

"As unique individuals, we do our best at work and play for the love of God and others."



St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Bereavement Policy

April 2020

Review Date: April 2023

The rationale of Bereavement in our school is:

The death of a child, a close relative of a child, or a member of staff can be traumatic for staff and children alike.

For some children this can be their first real contact with the death of someone known to them. For teachers, it can be the first time they have needed to respond professionally to the shock and sadness experienced by those in their care. St Benedict's Catholic Primary School believes in adopting a holistic approach to the care of both its children and staff. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people, in addition to the family concerned. We aim to ensure that the appropriate members of the school community are given sufficient support and advice at such times. The management of a bereavement situation will be a central role for the Head Teacher who will be supported by the Deputy Head and the SENDCO. Throughout the process the Head Teacher will oversee the process and offer advice and provide resources if required.

Introduction

This policy is intended to reflect St Benedict's positive Catholic faith and ethos and should contribute to the caring community we endeavour to nurture. The main aim of the policy is to ensure that all children and staff faced with bereavement are provided with a level of quality support, which is commensurate with their needs and wishes. This support includes the opportunity for them to express their feelings in a safe environment, to be given space and time to come to terms with their loss and to access specialist support if necessary. Furthermore, the situation for the individual and the school community will be monitored over a period of time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our community as an environment where individuals can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

1 Death of a Close Relative of a Child

1.1 Depending on the closeness of the relationship between the child and the deceased the degree of support required may vary. In general the following guidelines will be followed:

Head Teacher to discuss proposed approach by school with appropriate family member.

Head Teacher to inform SLT Leader and discuss action to be taken.

Head Teacher to advise appropriate staff of the situation and give an indication of the length of absence (if appropriate) of the child.

Advice may be given to staff on how to support child on his/her return to school.

It may also be appropriate to speak to classmates and/or school friends in on how best they might help in supporting the child on his/her return to school.

The Parish Priest will be informed of the death

1.2 The Head teacher will carefully consider whether appropriate members of staff should visit or contact the family during their period of mourning. They will also consider whether or not the school should be represented at the funeral.

1.3 Head teacher will meet with child on his/her return to school and offer appropriate support where required.

1.4 The Head teacher and class teacher will regularly monitor child over the next few months.

2 **Death of a Child**

- 2.1 On hearing of the death of a child the Head Teacher will meet immediately with the SLT to plan the school's response. Decisions as to which group(s) of pupils should be informed will need to be made. e.g. classmates, close friends, year group, friends of brothers and sisters of the deceased.
- 2.2 With great sensitivity, the Head teacher will ascertain the circumstances of the death. Where possible he/she should discuss with a close family member how the school will be dealing with the bereavement.
- 2.3 As soon as possible the Head Teacher will inform all staff about the child's death. Staff will also be given details as to which groups of children will be informed, and when and how this is to occur. They will be advised of the details that the children can be told. In addition the parish priest will be informed, if not already cognizant, in order to provide additional support.
- 2.4 It is strongly emphasised that normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible. Obviously, if the death occurs near the end of term then consideration should be given as to whether certain extra-curricular activities should be suspended (e.g. Merit Award activities, School Show etc.)
- 2.5 Staff will also be asked to be especially vigilant and provide immediate information to SLT about children who may be showing signs of distress and who may need support.
- The SENDCO will be made available to offer support. Other specialists such as the school nurse may also be asked to assist. The SENDCO will draw support from the Emotionally Healthy Schools team
- 2.6 The Head teacher, in discussion with the SLT will decide as to whether appropriate members of staff (2 persons) should visit the family of the deceased.
- 2.7 The Head teacher will also consider a selection process as to which members of staff and which pupils will, if applicable, attend the funeral. In this matter the wishes of the family will be taken fully into account.
- 2.8 Staff attending the funeral must be prepared to offer comfort and support as required. Obviously it is essential that the school has adequate staff to supervise the children not attending the funeral. This may limit the number of staff who can attend.
- 2.9 ~~Should the death be of interest to the media then the Head Teacher will formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority Press Office and the Diocese.~~
- 2.10 It may be necessary to advise staff, children and their families not to speak to the media and to avoid making innocent comments that might be misconstrued.
- 2.11 Where appropriate the Deputy Head will inform relevant external groups where appropriate.

3 **Death of a Member of Staff**

- 3.1 On hearing of the death of a member of staff the Head teacher will meet with members of the SLT to plan the school's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. The Head will also immediately inform the Chair of Governors and Parish Priest.
- 3.2 Decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made.
- 3.3 Adequate support for staff and pupils will be available. SENDCO will draw support from the Emotionally Healthy Schools team.
- 3.4 In general staff members will be able to support each other but it may be appropriate to consult the schools HR officer to provide more specialist resources.
- 3.5 Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral will be discussed with the deceased's family.

3.6 The Head Teacher, in conjunction, with the SLT, will ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

4 **Death of a Close Relative of a Member of Staff**

4.1 The death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff needs to be dealt with sensitively. It is essential that the member of staff is supported throughout the immediate period of mourning and on his/her return to school.

4.2 On hearing of the death the Head Teacher will meet with other members of the SLT to decide how other members of staff are to be informed. The Parish Priest will also be informed in order to provide additional support. The Chair of Governors will be informed also.

4.3 The Head Teacher will contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.

4.4 It is unlikely that many of the pupils will have to be informed but if so the Head Teacher, in conjunction with the SLT will decide on the appropriate method(s) to be used.

4.5 Attendance of Staff at the funeral will be discussed with the staff member.

4.6 On his/her return to work the SLT and other close colleagues must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances. A referral to Occupational Health will be considered.

5. with all of the above circumstances:

The Head teacher will check in on staff response. Any death affecting a student can trigger other remembered griefs and, at this time of crisis, a sense of helplessness in not being able to respond as wished.

The SLT should consider how the person should be remembered – book of condolence, Special Mass, pictures etc

The resources below could be considered and shared where appropriate.

Resources:

<https://livewellservices.cheshireeast.gov.uk/Services/863/Loss-And-Bereavement>

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/what-you-can-do/schools-professionals.aspx>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

the chance to email Winston's Wish through ask@winstonswish.org or through online chat

Free Helpline number for Winston's Wish (08088 020 021)

www.help2makesense.org;

www.hopeagain.org.uk;

www.themix.org.uk

Suggested books and resources can be found at:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/suggested-reading-list/>