



BEREAVEMENT POLICY

POLICY FOR	BEREAVEMENT
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	AP Pastoral, Safeguarding Team
REVIEW DATE	April 2026
REVIEWED BY	Assistant Principals and Head of School
APPROVED DATE	June 2026
APPROVED BY	ELT
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	April 2027
RELATED POLICIES	Safeguarding Policy, Counselling Policy, Well-being Policy

Executive Principal / CEO and Brand

Ambassador for GEMS Westminster Schools



Policy Statement

The Westminster School – Dubai is committed to safeguarding and promoting the emotional wellbeing of all students and staff. Bereavement and significant loss can have a serious impact on emotional stability, learning, behaviour, and attendance. The school will respond with compassion, structure, and professional care through a coordinated whole school approach aligned with GEMS Education safeguarding and wellbeing expectations.

This policy establishes a clear, consistent, and sensitive framework for responding to bereavement and significant loss within the school community.

Purpose

This policy ensures that:

- Bereavement responses are timely, coordinated, and compassionate
- Safeguarding risk is assessed and managed
- Communication is controlled and sensitive
- Students and staff receive appropriate emotional and academic support
- Cultural and religious practices are respected
- Practice aligns with GEMS safeguarding and wellbeing standards

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students
- All staff members
- Death of a student or staff member
- Death of a student's or staff member's immediate family member
- Traumatic loss affecting the school community
- Sudden or critical incidents
- Significant separation events (including parental divorce where impact is evident)

Definitions

Bereavement: Loss through death of a significant person.

Grief: Emotional and psychological response to loss.

Traumatic Loss: Sudden, unexpected, or violent loss.

Significant Separation: Major relational loss impacting wellbeing.

Postvention: Structured support actions following a death, particularly suicide.

Guiding Principles

The school will:

- Act with empathy, dignity, and respect
- Prioritise safeguarding and student welfare
- Share information on a need to know basis only
- Avoid speculation or public disclosure of cause of death
- Avoid romanticising or sensationalising death
- Provide tiered emotional support
- Maintain accurate records
- Review each response for effectiveness

Bereavement Response Team (BRT)

The Bereavement Response Team is activated following verified notification of a death or major loss.

Core Members

- Executive Principal / CEO
- Head of School / Deputy CEO
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Assistant Principals
- Head of Inclusion
- Student Counsellor
- Heads of Pastoral

