

# St Peter's R.C. Primary School

## Bereavement Policy



|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Policy                    | Bereavement            |
| Date                      | July 2022              |
| Date of review            | July 2024              |
| Signed Chair of Governors | <i>Eugene McCarthy</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, SEND, Mr E McCarthy, 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**

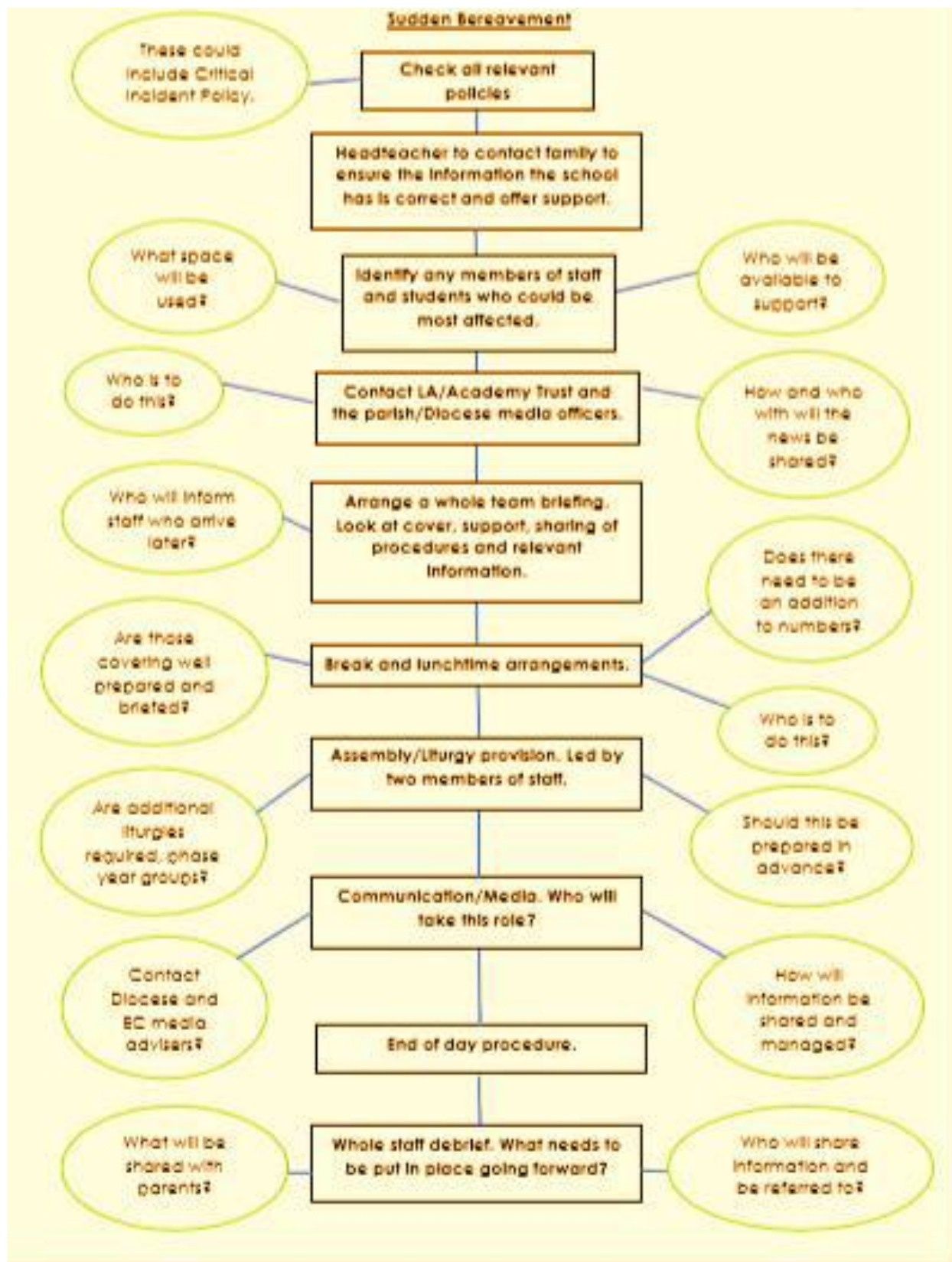
We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through our trained staff provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Staff will be made aware of Bereavement Counselling should the need arise.

