comments when communicating with a bereaved pupil or student
- how to communicate with children and young people about tragic events in the media
- the factors relating to how children or young people will respond to a death
- how to ensure the bereaved pupil or student's needs are respected and supported by all staff who come into contact with them
- what should be included in a bereavement policy and the guidance staff need to support everyone during a potentially difficult time
- when to seek further help and support on bereavement for children or young people, their families or even staff members within the school.

14. Bereaved Pupil Support Policy

It is possible that staff will be called upon to support pupils who have been bereaved.

The school's advice is for the relevant members of staff to meet with the Head to discuss the best way forward with that particular child. The Head will consult with the

family and, if necessary, with SeeSaw, an Oxfordshire Charity that specialises in this area (Contact: Christine Druce, See-Saw, Bush House, 2 Merewood Avenue, Headington, Oxford OX3 8EF tel: 01865 744768 www.seesaw.org). The Head will discuss with the surviving parent and also, if the child is sufficiently mature, with the child about how they would like the loss to be announced to staff and peers at school, and any other related issues.

Advice for supporting a bereaved pupil

In general, the advice for members of staff supporting a bereaved pupil is as follows:

- **Acknowledge the death with the parent/carer** and child – simple, genuine expressions of sympathy (in person or by cards) – plus reassurances of support for the child in school eg “I am so sorry to hear what happened. I will let the other teachers know and we will all keep a close eye on your child. If it is OK with you we will also let the class know what has happened so they can help your child when back in school. We want to make sure we offer the right support so please let us know if there is anything you think we need to be aware of and I will keep you posted about how things are going at school”.
- **Offer support to the child** – eg “I am so sorry to hear about what happened. Sometimes it helps to talk about it and if you want to you can come and talk to me. Sometimes you might find things a bit difficult in the classroom or playground, and if that happens do come and find me and together we can try and find a way to sort it out.” The Manor has a School Counsellor who can visit pupils weekly and can be accessed as required through the School Nurse.
- **Be prepared to listen if the child wants to talk** – if you can’t, find someone who can.
- **Watch and listen for any changes in behaviour** – these might indicate that the child is beginning to struggle – this may be weeks, months or even years after the death.
- **Watch out for deterioration in academic ability** – normalise this, give praise for what has been achieved and try and involve the pupil in ways to improve the situation eg “sometimes when someone we love dies it can be difficult to concentrate in the classroom for a while, and I am wondering if this is what is happening for you at the moment? What do you think we can do that might help?”
- **Watch out for significant dates** – get the family/child to identify special times when things might be difficult for them. What might help?
- **Watch out for absences** – might be connected with bereavement difficulties at school or home – check them out.
- **Watch out for children revisiting their grief over time** – this can happen years after the event especially if the death happens when the child is very young and the implications of the loss are not realised and understood.
- **Keep in touch with pupil/family** – this way you will be aware of any difficulties/changes that are happening to the wider family and the impact this might have on your pupil.
- **Ensure future staff are aware of the child’s loss and any significant dates**
- **Take care of yourself** – you are important – supporting a bereaved pupil is not always easy – make sure you have support for yourself.

APPENDIX 1: Organisations offering bereavement support and advice include the following:

For children and young people:

Winston's Wish www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus 0808 802 0021

Seesaw www.facebook.com/SeeSawCharity 01865 744768

Child Bereavement UK www.childbereavementuk.org 0800 028 8840

For adults:

Bereavement Care www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk 0208 427 5720

Cruse Bereavement Counselling www.cruse.org.uk 0808 808 1677

Helpful guidance specific to coronavirus:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

APPENDIX 2: Coronavirus Related Critical Incidents in Schools – Briefing from Oxfordshire County Council

The coronavirus pandemic is impacting on all our schools, families, communities and way of life. The current situation means that there is an increased risk of critical incidents both in the school and the wider school community. This is coupled with a collective raised level of anxiety due to uncertainty around the corona crisis and the additional complication of the nationwide closure of schools.

