Supporting Children Through Bereavement

Grass Roots Nursery Group

Updated September 2026

1. Policy Statement

Grass Roots Nursery Group recognises that grief and loss can profoundly affect young children, their families, and our staff team. Children process bereavement differently depending on their age, emotional development, communication stage, and individual circumstances.

We are committed to providing a compassionate, stable, and safe environment that honours the child's feelings, maintains consistent routines, and offers gentle co-regulation during difficult times. Our approach is rooted in sensitivity, cultural respect, and developmentally appropriate emotional support.

2. Purpose & Scope

This policy outlines how Grass Roots Nursery Group supports children, families, and staff experiencing bereavement. It ensures:

- children receive sensitive, age-appropriate emotional support
- staff respond consistently and professionally
- families are supported with empathy and confidentiality
- information is shared appropriately across the team
- safeguarding and wellbeing concerns are identified and escalated
- cultural and religious practices are respected

This policy applies to:

- all employees
- apprentices and students
- volunteers
- agency staff
- contractors working within the setting

It covers:

- bereavement notification
- partnership with families
- emotional support for children
- staff wellbeing
- critical incident response
- signposting to external services

3. Statutory Framework & Reference Guidance

This policy operates in line with:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- UK GDPR
- Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures
- West Yorkshire Consortium Inter-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

4. Operational Procedures

A. Initial Notification & Partnership with Families

Informing the Setting

Parents/carers are encouraged to inform the Nursery Manager or Key Person as soon as possible about a bereavement or terminal diagnosis within the family.

Initial Meeting & Planning
The Key Person and Nursery Manager will meet with the family (informally or privately) to discuss:

- the language and explanations used at home (e.g., clear terms such as *"died"*)
- how the family wishes information to be shared with staff
- any changes in behaviour, sleep, appetite, or emotional expression
- cultural or religious practices the family would like respected
- whether the child will attend funerals or memorial events

Recording Information
Key details will be recorded confidentially on CPOMS or Famly to ensure consistent support across the team.

B. Supporting the Child in the Setting

Age-Appropriate Support
Practitioners use therapeutic stories, bereavement books, sensory resources, and creative play to help children explore feelings of loss at their own pace.
Providing a Safe Space
Children may access quiet areas indoors or outdoors if they feel overwhelmed, supported by a trusted practitioner offering calm co-regulation.
Responding to Questions
Practitioners answer questions honestly, simply, and gently, avoiding complex or abstract explanations. Repetition is expected and responded to sensitively.
Maintaining Routines
Daily structure, play, outdoor learning (Wild Roots), and mealtimes are maintained to offer comforting familiarity, with flexibility if the child needs additional rest or comfort.

C. Supporting Staff & the Setting Community

Critical Incident Support
In the event of the loss of a child, staff member, or parent, the Executive Leadership Team will activate critical incident protocols.
Staff Wellbeing & Counselling
Staff will be offered debriefs, occupational health advice, and access to external counselling services (e.g., BrightHR Employee Assistance Programme). Managers will monitor staff wellbeing and provide additional support where needed.

D. External Resources & Signposting

Families may be signposted to specialist bereavement organisations, including:

- Winston's Wish
- Child Bereavement UK
- Cruse Bereavement Support
- Local NHS & pastoral care teams

5. Confidentiality & Safeguarding

All information relating to a bereavement is treated with strict confidentiality in accordance with UK GDPR and safeguarding protocols.
Any sudden, traumatic, or unclear circumstances surrounding a bereavement will be handled with heightened sensitivity and logged securely on CPOMS under the direction of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
Practitioners remain alert to signs of emotional distress, regression, or safeguarding concerns that may emerge following a bereavement.

6. Monitoring & Review

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, guidance, or emerging needs change.

The Nursery Manager and DSL are responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented consistently across all settings.

7. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Critical Incident Procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Mobile Phone & Electronic Device Use Policy