

Bereavement Policy

Rationale

At St Andrew's C of E Primary School, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, parents and staff. This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

Aims

At St Andrew's CE Primary School we aim to meet the needs of all children, staff and parents within a Christian context. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together, with outside agencies, as appropriate, to support each other.

Objectives

At St Andrew's we will provide:

- A framework for all staff to enable them to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement
- To support pupils and members of staff before, during and after the bereavement
- To ensure effective communication and clarify the support between staff, pupils and family
- To identify key staff
- To have clear expectations about how we respond to a death

Section 1 Death of a pupil or member of staff

Roles and responsibilities

In the case of a death of either a pupil or a member of staff, the Executive Head or a member of Core SLT will take charge of the situation. If the Executive Head takes charge then the Head of School will deputise and if this is not possible one or both of the Assistant Heads.

In the case of a sudden death, the school may be asked to partake in a multi-agency review; if this were the case then either the Executive Head or one of Core SLT would be appointed as the representative. This member of staff will communicate with the family or families.

The news of a death may need to be shared quickly before the indiscriminate spread of news via social media means that some members of the school community may hear before others. This information needs to be shared sensitively. Core SLT will share the load of contacting staff or parents preferably by phone conversation if during a time of closure or if during school hours by a staff meeting. When sharing the news with pupils it may be better to do so in smaller groups with a familiar adult for some pupils and others may hear the news via a whole school assembly. If a pupil has died then it may be wise to share with the class first, again this may be done in small groups and with a familiar member of staff. Consider the circumstances of each individual case before deciding the best approach for passing on information. If the press are involved then the Executive Head will liaise, if this is not possible then the Head of School or Assistant Heads.

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Initial response

If the death of a pupil's family member occurs whilst the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to school to inform the pupil of what has happened and to take them home. If this is not possible and with the agreement of the next of kin, two members of SLT will take the pupil home.

- The Executive Head or if this is not possible a member SLT will make contact with any other agencies e.g. the Police, Children's Services
- The Executive Head will decide if any changes need to be made to the school timetable
- In the event of the death of the Executive Head, the Head of School or Assistant Heads will be responsible for any duties outlined in this policy

If the death of a staff member occurs whilst they are at school, a member of SLT will inform the staff member's family.

If a member of staff's family die either the Executive Head or a member of SLT will speak to the member of staff or a family member will come into school to talk to the member of staff. The member of staff will go home either with a member of their family or if necessary they will be accompanied by a member of staff.

Informing Staff and Governors

- Staff and governors will be informed of the death before the pupils
- All staff and governors will be invited to attend a meeting held by the Executive Head as soon as practicable. All absent staff and governors will be informed as soon as possible. If this is not possible to speak with them in person, a phone call will be arranged.
- All information passed to staff and governors will have prior approval from the family
- The Executive Head will explain how the death occurred
- Allow time for staff and governors to discuss what has happened and how they feel. Some staff and governors may need time out to manage the information
- Designate a member of staff from SLT to be a media spokesperson if necessary
- Identify what internal and external support is available to staff and governors
- Discuss the details for informing pupils and which members of staff will be involved with dealing with varying aspects
- Staff members who will be responsible for dealing with informing pupils will be given a script with the information to be shared. This will be created by the Executive Head and SLT with input from the family

Informing Pupils

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- The Executive Head or SLT will have had a discussion with the family as to what information will be imparted to the children
- Pupils will be informed either in small groups, particularly if they are a friend of the deceased. The remainder of the children will be told as soon as possible in either key stages or as a whole school depending on the circumstances. The Executive Head will make the decision regarding this. Pupils with specific needs may be told separately.

This will include:

1. Pupils that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
 2. Pupils with a history of loss
 3. Pupils with SEND
 4. Pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions
- Staff responsible for informing pupils will be given an age appropriate script
 - Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling. Any questions asked by pupils should be answered factually. Pupils will be told where they can go in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

Informing Parents

- The Executive Head or SLT member will have a discussion with the family about whether all parents need to be informed about the death. If the death affects the whole school then the Executive Head or SLT member will recommend to the family that all parents should be informed
- The Executive Head or SLT member will compose a letter to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic factual information about the death, including how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children and to whom they can direct any questions of concern.
- Some families may want to share information with the school community whilst others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family is consulted.
- Delivering news: Keep the information simple, factual and brief. Give any information that needs to be shared. Let pupils, staff and parents know of any support that is available to them. Remind all individuals of their responsibilities if deciding to post information on social media and the impact this may cause. Allow time after the sharing of information for staff and pupils to process the news. Acknowledge that everyone will be feeling sad.

Allowing staff and pupils a safe place to be and a time to grieve

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Available support: This depends again on each individual case. Some pupils may wish to spend time and discuss the situation with their class teacher, others may wish to spend time with a member of Core SLT.

Support and information can be found on the Child Bereavement UK website:

www.childbereavementuk.org

- If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools. They can be contacted on: 0808 168 2528
- Support for staff. Staff may require support for the loss of a pupil or a colleague. These times can be very stressful for staff who are already struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives.

What will we do in these circumstances? Staff may require time out of class and a short break may be welcome and cover could be put in place by a TA or SLT. Try to be thoughtful and considerate about overloading work at this time. Think about outside support for staff if necessary.

Consider any training that may help staff to manage the children's emotions. Review staff wellbeing regularly; weekly in the first month and then fortnightly for the next 3 months and then monthly. This would include an update with the member of staff to see what help they still require.

Procedures

The first few days:

School should provide stability and normality for staff and pupils however some flexibility will be necessary. Some may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to take time out in a safe space can be helpful during these times. For staff an office may be vacated for this purpose and for children - either the SENCO's room, The Executive Head or Head of School's room may be available at these times.