Schools will be managing this in the particularly challenging circumstance when most children are at home and most staff working remotely, with many staff self-isolating with suspected Covid-19 or because they are at increased risk. Whilst huge efforts are being made to stay in regular contact with children and young people, school communities are likely to feel less connected especially over school holiday periods.

Child Death

In the event of the death of a child the usual procedures and support available will apply. Please see *Child Death Communication Protocol* and *Support for Education Establishments Child Death* attached at the end of this document.

Bereavement (following the death of a family member or member of staff)

Help and support for children and young people who experience bereavement is best provided by a trusted, familiar adult as and when it is needed. In time, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. We do not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereaved families – grief is a normal process and those who are grieving may need to be reassured that whatever emotions they are feeling, are perfectly normal, there is no one process of grieving for all.

It is usually only when feelings remain overwhelming, over a period of weeks, when counselling support may become a more appropriate offer. Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier, particularly whilst we remain in social isolation.

In the event of a critical incident, Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service will offer support to the school's management team. The approach taken is founded on helping schools manage the immediate aftermath of an event, including advice and support around communication, practical arrangements and managing emotions. During COVID-19 we would advise schools to plan ahead and prepare for such an event using the guidance below to identify issues that need to be considered.

A member of the Educational Psychology Service or other Education staff will contact you to identify what steps have been taken so far and what needs to happen next.

Preparation: Schools are advised to consider the following issues (for each issue identify more than one member of staff to lead in case of illness)

Communication

- Who will contact the family to offer condolence on behalf of the school sign post to resources or support and remain as a point of contact as needed.
- How will you communicate information to staff: what messaging systems are available? Who will lead on this?
- How will you communicate information re bereavement if necessary to pupils/students. Will you contact the parents only? Plan a form of words to express regret but at the same time reduce anxiety.
- How will you communicate with parents? How do you normally communicate with parents? Will this be appropriate?

Helpful information to share with staff in advance of an incident

- Share information with staff about typical responses to bereavement and how to manage this while recognising that this is a new situation for all of us.
- Provide information that can be shared with parents about children and young people's responses to bereavement.

Winston's Wish have produced guidance for supporting children and young people during the coronavirus – see the end of this document. These three are helpful and relevant.

Hyperlinks:

Coronavirus [How schools can support children and young people](#)

Coronavirus [How to tell a child or young person that someone has died from coronavirus](#)

Coronavirus [How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible](#)

Identify vulnerable students and staff

- How will you identify those who may be made more vulnerable following a bereavement. Who will do this? Consider a key worker approach to follow up regularly with those families during school closure.
- Some staff may be more vulnerable in this situation ensure that you have support systems in place e.g how can we support each other, use of typical support networks, PAM Assist or equivalent used by school, Cruse counselling

Post event actions

- Senior leadership team to refer to the communication plan made and finalise roles. (staff sickness may be a factor)

- What are the family's views on what they want to be shared.
- Agree a script to guide communication with staff and students
- Plan for vulnerable students. Do other agencies need to be informed? LCSS? CAMHS?
- Identify a focus for students to share feelings for example use of tutor / mentor groups; other school sharing forums as appropriate to the age group.
- Continue to provide homework for students in order to maintain the reassurance of routine.
- Maintain regular contact with staff – identify any vulnerable staff and provide a support system
- Consider practical issues such as memorials / books of condolences. Are they going to be appropriate?
- Signpost families to information and /or services that are available during COVID -19 if they have continuing concerns about their child.