## **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.



## Appendix 1



# SAMPLE LETTERS, EMAILS AND SCHOOL WEBSITE NOTICES

### Introduction:

The death of a pupil, member of staff, governor or other close member of the school community can cause great shock and distress to all concerned.

Mobile phones, social networking sites and email can all quickly be the means of effective and speedy communication, but they can also be a cause of great speculation, often before the school has had chance to provide the information. If members of staff responsible for communicating to parents are in shock, then the situation is more difficult to manage.

The following letters are offered as samples, simply to support and guide colleagues if faced with communicating to governors, staff and parents, the death of a member of the school community.

*ACTION: If faced with having to write such a letter, or post the information on the school website, please just take a moment to check the accuracy of the information*

Parents need to know how a school has responded to the death of a member of the community and what information has been given to their child.

This will no doubt include:

- Factual information about the circumstances of the death
- Information about how their child may respond to the news
- Practical suggestions to help their child to understand the news

Four sample letters are offered:

1. To inform parents of the death of a member of staff as a result of illness
2. To inform parents of the death of a pupil
3. To inform governors and staff of the death of a pupil
4. To thank parents after a time of support following the death of a pupil



## **1. TO INFORM PARENTS / CARERS OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF AS A RESULT OF ILLNESS**

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you that over the weekend, N..., a highly respected and much loved member of our teaching staff, has died. S/he had become increasingly poorly over the last few days and in the end died peacefully, with his/her family at his/her side.

The children/young people have been told of her/his death today in their own classrooms and as anticipated, a number of them are experiencing some significant distress. They were told the name of the illness was cancer and it was also explained to them that many times people with cancer do get better, but other times people die from it.

On behalf of the school community I have expressed our sympathy to her/his family. I hope in the weeks to come we will find an appropriate way to celebrate the life that s/he had with us here at our school, together with the significant contribution s/he has made.  
Personal end.....

## **2. TO INFORM PARENTS / CARERS OF THE DEATH OF A PUPIL**

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the tragic death of one of our pupils, N..... from Year/Mrs .....class. We learned this morning that N.....had died after ( a short illness/tragic accident or other appropriate phrase ). Mr and Mrs ..... have told me that N..... died peacefully in hospital last night.

Members of staff have informed the pupils in school this morning and lessons were suspended for a short time to allow us to gather to express our individual and shared sorrow.

It is our intention, with Mr & Mrs .....’s permission, to hold a ‘Celebration of N’s.....Life’ on the same day as the funeral will be taking place in order for the whole school to be part of this time. You are more than welcome to join us at this service and we will post details on our school website as soon as times have been confirmed.

I enclose a leaflet which you may find useful with one or two suggestions that might help you to help your child with their grief.

Personal end..... “Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all”  
Personal end.....



## **4. TO THANK PARENTS AFTER A TIME OF SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A PUPIL**

Dear Parents,

On behalf of all the staff I would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone for the support, sympathy and concern we received throughout last week.

The emails, texts, letters and flowers have helped ease our sadness here in school and for that we are all most grateful. Our hearts go out to Mr & Mrs ..... and their family. They will need our support for many months to come.

I know that despite their pain and sorrow they were greatly comforted by the love and genuine compassion shown by the whole school and the local community. The special assembly and funeral service gave tangible evidence of this compassion. The remembrance book will remain in the hall for the remainder of this half-term. Please do continue to add to it or visit the garden/chapel at any time. Its presence has been a tremendous release and comfort for many of us.

As at other times of the school year, please do not hesitate to talk to me or any member of staff if you are concerned about your child's reaction to N's tragic death. However, we also enclose some practical guidance for parents, which you may find helpful, and our school website lists a number of books and links to other websites, which may be useful.

Thankfully, what we have experienced as a school is extremely rare. I have no doubt that the experience has drawn us closer and has created new bonds but it will also leave a lasting heartache. Together I know we will ensure that it is also a positive experience, which will enable us all, children and adults to be more sensitive and compassionate human beings. Above all else, perhaps this tragedy has helped us all put things into perspective and recognise our own and each other's humanity.

With our sincere thanks for your on-going support and understanding

Yours sincerely

Adapted from ©Rainbow Bereavement Support GB

## Books and Resources

The suggestions below are suitable to use with children and young people, looking at the life cycle including the end of life, or to use when someone they know has died. Young people can find reading about others in similar situations reassuring and sometimes easier to do than talking about their loss. The books, films and resources below will help with this.

### EARLY YEARS

#### **1. Someone I know has died**

**Author: Trish Phillips.**

Innovative activity book with interactive features written for bereaved children to do by themselves or with adult help. For pre-school and early years. Usually available from Child Bereavement UK.

#### **2. Missing Mummy**

**Author: Rebecca Cobb.**

Beautifully illustrated and with moments of wonderful warmth, this is a touching, honest and helpful book about the death of a parent. With minimal text, it covers some of the worries and fears that a young child may have after a death, offering reassurance and hope. For pre-school and early years.

#### **3. I Miss You: a First Look at Death**

**Author: Pat Thomas**

This book helps children understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have. For pre-school and early years.

#### **4. Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?**

**Author: Elke Barber & Alex Barber**

Alex is only three when his father has a heart attack. All on his own, Alex manages to get help but his beloved Daddy dies at the scene. Explains sudden death to pre-school children using words and illustrations they will understand.

#### **5. Goodbye Mousie**

**Author: Robie H Harris**

The story of a young boy dealing with the death of his pet mouse is handled with the sure touch of an author familiar with children's tender emotions. Simply told by the boy, in a matter of fact tone with a dash of humour, he recounts his reactions to the death of his pet mouse. "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

## **6. Suzie Goes to a Funeral**

Author: Charlotte Olson

Join Suzie as she goes to Grandma's funeral and says goodbye. Suzie can help explain to a child who may be anxious about going to a funeral for the first time. A simple story to help and show what they might experience on this day.

## **KEY STAGE 1 & 2**

### **1. Remembering**

Author: Dianne Leutner. Illustrated by: Daniel Postgate.

It's part book, part scrapbook and was created to help keep a child's memories alive after the loss of someone special and to give children a place to return to whenever they wish.

### **2. Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young children**

Author: Doris Stickney

Written from a Christian perspective, this acclaimed book can be used to help explain the concept of death to young children. The story illustrates that death is inevitable, irreversible but natural.

### **3. Badger's Parting Gifts**

Author: Susan Varley

Badger is so old that he knows he will soon die. He tries to prepare his friends for this event, but when he does die, they are still grief-stricken. Gradually they come to terms with their grief by remembering all the practical things Badger taught them, and so Badger lives on in his friends' memories of him.

The new, 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the book features a reading guide from Child Bereavement UK that provides tips for reading *Badger's Parting Gifts* with children and helping them better understand grief.

Download the online information sheet *Talking With and Supporting Bereaved Children* with further notes and guidance, using examples and illustrations from the book.

### **4. Ben's Flying Flowers**

Author: Inger Maier

When Emily loses her brother after a long illness, she feels alone, angry, and very, very sad. With the understanding and support of her parents, Emily learns that it helps when she snuggles with her parents. It helps when she talks about her feelings and asks questions about Ben. And it helps when she does regular kid stuff too. But mostly, she learns that remembering Ben and their happy life together builds health and helpful images that soothe her sad feelings and provide much comfort to her and her family. Written for children aged 4-8.

