



St Peter & St Paul

CofE Primary School

Bereavement Policy

2017 - 2021

(This policy has been drafted having regard for the school's Christian ethos.)

	Date	Signed
Agreed by Staff:	March 2017	Mr Mark Carlyle Head Teacher
Agreed by Governors:	March 2017	Mrs N Ford Chair of Governors
Lead:	Senior Leadership Team/Strategic Leadership Committee	
Review date:	March 2021	

Our School Mission Statement

We see it as our mission to grow the whole child - intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually. To provide them, within a Christian environment, with every learning opportunity possible and to empower them to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Bereavement Policy

Rationale:

St Peter and St Paul Church of England Primary School is an openly inclusive school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities. At this school we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole learner physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Aims:

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication between school, family and community
- To identify key staff within the school and other support networks who may be able to help those in the midst of a bereavement

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being

Responsibilities:

a) The Role of the Head Teacher:

- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To keep the governing body fully informed
- To ensure that all staff have access to appropriate bereavement training.

b) The Role of the Governing Body:

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation
- To review the policy every three years.

c) The Role of Staff

- It is part of the role of teaching and support staff to do all they can to support a bereaved child and to act as a listening ear
- All staff will need to have knowledge of the policy, including Midday Supervisors, Office Staff and any others who children might talk to.

Procedures:

1. When the Head Teacher becomes aware of a bereavement, he/she should contact the deceased's family as soon as possible to establish their wishes about who should be told; which must be respected in communicating with others. Before sending a letter home to parents in general about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the deceased parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the deceased parents and school. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations. See Sample Letters at Appendix A
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
5. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
6. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
7. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher.

8. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. Throughout all record keeping, the need for confidentiality and the consent of the family is paramount. The records will be kept to facilitate continuing care as a child meets new members of staff when changing class. Records would include a simple, accurate account of the circumstances, agreed by the family, and reference to the strategies used to help the child. A central calendar showing significant anniversaries of death in school will help to show where sensitivity will be needed at school.

9. There needs to be a clear set of ground rules for all staff concerning bereavement. These rules should consider and provide information about: what to tell peer groups, different strategies for coping with pupils who become distressed in class and outline different strategies which may be pertinent depending on the cause of death (eg. after illness, sudden, suicide or as a result of criminal activity).

10. There needs to be recognition that bereavement may have a long term effect on the behaviour of pupils.

11. Additional support services should be consulted if bereavement issues persist and appear to be becoming 'pathological' and where possible and appropriate, additional referrals should be made.

Further References for information and training:

<http://childbereavementuk.org/for-schools/primary-schools/>

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/for-schools/bereavement-policy>

[https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/Whole_School_Approach_to_LossAndBereavement\).pdf](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/Whole_School_Approach_to_LossAndBereavement).pdf)

Period of Review:

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or sooner as may be necessary.

Appendix A.

Suggested templates for letter to parents:

Before sending a letter home to parents in general about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the deceased's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the deceased's parents and school.

Sample letter to Bereaved Parents:

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of [Name's] death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and classmates. He/She was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan [Name's] funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of [Name's] that remains in school is returned to you, including any photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Head Teacher

This letter is merely a letter of condolence; it does not request any of the necessary permissions to inform the rest of the school that the policy requires. The school may wish to add to the policy a specific pathway for this contact, which may more practically be done by phone.

Sample letter to parents in general on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents,

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of [Name] , a pupil in [Year] .

[Name] died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly [Name] had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her. When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating [Name's] life.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Sample letter on death of a Staff Member:

Dear Parents,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher.