

St Peter's R.C. Primary School

Bereavement Policy



Policy	Bereavement
Date	September 2020
Date of review	September 2022
Signed Chair of Governors	<i>George Lopez</i>
Signed Headteacher	<i>Clare Scott</i>

We, the family of St Peter's, united in faith by God strive to learn and grow together to be the best we possibly can every day.

Responding to a death within the school community

NAME OF SCHOOL: St Peter's RC Primary

MISSION STATEMENT:

We, the family of St Peter's, united by faith in God strive to learn and grow together to be the best we possibly can every day.

SCHOOL PRAYER:

This is our school, where we are all stars in God's eyes, where we should try our hardest in our work and in our play. With Jesus in our hearts, help us to treat each other with respect, even when we find it hard. Help us to follow His example so that at St Peter's we can all live in peace and harmony as part of one big family,

Amen

We acknowledge that death, while being the inevitable end of life, is often unexpected and traumatic. Its unpredictability can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole school community. It is therefore important for everyone to have a clear understanding of what bereavement means and to be aware of the different stages of bereavement.

We acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.

We acknowledge that the communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school website, text, telephone or email.

We will establish a "*School Bereavement Team*" to be chaired if and when necessary by a '*Bereavement Team Leader*' who will be the most senior appropriate member of staff in school. Members of the Team will be: ***Mrs C Scott Head Teacher, Ms G McBride, Deputy Head, Miss S Doe, Mr G Lopez, Chairman of Governors, Mrs L Barnes, Rainbows Coordinator, Mrs M Ryan, Business Manager.*** We will have in place a course of action agreed upon by staff and the governing body, which is understood by everyone who comes into contact with the children. In the event of the death of a pupil, a member of staff or a multiple loss within the school, Mrs C Scott the Head Teacher would obviously take control of the situation.

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives and there should be a clear understanding of what bereavement means and to be aware of the different stages of bereavement and appreciate that everyone will react differently to bereavement.

We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by trained staff and when appropriate, through the use of age related structured programmes provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff, in order to help children and adults cope with bereavement as well as possible.

The Bereavement Team will ensure all staff and governors are aware of our policy and procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed annually or in the event of a death within the school community.

TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

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 break 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.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

We acknowledge our responsibility to 'keep a special watch' on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and for at least a two year period and at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns. Members of our Bereavement Team will advise an appropriate response, depending on the individual's circumstances.

For the bereaved child, returning to school will be traumatic. It is essential to pave the way for their return. Whilst it is only natural to show compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief, it is important not to forget that for the bereaved, school, with its routines and rituals, can provide a respite. Death brings unpredictability, fear and uncertainty. For the bereaved, family life at this traumatic time can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, and the future uncertain.

While all staff should be supportive of the child, and show kindness and compassion, it is equally important not to single out a grieving child for special attention. They need to feel part of the class and it helps if you expect them to continue to perform, though obviously at a different level. The grieving child needs to be dealt with in a firm but sensitive way, thus providing both the bereaved and other pupils with a sense of security in the fairness, consistency and stability of school discipline. Staff should also be aware that although

instinctively they may wish to give special attention to a bereaved child, this can cause resentment among their peers, potentially leaving them more vulnerable.

MANAGING ANTICIPATED DEATH AND THE TERMINALLY ILL. We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil's sick relative or friend
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family's wishes)
- Never give false hope to the child or young person
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so

THE PLACE OF DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During the month of November, as part of our Catholic faith, we will hold a special assembly/liturgy/act of remembrance as appropriate, to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died.

LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through our trained staff provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Staff will be made aware of Bereavement Counselling should the need arise.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF WHO SUPPORT BEREAVED PUPILS AND COLLEAGUES

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