### **5. Guess How Much I Love You**

Author: Sam McBratney

When you love someone to the moon and back... "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

Sometimes when you love someone very, very much, you want to find a way of describing how great your feelings are. But, as Little Nutbrown Hare and Big Nutbrown Hare discover, love is not an easy thing to measure!

#### **6. The Boy Who Built a Wall Around Himself**

Author: Ali Redford

Boy built a wall to keep himself safe. Behind it he felt strong and more protected. Then Someone Kind came along. She bounced a ball, sang and painted on the other side of the wall, and Boy began to wonder if life on the other side might be better after all. Written for children aged 4 to 9, this gentle full-colour picture book uses a simple metaphor to explain how children who have had painful or traumatic experiences can build barriers between themselves and other people. It will help children explore their feelings and encourage communication.

#### **7. Michael Rosen's Sad Book**

Author: Michael Rosen

A very personal story that speaks to adults as well as children. The author describes feeling sad after the death of his son and what he does to try to cope with it.

#### **8. Am I Like My Daddy?**

Author: Marcy Blesy

Join seven-year-old Grace on her journey through coping with the loss of her father while learning about the different ways that people grieve the loss of a loved one. In the process of learning about who her father was through the eyes of others, she learns about who she is today because of her father's personality and love. This story is based in the United States but relevant to all.

#### **9. The Invisible String**

Author: Patricia Karst

This story that teaches of the tie that really binds. Mums (and Dads) feel the tug whenever kids give it; and kids feel the tug that comes right back: the Invisible String reaches from heart to heart. Does everybody have an Invisible String? How far does it reach anyway? Whether it is a loved one who has died, or a parent who is just in the next room, this book illustrates a new way to cope with a child's fear of loneliness and separation. Here is a warm and delightful lesson teaching young and old that we aren't ever really alone.

#### **10. The Scar**

Author: Charlotte Moundlic

A little boy responds to his mother's death in a genuine, deeply moving story leavened by glimmers of humour and captivating illustrations.

When the boy in this story wakes to find that his mother has died, he is overwhelmed with sadness, anger, and fear that he will forget her. He shuts all the windows to keep in his mother's familiar smell and scratches open the cut on his knee to remember her comforting voice. He doesn't know how to speak to his dad anymore, and when Grandma visits and "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

throws open the windows, it's more than the boy can take -- until his grandmother shows him another way to feel that his mom's love is near.

**11. When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief - Workbook**

Author: M Heegard

This work book was designed to teach basic concepts of death and help children understand and express the many feelings they have when someone special dies. Communication is increased and coping skills are developed as they illustrate their books with their personal story.

**12. Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died**

Author: Winston's Wish

Offering practical and sensitive support for bereaved children, this book suggests a helpful series of activities and exercises accompanied by the friendly characters of Bee and Bear. It aims to help children make sense of their experience by reflecting on different aspects of their grief.

**13. Resolving Bereavement**

Author: Fiona McAulsan

The story focuses on how loss affects Joe and Lisa in different ways, but how they both find support and learn how to talk about their feelings. They begin to regain confidence and learn how to be happy again. The story will help children understand and deal with grief and all the emotions that come with it, such as isolation, anger, depression, guilt, fear and insecurity. The book also has a very useful toolbox section, with tips, games and information to help children put into practice what they have learned from the book. It is also supported by a website, which has additional material available for download for both children and parents.

## **KEY STAGE 3 & 4 (and some KS2)**

**1. Sad Book-** Author: Michael Rosen – See above

**2. Sometimes Life Sucks: When someone you love dies**

Author: Molly Carlile

Teenagers can experience death in all kinds of ways. Full of tips and stories, this will help them to make some sense of their shock and grief.