Consider a temporary location for a tribute/book of condolence which needs to be safe, accessible and ideally where pupils can be supervised. This could be kept in the SEN classroom and available during break times, this could be supervised by either the SENCO, SEN TA or a designated TA at the time. Consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving them notice to prepare beforehand.

The funeral:

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Rather than making assumptions consult with the family of the deceased to find out whether or not members of staff and or children are welcome to attend. Is it appropriate to send flowers or organise a collection? This can be arranged with the children and an appropriate member of staff. Identify practical issues of staff cover to allow those wishing to attend the funeral; it may be appropriate to close the school in some circumstances. Consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral and how they will be supported/supervised.

Remembering:

Consult with the family of the person who has died about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute. The family may wish to attend any memorial services. A more permanent memorial e.g. a tree, a bench may be appropriate but in future the removal or relocation will need to be managed sensitively.

Arrange for the family to be able to collect personal belongings.

Supporting a bereaved pupil or member of staff

Supporting a bereaved pupil when returning to school

A familiar and trusted adult will meet with the pupil and their family/carers to discuss their return to school following a bereavement.

The purpose of the meeting should be to:

- Set up a meeting between the pupil, parent/carer and a designated member of staff
- Acknowledge the death
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news, for younger pupils discuss with parents/carers
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief. Decide how they will communicate this need to staff; they could have a time out card which they could leave on the teacher's table or arrange a non-verbal signal or message that can be used to signify that they need to leave. This will be decided with the pupil and the information passed onto the class teacher and TA
- Consider if memory boxes, journals, books to read or any other activity would be of benefit to the individual. This type of work could be carried out by a member of SLT
- Set guidelines for communication with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school and ensure that they are established and shared
- Consider if the pupil would like a friend to sit with during quiet times. If this is the case then careful consideration needs to be given to the chosen peer.
- Put in place any support required for the peer(s) of the bereaved pupil. This could be a group that meets with a designated member of SLT.

A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website

www.childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved

Support for staff working with a bereaved pupil

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- Staff who are working with a bereaved pupil and their family may require support. Time out may be required for the staff member. Not being left on their own is also to be considered. Support from other staff can sometimes help, this may include covering lessons or other duties.
- Help and support from outside agencies such as: The Education Support Line (08000 562 561). There is also help and advice from Child Bereavement UK under 'Support for Yourself' www.childbereavementuk.org or helpline 0800 0288840. Live chat 9.00 – 5.00 Monday – Friday

Support for the family

- Either the Executive Head or a member of SLT will be the main point of contact between the family and the school.
- The family will be invited to the school to discuss how best the school can support them
- The family's feelings and wishes will always be considered and respected when making any decisions and conducting any activities relating to the death
- Support will be put in place and this will vary depending upon each individual situation

Longer term support

- Record a list of significant dates for the pupil; these may include Mother's/Father's Day, birthdays, Christmas or any other religious festival which is pertinent to the pupil and their family
- Identify the staff member(s) who will be working with the family and the pupil. Arrange how this information will be relayed to SLT and any other staff members. Arrange review meetings for all parties
- Ensure that transition to any other school is carried out. Discuss with the family prior to this so they are aware of the information that is required for the new school. Arrange for the pupil to have support around this time; this may involve meetings with Staff from St Andrew's, the new school and the pupil and pupil's parent/carers. It may require a member of staff to visit the school with the pupil beforehand.
- Inform any new teachers or staff of the bereavement and the pupil's needs
- Often bereaved pupils struggle with change. Ensure that the family and pupil are made aware of any changes if and when possible

Support for staff who have had a bereavement outside school

- Staff directly affected by the death of a relative or close friend will have appropriate support put in to place; this will be decided on the individual circumstances
- Ensure that the staff member is supported by all staff; this may include covering lessons or duties and to be vigilant to any signs that their colleague is being affected by the bereavement
- Organise bereavement leave

Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live (pupil)

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- If a pupil has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place
- A designated member of staff, this could be a member of SLT, will meet with the pupil regularly to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling
- All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to SLT who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live (staff)

- If a member of staff has a close family member who is not expected to live they will make the Executive Head aware of their circumstances
- School will put in place appropriate support for the member of staff; this may include covering lessons, duties, or having time off to support the family member with hospital appointments
- An SLT member will meet with the staff member regularly to support them
- All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the staff member is facing challenges and will refer any concerns to SLT who will ensure appropriate support is put in place

Pupils with a life-threatening illness

- Pupils with a life-threatening illness will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible.
- School will liaise with parents/carers for updates and appropriate support will be put in place
- The Executive Head or SLT, the pupil and their family will decide how to share the news that the pupil is terminally ill with the school community
- Other pupils and staff will be informed how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way
- If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, a designated member of staff will contact either the hospice or hospital for advice and support

Staff with a life-threatening illness

- The staff member will inform the Executive Head
- The Executive Head will decide a plan with the member of staff; this may include the member of staff working reduced hours or not working at all, this plan will be reviewed weekly
- If the member of staff continues to work they will be allowed time off for hospital and any other medical appointments
- A member of SLT will be made available to support the member of staff on a regular basis

Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum

- When teaching any subject around death and grieving inform the family beforehand. Speak with the pupil so that they have advanced warning. Ask the pupil if they would prefer to work outside of the classroom during these sessions
- Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions; think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death



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Cultural and religious beliefs

- The school will keep in mind the cultural beliefs, attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will ensure that these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected.

*Letters for parents/carers and further information is available on the Child Bereavement website.

*Please read this in conjunction with the staff leave policy

Reviewed: Autumn 2022

Approved by: Curriculum Committee

Next Review Due: Autumn 2024

Monitored by: SLT

With God's love, we live, learn and grow together