Reintegration of a bereaved child into school if attending during the pandemic or returning when schools reopen

- Talk to the family and child, if age appropriate, to see what s/he would like to happen when they return to school.
- Talk to the child's current peers attending school about how people are affected by grief and encourage them to share their own feelings. Ask about how they have coped with bereavement in their own lives and what has helped.
- Discuss how difficult it may be for the bereaved pupil to come back to school. Ask how they would like to be treated if they were returning to school after a death. Acknowledge that people will have different preferences as to how they are treated. Some people may want to discuss what has happened, while others may want to be left alone. In general, bereaved students say that they would like others to treat them as before rather than being 'over-nice' to them. However, it is a delicate balance as they don't want people to behave as if nothing has happened at all.
- Allow them access to a 'quiet room' where he/she can go to be alone and agree a way to communicate this (e.g. signal or exit card).
- When they return, acknowledge their loss "I'm sorry that (name of deceased) died. I know that you are sad."

The Educational Psychologist can support you in the immediate aftermath of the incident and they will also be available to support with any later issues that arise.

If, after a period of time, there are members of the school community who are showing signs of continued distress signposting to further support may be needed including access to professional staff support agencies. This is an unprecedented situation and time of uncertainty and stress it is likely therefore that additional measures will be needed to ensure the wellbeing of all members of the school community.

Documents and websites to support schools in relation to current emergency

1. *Child Death Communication Protocol*
2. *Support for Education Establishments Child Death*
3. Cruse Bereavement Care have published a helpful range of booklets for children young people and their carers that can be found here:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/parents/free-booklets-children-young-people-and-their-carers>

4. Organisations offering bereavement support and advice include the following:

For children and young people :

Winston's Wish www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus 0808 802 0021

Helpful guidance specific to coronavirus:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Seesaw www.facebook.com/SeeSawCharity 01865 744768

Child Bereavement UK www.childbereavementuk.org 0800 028 8840

For adults :

Bereavement Care www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk 0208 427 5720

Cruse Bereavement Counselling www.cruse.org.uk 0808 808 1677

Note: as the situation and sources of information are developing, the above guidance may be updated (dated 2/4/20)

Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service

APPENDIX 3: OSCB Joint Agency Communication Protocol in the event of an unexpected Child Death

Receiving the news that a child has died is inevitably challenging and emotive for the professionals responsible for co-ordinating an effective and sensitive response.

Events can be fast paced and information often received in a fragmented way. Swift and smooth inter-agency communication ensures facts are accurately represented and action plans co-ordinated and communicated appropriately.

Whilst Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Working Together 2018 set out the statutory responsibilities and procedural steps agencies need to take, in order to minimise any potential distress or misunderstanding to those who knew the child, agencies' communications should be agreed and co-ordinated.

Taking into account that each situation is unique, the following principles should underpin the spirit and delivery of any communications:

- **Compassion** – tone and wording must reflect compassion for the individuals and networks involved with that child. This can include family, friends, professionals, schools, community groups etc. Consideration needs to be given to potential impacts on specific local communities and groups. Encourage parents and communities to use private messaging groups to communicate rather than open forums which may compromise confidentiality.
- **Consistency** - Use of a consistent message and broad structure by all agencies.
- **Confirmation** of the child's name at the earliest opportunity. This minimises inaccuracies and speculation and reduces the risk of prolonged press interest. Agreement to release the name will be given by Thames Valley Police (TVP), all agencies to be advised of planned timings of information release into the public domain. Ensure the name is only shared in any communications when TVP agreement has been obtained.

Steps to take:

- Press interest should be pre-empted.
- As soon as notification of death is received, plans should be made to develop an agreed press statement. This should be a jointly prepared statement, for partial or complete use by all involved agencies.
- Ordinarily this will be led by Oxfordshire County Council Communications Team in collaboration with TVP Communications Team, Coroner's Office, any other local agencies and the child's school, if applicable.
- Schools will often draft a letter to parents and students. The contents of these should be consistent with any press release. The OCC Education Safeguarding Advisory Team (ESAT) will offer support and co-ordination with

this and can be contacted on 01865 810603 or at

<http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/safeguarding>

- TVP and OCC colleagues (Communications, Coroner's Office and Education Safeguarding Advisory team) should liaise to agree appropriate timing and content of the release and ensure the child's family or carers are informed of this.

Useful links:

<https://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<http://www.seesaw.org.uk/>