**3. Still Here With Me: Teenagers and Children on Losing a Parent**

Author: Suzanne Sjoqvist

In their own words, children and young people of a variety of ages talk openly and honestly about the death of their mother or father. They describe feelings of pain, loss and anger, the struggle to cope with the embarrassed reactions of others and the difficulties involved in rebuilding their lives "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"



#### **4. The Grieving Teen**

Author: Helen Fitzgerald

Written about, but also for teenagers, this book covers the entire range of situations in which grieving teens and their friends may find themselves. It offers explanations and guidance in a very accessible format.

#### **5. What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?**

Author: Trevor Romain

Written by the author after his father died, this book suggests ways of coping with grief and offers answers to questions such as 'Why do people have to die?' and 'How can I say goodbye?' Friendly, accessible text and illustrations aimed at ages 8-14.

#### **6. The Savage**

Author: David Almond

Blue's father has died suddenly, and finding that the school's counselling increases his anguish, he turns to writing a story instead. Recommended 8+.

#### **7. Out Of The Blue [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)**

This book has been written and designed specifically for adolescents and teenagers with the aim of supporting them through their bereavement using a range of activities.

#### **8. A Monster Calls**

Authors: Patrick Ness and Siobhan Dowd

Connor's mum has cancer and life is irrevocably, disturbingly changing. First there is the nightmare, filled with screaming and falling; then there is school, where people avoid him (not knowing what to say), or persecute him.

#### **9. If Only**

Author: Carole Geithner

Corinna's world is crushed after her mother dies of cancer. How does she get through the funeral, trays of ziti, a father who can't communicate, the first day of school, Mother's Day, people who don't know what to say, and the entire eighth grade year?

### **Short films**

Several films created and made by Child Bereavement UK's Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) including A Message for bereaved young people and A Message For Friends. Other topics include: What is grief? Stories from other young people. How to find help. Contributed to and created by bereaved adolescents and teenagers. On Child Bereavement UK's website [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

LAD – A Yorkshire Story A film by Dan Hartley When 13 year-old Tom Proctor's dad dies his world falls apart; his brother joins the army, his mum is threatened with eviction and Tom gets into trouble with the police. Tom comes to terms with the loss of his dad through the "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

friendship he forms with national park warden, Al Thorpe. This enchanting coming-of-age story is set in the stunning Yorkshire Dales.

## Leaflets

### **A Teenage Guide to coping with Bereavement by Sarah Darwen.**

Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop This pocket-sized leaflet contains practical advice and guidance for a young person managing confusing emotions when someone important in their life dies. Devised by teenager Sarah Darwen following her father's death.

### **When Your Mum Or Dad Has Cancer by Ann Couldrick**

Available from Child Bereavement UK's online shop This is a useful booklet for younger children (7+) to teenage children. It has an introduction for parents but then explains cancer in a simple way children can relate to. It also covers many questions children ask such as whether the person will die and what exactly happens, but tackles the answers with insight and honesty.

## School assemblies at times of bereavement

### Words and Prayers:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto Name, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him/her. May s/he rest in peace, Amen

Heavenly Father we are stunned and shocked at the death of Name and as a community we have gathered together to share our sorrow, our bewilderment and our pain. We are all asking the question 'Why?' but there seems to be no easy answer. We pray especially today for her/his friends, her/his classmates, her/his teachers and all who knew her/him. We remember Name for ..... (List some characteristics or traits of the deceased) We just don't understand this Lord, but help us to let go of any anger or any desire for revenge. May our tears be replaced by smiles when we think of Name, giving thanks for her/his life and all that she/he was to us and our school. Help us now pick up the pieces once again and to carry on in life as we believe Name would wish us to.

Almighty God, you know that it will be very difficult for us at our school without Name. Bring us the strength and the hope we need to carry on as Name would have wished us to do. We thank you Lord for the special gifts Name brought to the school and shared with us. May the Church and the wider community give thanks for the contribution Name made to the life of (village/town name) and may we redouble our efforts to serve each other, in honour of her/his memory. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they loved has died.

We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they knew has died.