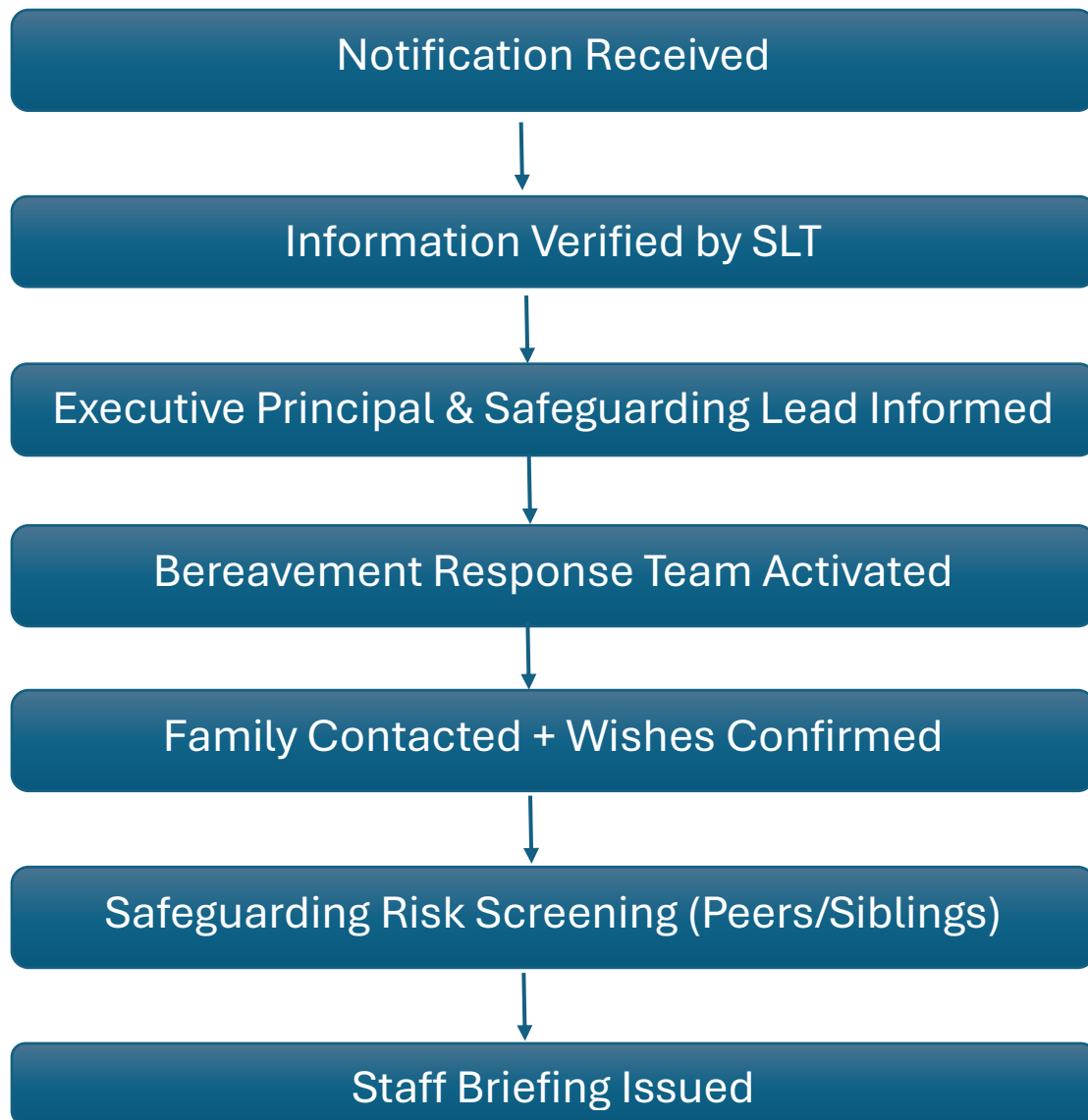


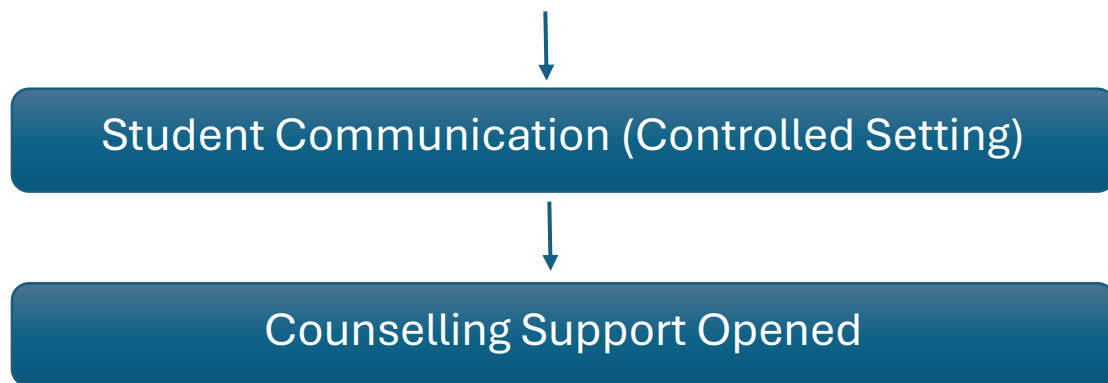
- Heads of House
- Deputy Head of Secondary (For Secondary)
- Key Stage Leaders
- Form Tutors (as directed)

Procedure in Managing Bereavement:

To enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with death, bereavement, and separation, a framework is outlined for guidance:

