

The Holmesdale School

Bereavement Policy

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Headteacher/Lead DSL
DATE LAST REVIEWED	April 2026
DATE NEXT REVIEW	June 2027
DATE LAST APPROVED BY LGB	06/05/2026

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

Supporting our students and families through bereavement

At The Holmesdale school, we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. We provide opportunities within our school for students to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences.

Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. There is no right or wrong reaction to death. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help support anyone in the way that best meets their needs.

At The Holmesdale School we aim to achieve the following:

- To deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To meet the needs of all our students and staff and provide much needed support.
- To work with outside agencies as appropriate.
- For staff to be aware of the needs of the students, as well as their own.
- For students to express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies with the support of sensitive staff.
- To provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To provide emotional and practical support for families where appropriate.

How The Holmesdale School can support students and their families during a bereavement

When The Holmesdale School is informed of a bereavement that is linked to a student e.g. a family member, a close family friend, a pet:

- We will ask parents/carers how the school can be involved to support their child and family.
- We will explain how THS can provide resources to support the child.
- We will monitor any changes in the child's behaviour and share any information with parents/carers.

How The Holmesdale School provides support when there is a death in the school community

Telling staff:

- Where possible discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school.
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible.
- The Senior Leadership Team will be prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is a perfectly natural response.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team will be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or student if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Advice for families will also be provided of support services available to them.

- Bereavement support or counselling should be available for anyone who requires it.

Telling students:

- Students in the same class should be told, in small groups by adults they know.
- A letter should go to the family, the same day if possible.
- Staff will be provided with guidelines as to how to inform students.
- Students will be given time and space as required to talk and reflect.
- Staff will be as honest as possible about their own feelings and experiences and talk about their relationship with the person.
- Resources to support students will be available.

The family, students and staff will be given an opportunity to celebrate the life of the student/teacher with a special assembly held in school at an appropriate time.

Support for families:

Slide Away

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

Winston's Wish

08088 020 021

<https://winstonswish.org/about-us/>

Grief Encounter

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/about-us/about/what-we-do/>

Support for bereaved children and their families.

Child Bereavement UK

0800 02 888 40

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

Supporting bereaved children through difficult times.

CRUSE

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

Support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies.

There's a section for schools <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools>

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/>

Not Too Young to Grieve is a film created with Childhood Bereavement Network and explores how very young people respond to loss

<https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/15>

Support for Schools:

Employee Assistance Programme

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

The Educational Psychology Service provides a crisis support service for schools. This work is part of the core work provided for schools by the Local Authority to support the delivery of its statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

The overriding objective in all of these is to promote psychological processing of the event, both at an individual and a systems level, within the school community. As a consequence, it aims to minimise further distress.

[Universal \(Statutory\) Services - KELSI](#)

Email: Educational.psychology@kent.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 410100