We hold before God each one of us that we may support each other in the days to come.

We hold before God Name who has died. May s/he rest in peace. Amen. "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

## Prayers for those who mourn

1 .Lord, we look up to you and receive from you,  
Your blessing  
Your strength  
Your most holy love.  
In the darkest moments of our lives,  
Let us remember that you are the light  
You are the hope  
You are the courage we need. Amen

2 .Lord God, help us find comfort in our sadness,  
Certainty in our doubt  
And the courage to live.  
Make our faith strong  
Through Christ our Lord, Amen

3. Circle us Lord  
Keep hope within;  
Keep fear without.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep peace within,  
Keep darkness out.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep calm within  
Keep turmoil out.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep love within  
Keep anger away. "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

4. May you be held by the God of compassion as you remember your loved ones today.  
May God be with you in your sorrow, and comfort you in your loss.  
May your God, your family and your friends, give you strength and confidence.  
May your spirit be lifted, may your heart be filled with peace, and may the light of God's promise fill you with joy and hope.  
Amen.

5. God of compassion, when I feel helpless in my grief, hold me to your heart.  
God of gentleness, in those moments when life is dark, keep me close to you.  
God of comfort, when I am overcome with sadness, shelter me under your wings.  
Ever-faithful God, help me to find reassurance and hope in these words of hope to all your people - "Because you are precious to me, because I love you, there is no need to be afraid, for I am with you." (Isaiah 43)

*Margaret Lillis/CAFOD*

6. Lord of our longing  
hear our prayer,  
protect our dreams,  
and listen to our silent hopes.

Deal gently with our pain,  
speak to our sadness  
and remove the barriers

Shed your light  
where shadows are cast,  
that we may feel your warmth  
and know your presence.

Give us courage  
to hold fast to our vision  
that we may build our world  
and create our future. Amen

*Anna Shilson-Thomas, CAFOD*

7. Jesus Christ,  
You understand the pain of loss,  
the grief that seems to take  
the air from my lungs.  
You are the Resurrection  
and the Life.  
All our hope is in you.

Lord Jesus,  
May I find a way through  
the darkness  
to the light of your love.  
You are the Resurrection  
and the Life.

All our hope is in you.

Christ Jesus,  
You wept at the death of your friend Lazarus.  
Now your compassion wipes the tears from our eyes.  
May we find comfort in reaching out to others  
Who feel lost and alone.  
You are the Resurrection and the Life.  
All our hopes are in you.

Linda Jones, CAFOD

## Useful Scriptures

1. **Job 5:11** The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.
2. **Psalms 27:13-14** I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.
3. **Isaiah 41:10** Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.
4. **John 16:33** I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.
5. **Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.
6. **Romans 8:37-38** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
7. **Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. **2 Corinthians 1:3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.
9. **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.
10. **Hebrews 13:5** I will never leave you or forsake you.



## Poetry some people find helpful

### Death is nothing at all by Henry Scott-Holland

Death is nothing at all.  
It does not count.  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.  
I am I, and you are you,  
and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.  
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.  
Put no difference into your tone.  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.  
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was.  
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.  
What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,  
somewhere very near,  
just round the corner.

All is well.  
Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.  
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.  
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!

## **The Rose beyond the Wall (a simpler version)**

A rose once grew where all could see,  
sheltered beside a garden wall,  
And as the days passed swiftly by,  
it spread its branches, straight and tall...

One day, a beam of light shone through  
a crevice that had opened wide.  
The rose bent gently toward its warmth  
then passed beyond to the other side.

Now, you who deeply feel its loss,  
be comforted - the rose blooms there-  
its beauty even greater now, nurtured by  
God's own loving care.

# Death of a pupil

**Entrance music** (tape or CD) Choose a suitable piece of music.

## Introduction

In our distress and sorrow the one word that is surely coming to us all is “why”?

There is no answer that will take away our pain. But there are answers that will give us strength.