FLOWCHART — INITIAL RESPONSE PROCESS



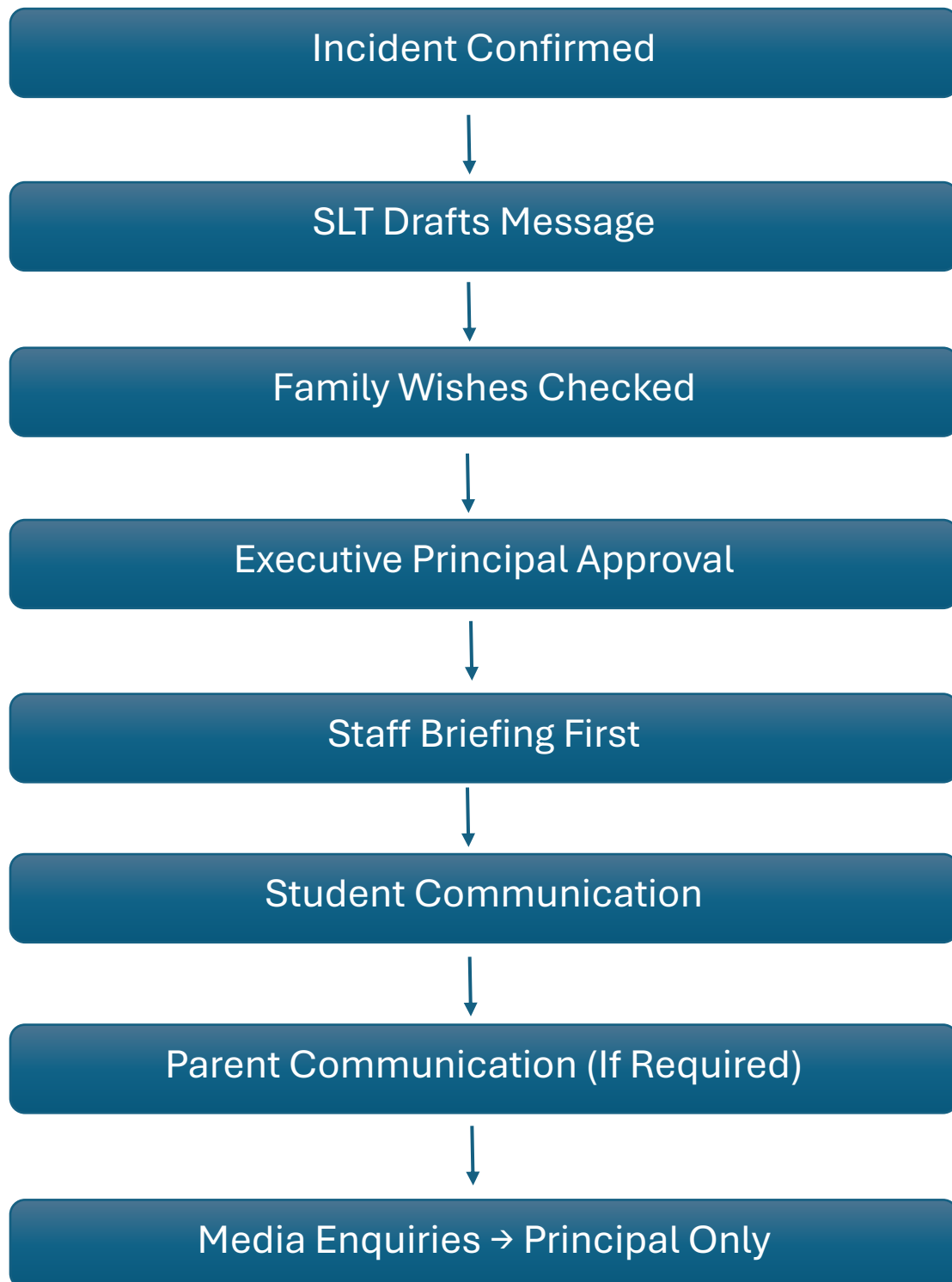


Immediate Response Protocol (First 24 Hours)

1. Verify information through reliable sources only.
2. Inform Executive Principal and Safeguarding Lead.
3. Activate Bereavement Response Team.
4. Contact family to express condolences and confirm communication boundaries.
5. Identify high-risk students and close contacts.
6. Conduct safeguarding risk screening.
7. Prepare approved communications.
8. Brief staff before student notification.
9. Make counselling support available.

No unauthorised communication is permitted.

