



## **ST ANDREW'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

This Policy reflects St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School's vision: At St Andrew's CE Primary School, we aim to bring children to a place where they can realise their full potential. Our Christian values are the foundation of all we do and each one is a facet of the central value, love, which 'always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' (1 Corinthians 13:7)

As a 'Rights Respecting School', we follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states:

*Article 13- Children must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information*

As a Church of England School, St Andrews's CE Primary School is fully committed to supporting all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances. Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a mentally healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

We will endeavour, to the best of our ability, to work in partnership with parents to provide children with support to manage the effects of bereavement and to maintain their emotional well-being.

This policy links to the school Emergency Plan and Behaviour policy and outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances to include:

- Ensuring that there are designated, named members of the school staff who will provide support to children and/or staff before (where applicable) during and after bereavement
- Enhancing effective communication and clarifying the pathway of support between school, family and the community
- Setting out how to inform children/colleagues about a death and what to do if required to tell a child that someone close to them has died
- Identifying key staff within the school and LA and clarifying the pathway of support that will be offered to staff/children if they have been bereaved
- Setting out clear procedures in respect of what to do in the case of a crisis or disaster situation on school premises or on a school trip (see Emergency Plan & Visits Policy)
- Ensuring that all staff members are trained and are able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief – SLT to discuss how to respond to behaviours which may be exhibited as a result of grief and how to manage these in conjunction with the Behaviour policy.
- Ensuring that the contact details of local and national support agencies specialising in bereavement such as Cruse Bereavement Care and Child Bereavement UK are available (see links at end of this policy)

#### **Rationale**

- Every 22 minutes in the UK a child loses a parent, this equates to around 111 children

a day

- Teachers in a Primary school are certain to encounter students who have been deeply affected by bereavement
- 1 in 29 children aged 5-16 year has lost a parent or sibling and many others have lost grandparents
- It is thought that 92% of children in the UK will experience bereavement before the age of 16
- There is no fixed pattern to how a child will grieve
- The 'Five Stages of Grief' (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) can be used as a way of starting to understand what the child or young person may be experiencing

### **The role of the Governing Body**

- To approve the policy and ensure it is implemented
- To review the policy

### **The role of the Headteacher**

- To keep the Governing Body informed
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To refer media enquiries to OCC Press Office
- To be the first point of contact for the family/families & child/children concerned
- To keep the Governing body fully informed

### **The role of the Local Authority**

- To advise & support staff
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief
- To manage media enquiries through the Press office
- The Educational Psychology service offer support to schools

### **Procedures if the school is notified of a bereavement of a staff member or child**

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations
- Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance
- Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them
- If it is appropriate, and with the agreement of the deceased's family a letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed
- The school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal

disruption to the timetable, as this also offers a sense of security and familiarity

- Staff affected by the death will be offered support
- 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
- Where necessary, the Headteacher will work with the Welfare Assistant and OCC Press Office to prepare a press statement

*“A child can live through anything so long as he or she is told the truth and is allowed to share the natural feelings people have when they are suffering.”*

Eda LeShan

### **Staff Support**

It is important that staff feel confident in delivering support for children and mutual support for each other and for implementing this policy. If possible, bereavement support training will be sourced for staff as required and the advice and guidance of the Welfare Assistant will be sought. Staff will have opportunities to speak with the school counsellor or a bereavement trained member of staff and will also be referred to LA wellbeing provision.

### **Breaking news to Staff, Children & Families**

This is usually done when a member of staff or a child has died and would not usually be appropriate when a single child/family has experienced the death of a parent or close family member.

- Headteacher or member of the SLT will speak to the family to offer condolences and support and to ascertain what the family would like to happen. Family will be given details of a school contact
- Prioritise obtaining of factual information
- Inform all staff immediately (including lunch supervisors/peripatetic staff etc) ideally before children are told
- SLT to decide how and when children will be told, having first identified any vulnerable children and considered what additional support they may need
- Children should be told as soon as possible, ideally in familiar groups by an adult who is someone they know (staff may need guidance on words to use and approach to take)
- If possible, send a letter to families on the same day (see templates in appendices)
- Consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter

### **The first few days**

Map out the first few days after an incident.

- It is usually best to have minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required.
- Consider what the school approach will be if pupils or staff are too upset to attend lessons.
- If it is a teacher who has died, what will happen to his/her class?

### **Funeral**

- Establish whether the family would welcome involvement of members of the school community or if they wish to keep it private
- Identify which members of staff and/or pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport
- Decide if flowers are to be sent and/or a collection made
- Take into account any cultural or religious implications
- If necessary, a familiar member of staff could talk to the child regarding expectations of the funeral

### **Support for a bereaved child**

#### **Return to School of a bereaved child**

- Consider a home visit, return interviews, prior to the pupil returning to school
- Ensure that the appropriate staff are aware and prepared
- Inform peers and prepare them on how to support their classmate

Not all children will need the support of specialist practitioners; they will need support from familiar people who care.

- Offer the child(ren) the opportunity to speak with the Welfare Assistant /designated adult
- Keep a routine, providing a sense of normality
- Offer a safe place, away from an emotional intense atmosphere
- Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent)
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside the home environment)
- Regular correspondence with home, providing assurance about behaviours and general well- being, will ensure the child is managing the grief
- Access to appropriate resources via Bereavement counselling, Healthy Schools or other support agencies
- An individual link person to support the child(ren) when necessary
- A suitable place in school for children who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support (e.g. school counsellor/nurture room)
- Ensure that the information is passed to the next class/school as part of transition

#### **Monitoring & supporting children**

- Support may need to be offered to other vulnerable children.
- The anti-bullying message needs to be reiterated and monitored closely.
- Therapeutic books should be readily available to assist with counselling. These can be found in the Life Skills Room.

#### **Monitoring & supporting staff**

- We recognize that supporting bereaved children will be very stressful for staff who

may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. A list of outside agencies that may offer help, both in the short and long term will be shared with staff

- We will give staff time to attend the funeral if appropriate
- Staff will be made aware of available resources and time to become familiar with these.

### **Support for bereaved families of a member of staff or a child who has died**

We will:

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer our support
- Send a letter of condolence from the school
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people
- Give the parents and/or family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who died
- Send a representative to the funeral
- Hold a collection or send flowers, as appropriate
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance book, this will be returned to the parents at an appropriate time and the children informed where it has gone

### **Useful Websites :**

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

[www.cruse.org.uk/](http://www.cruse.org.uk/)

<https://earlyyears.buckscc.gov.uk/eyfs-best-practice/bereavement/>

**Date: June 2022**

**Review date: June 2023**

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)