In our prayer today we remember..... with thanksgiving our friend and pupil of this school. And we ask God’s grace for ourselves.

## Focus or symbol

☐ Overhead with words: ***“The kingdom of heaven belongs to children,”*** or ***“Let the children come to me.”***

☐ Photograph of deceased pupil or symbol of childhood, e.g. exercise book, school bag etc.

## Sign of the Cross

..... was baptised into Christ with the sign of the Cross, and so we begin “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

## Hymn or song

*CFE O&N*

211 God who made the earth

349 Lead me, guide me

The love I have for you 536

**Reading**            *Isaiah, 25:6-9 (paraphrased)*

The Lord will prepare feast for all the nations on earth – a great meal with the riches of food and drink. He will remove the cloud of sorrow hanging over us. He will wipe away all tears.

Then we will say, “He is our God! We have put our trust in him and he has rescued us. He is the Lord. Now we are happy and joyful because he has saved us.”

## Comment on reading

The way we think about life and death will determine the consolation we receive in a time of sorrow. If we do not have a Christian vision, then the consolation we receive may be less. The Christian vision of death is of going home, going to Jesus, who has already gone to prepare a place for us. Therefore a good way of acting in times of sorrow is to trust in God as the reading has just told us. It means to give thanks for the life of the person we mourn. We recall with thanksgiving their friendship, their lives. We ask Jesus to look after them. At the same time it is a reminder to us that we sooner or later will die. And the way in which we live is our real preparation for death.

## Response to reading

Representatives of the class of ..... bring forward flowers, plants and light a candle.

## Prayers

We turn to our loving God and pray:

That ..... be safe in the presence of Jesus.

**Response: Remember us O Lord.**

That the parents and relatives of ..... may be strengthened at this time.

**Response: Remember us O Lord**

That all the friends of ..... may be consoled at this time.

**Response: Remember us O Lord**

That all who nurse and care for the sick may be blessed.

**Response: Remember us O Lord**

That we all would live well and be ready to meet the Lord when he comes.

**Response: Remember us O Lord**

[Other prayers]

**Response: Remember us O Lord**

**Our Father ...** (perhaps sung)

## Thought-Word-Phrase for the day

*Our true home is in heaven.*

## Blessing

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

## Concluding song or music

*CFE O&N*

106 Christ be beside me 79

816 Yahweh, I know you are near 620

Jesus, you are Lord 286

*Taken from Assemblies Vol. 1 for Liturgical Seasons and School Occasions*

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## Reflection

O Lord,

We know that the task you set before us of raising a child is the most important and most challenging we will ever face.

We understand that our children are ours, not to possess, but to cherish and guide for a time, leading them to union with you;

We know that parenting may bring joy beyond words, and also sacrifice and heartache;

Yet we accept this responsibility gladly, knowing that you will help us if only we remember to ask.

O Lord,

When we have no strength, give us your strength;

When we lose patience, give us your patience;

When we don't know what to do, inspire us;

When we become weary, lift our spirits.

Help us to enjoy our children and to laugh with them;

And O Lord, when don't feel loving, send us your love.

## **I'll lend you for a little while,**

A child of mine, God said,  
For you to love the while he lives,  
And mourn for when he's dead.  
It may be six or seven years  
Or forty-two or three,  
But will you, till I call him back,  
Take care of him for me?  
He'll bring his charms to gladden you,  
And should his stay be brief,  
You'll have his lovely memories  
As a solace for your grief.  
I cannot promise he will stay,  
Since all from earth return,  
But there are lessons taught below  
I want this child to learn.  
I've looked the whole world over,  
In search for teachers true,  
And from the things that crowd life's land  
I have chosen you.  
Now will you give him all your love,  
Nor think the labour vain?  
Nor hate me when I come to take  
This lent child back again?  
I fancied that I heard them say:  
Dear Lord, thy will be done,  
For all the joys thy child will bring,  
The risk of grief we'll run.  
We'll shelter him with tenderness,  
We'll love him while we may  
And for the happiness we've known  
Forever grateful stay.  
But should thy angels call for him  
Much sooner than we've planned,  
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes  
And try to understand.