FLOWCHART — COMMUNICATION CONTROL



Communication Protocol

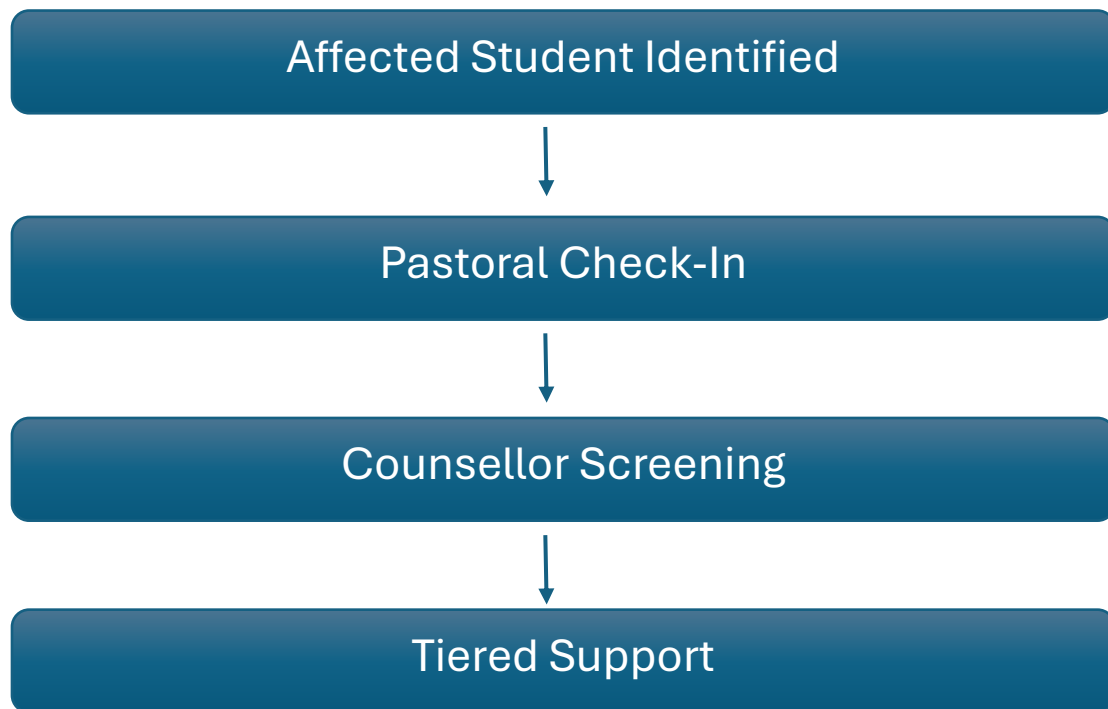
- All messages must be approved by SLT.
- Information must be factual and minimal.
- Cause of death is not disclosed unless authorised.
- Rumour control is prioritised.
- Tutors receive guidance scripts.
- Group announcements should occur in supported settings.

Suicide or Traumatic Death Postvention

In suspected or confirmed suicide cases:

- Activate safeguarding postvention plan
- Avoid memorialisation that could encourage imitation
- Do not share method or details
- Use counsellor-led classroom support
- Increase monitoring of vulnerable students
- Escalate risk cases immediately
- Engage external mental health partners if required

FLOWCHART — STUDENT SUPPORT PATHWAY



Tiered Support Model

- **Tier 1 — Universal**
 - Tutor monitoring
 - Classroom flexibility
 - Pastoral awareness
- **Tier 2 — Targeted**
 - Mentoring
 - Workload adjustments
- **Tier 3 — Intensive**
 - Individual counselling
 - Safeguarding monitoring

➤ **Tier 4 — Specialist**

- External clinical referral
- Specialist therapy services

Academic & Attendance Adjustments

The school may provide:

- Flexible attendance
- Deadline extensions
- Reduced workload
- Phased return plans

Cultural and Religious Considerations

The school will respect:

- Religious mourning practices
- Burial timelines
- Prayer and ritual needs
- Family preferences regarding memorials

No memorial activity proceeds without family consent and SLT approval.

Memorials and Tributes

Memorial activities must:

- Be SLT approved
- Be age appropriate
- Avoid glorification
- Focus on remembrance and wellbeing

Approved formats may include reflection spaces, memory books, or charitable actions.



Funeral Attendance

- School representatives may attend with permission
- Student attendance requires parental consent
- Alternative condolences may be sent when attendance is not appropriate

Staff Support

Affected staff may receive:

- Counselling access
- Temporary workload flexibility
- Debrief meetings
- Cover support where feasible

Confidentiality

All bereavement information is confidential and shared strictly on a need to know basis in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Documentation Requirements

The school will maintain secure records of:

- Risk screenings
- Support plans
- Counselling sessions (as appropriate)
- Safeguarding actions
- Communication logs
- Reintegration plans

Training Requirements

Annual training will include:

- Bereavement response procedures
- Safeguarding grief risk indicators
- Tutor response guidance
- Crisis communication leadership training

Media Response

Only the Executive Principal or delegated SLT member may respond to media enquiries. All staff must redirect enquiries immediately.

Monitoring and Policy Review

- Each incident response will be reviewed by SLT
- Support outcomes will be evaluated
- Policy updates will follow GEMS and regulatory changes
- Annual review is mandatory

External Agency Coordination

Where appropriate, the school will coordinate with:

- Health authorities
- Child protection services
- Licensed mental health providers
- Approved support organisations