

St. Joseph & St. Bede R.C. Primary School



Bereavement policy

With **Christ** at the centre, our *Dream* is for **greatness** in our learning, to *Believe* in our **unique talents**, to be Guardians of **life & creation** and to *Achieve* a **better world**, by **living life to the full.**

Approved by: Mrs J. Myerscough

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1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- › Set out a guideline for how the school will respond to a death in our school community
- › Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- › Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- › Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- › Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

2. Roles and responsibilities

- › Designated safeguarding lead: – Mrs. J. Myerscough and deputy leads are: - Mrs. S. Prince, Mrs. H. Daly and Mrs. N. McDonald
- › SENCO: - Miss C. Wheeler
- › Bereavement or crisis team: - Mrs. J. Myerscough and Mrs. N. McDonald and SLT members
- › Religious leaders: - Fr. W. Foley and Mrs. S. Prince

2.1 The headteacher

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The headteacher will:

- › Liaise with the family of the deceased
- › Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- › Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- › Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- › Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement

- › Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff

2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- › Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- › Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- › Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- › Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, Memory tree
- › Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- › Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- › Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- › Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through governor/committee meetings as and when appropriate.
- › Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair.
- › Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- › Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

- › Employee Assistance Programme 08000856148
- › Line managers will support any staff who are supporting in this role.
- › Staff have been trained in 'Rainbows' a bereavement training through Salford Diocese.

4. Immediate actions following a death

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner. Should we receive the news of a death, in ALL cases the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (It is essential to have the facts confirmed)
- Share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff and a member of the Bereavement Team.

The senior member of staff and the members of the Bereavement Team will:

- Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance and examples and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.

THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A PARENT OR CLOSE RELATIVE

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member breaks the news with the support of an appropriate member of staff. If this is not possible the Bereavement Team Leader will ensure someone suitable to break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes,

We will:

- Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school; be that a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available.
- Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, email, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances
- Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.

THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE PUPIL

Should we receive such news, members of the Bereavement Team will be called together to be briefed with the salient facts and to decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident.

We will consider:

- Who will contact parents, if necessary?
- Who will meet with parents who arrive at school? Where?
- Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. Members of the Bereavement Team responsible for dealing with the media will prepare all necessary statements. Such statements should deal only with facts in as sympathetic a way as possible. We will agree a format of response to telephone inquiries, including approaches from the media.

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff; supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague. Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the appropriate senior member of staff will call together colleagues from the Bereavement Team.

We will use the guidance notes below:-

- a. Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.

- b. Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff.
- c. Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- d. Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes.
- e. Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- f. Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- g. It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way.
- h. Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death.

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- › The headteacher or a member of the Bereavement Team will contact the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how.
- › The news of a death will be confirmed by contacting official bodies if the family can't be immediately contacted.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- › The headteacher or a member of the Bereavement Team will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- › If we are in school, staff will be informed promptly by calling a staff meeting. If we are not in school then the Bereavement Team will activate a phone tree.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

Should we need to break sad news to children or young people we will first refer to the "Guidelines for Breaking Sad News of a Death to a class or assembly" which are stated below –

- Whoever is giving the news should prepare themselves with what to say.
- Don't be afraid to show emotion - this just shows that you are human but can throw you if you are not expecting to react in this way.
- Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.
- Be honest, give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.
- If known, explain how, where and when the death occurred.
- If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct.
- Talk briefly about the person who has died without eulogising them.
- Let the school know of any arrangements already in place.
- Close by acknowledging that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is OK.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

- › Parents/carers will be notified of a death by sending a letter home with pupils explaining the steps you've taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

- › The death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)
- › The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which you can find at the bottom of [this page](#))
- › If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- › The headteacher will respond to media requests in consultation with the Diocese and LA. Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to this responsible person.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

In consultation with the family and school Bereavement Team the school will support the community. We will take advice from appropriate agencies.

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- › The Pastoral care team, bereavement team, peer-to-peer support will be available in school
- › Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

5.2 Timetables

- › We will decide whether to adjust the timetable for some or even all pupils dependant on the circumstances and the situation.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

- › The school community will come together to memorialise the deceased in an appropriate way dependant on the circumstances and the wishes of family members.

5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- › Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- › How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

Mrs. J. Myerscough will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- › Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- › Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- › Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- › Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- › Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support
- › Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

6.2 Ongoing support

- › We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- › We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult.
- › We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will hold regular pupil progress meetings.
- › We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

Mrs. J. Myerscough will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- › Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- › Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- › Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- › Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

- Employee Assistance Programme 08000856148
- Adjustments may be made, e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually. At every review, it will be approved by the headteacher

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/