## PRAYERS

Eternal rest give to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. Amen.

Remember those who have died and who have gone before us, marked with the sign of faith.

May these and all who sleep in Christ find in your presence light, happiness and peace. Amen.

**Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom *Taizé Chant.***

**Compassionate Lord Jesus**

**Grant them rest in peace.**

## Act of Remembrance

They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning we shall remember them.

## THE DE PROFUNDIS

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,

Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive

To the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,

Lord, who would survive? But with you is found forgiveness:

For this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,

I count on his word.

My soul is longing for the Lord

More than watchmen for daybreak

And Israel on the Lord

Because with the Lord there is mercy

And fullness of redemption.

Israel indeed he will redeem



From all its iniquity. V. Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

**Jesus Says:**

"Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Trust in God still and trust in me.

There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I should have told you and after I have gone and prepared you a place I shall return to take you with me.

So that where I am you may be too." *John 14: 1-3*

May God support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done! Then in his mercy may he give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last!

Cardinal Newman

**CELTIC BLESSING**

May your health overflow like a mountain stream in Springtime.

May your days be as happy as

Summers long ago.

May you reap the autumn gold from  
a life of love and giving.

May you stay forever young.

And when you go ...

May a million stars light your way to PARADISE.

## **Death of a teacher / staff member / friend of school**

**Entrance Hymn** (*tape or CD*) Choose a suitable piece of music

### **Introduction**

There are many ways of commemorating death. A common one is remembrance and thanksgiving. In our Catholic tradition, we also pray that the dead person be at peace with God.

### **Focus or symbol**

- Overhead with person's name and the words, "*Eternal Rest.*"
- Photograph/or articles associated with dead person.

### **Sign of the Cross**

It is through our baptism that our greatest hope lies, and so we begin "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

### **Hymn or song**

*CFE O&N*

69 Be still and know that I am with you. 57

369 Like a shepherd 727

543 O Lord, you are the centre of my life.

### **Reading** *Wisdom 4:7-15 (paraphrased)*

Even if they die before their time, good people will find rest. Life is not about how long we live, but how wisely we live. A good life is a long life. Good people try to please God, and God loves them. Coming to perfection in a short while is the same as having a long life. Good peoples' lives are pleasing to God. Foolish people never think that mercy and grace are what God has ready for good people. He will protect them.

### **Comment on reading**

Our thoughts are very limited. Compared with God's wisdom, our thoughts are even foolish. God has a plan for each one of us. When we have done what he willed for us, when we have come into full life and goodness, God takes us to himself. God also has a care for those who remain. The way in which we fit into God's scheme of things is to live wisely. And we admit that we do not understand everything, much less the mystery of death. We treasure life, and we give thanks for the life of .....(*name*) who has enriched our lives.

### **Response to reading**

- a signed Mass card is placed at the focus of worship.
- a candle is lit "Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish, and Christ is made known to all"

- a flower or plant is laid
- a copybook for signing condolences is placed for people to sign later.

## Prayers

We turn to our living God and pray.

That ..... may have eternal rest with the Lord.

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

That..... may be rewarded for his/her contribution to this school.

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

That the family, relatives and friends of ..... may be consoled at this time.

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

That all past members of this school who have left this world may be at peace with the Lord.

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

That we may remember that we too are on a journey to the Father.

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

[other prayers]

**Response: Jesus you are the Resurrection and the Life.**

**Our Father .. (perhaps sung)**

**Thought-Word-Phrase for the day – Jesus said, “I am with you always.”**

## Blessing

To us who are alive may God give forgiveness;

To all who have died may God give light and peace, and may a million stars light their way to paradise.

## Concluding song or music

CFE O&N

40 Amazing grace 36

106 Christ be beside me 79







