



St Mark's West Essex Catholic School

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Date Reviewed:	June 2020
Next Review Date:	June 2022
Committee:	Curriculum, Pupils and Admissions

Introduction

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their loss, or sometimes the death of a member of staff or a pupil may have an impact on the whole school community. Whilst we would hope to not encounter such circumstances, we have this Bereavement Policy in place so we can be proactive, rather than reactive, in these very sensitive situations.

Usually, support and understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of our school, along with that provided by their family and friends, may be all the bereavement support most children or staff require. However, we recognise that referral to more specialist support may be necessary where the impact of grief is more complex.

Aims and ethos

As we recognise that most children and adults can be effectively supported through bereavement and loss by those with whom they already have relationships, we want to equip our staff and others to respond effectively and confidently to a death in the school community. It is important too that we recognise that everyone experiences bereavement and grief differently and that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Therefore, it is our aim:

- to provide appropriate support to pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after a bereavement
- to provide a safe and calm environment for pupils and staff
- to ensure there is effective communication between home and school and to provide parents with information on how to access other support (if it is required)
- to work with the local authority and other partners as appropriate

The role of the governing body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation and regular reviews
- To ensure there is a whole school approach to supporting emotional wellbeing

The role of the head teacher

- To have oversight of support required and provided, liaising with external agencies as appropriate
- To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned
- To respond to media enquiries if required
- To keep the governing body fully informed
- To ensure staff are appropriately trained around bereavement and undertake actions set out in this policy (such as how to share sad news with pupils), including a deputy for the role of the head teacher should the event mean the head is unable to complete this role

The role of the Local Authority (LA)

- To advise and support school staff as required
- To signpost to referral pathways and other means of support

- To provide information, guidance and support for all schools (available on Essex Schools InfoLink)

The role of staff

- To provide a safe and calm environment for all
- To act as a 'trusted adult' to support pupils and proactively enable them to have the time and space to talk
- To monitor the wellbeing of their pupils, identify concerns and escalate where additional support may be required
- To ensure any safeguarding concerns are shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Procedures following a bereavement

1. Wherever possible (and if deemed appropriate), the Headteacher will attempt contact with the bereaved family before taking **any** other action. This is to ensure any communications to the wider school community (and the media) are factual, avoid rumour or confusion and are aligned with the family's wishes. Where it has not been possible to establish contact with the family, and news of the death is already in the public arena, the Headteacher will need to manage this and will do so, taking advice from the local authority / Diocese.
2. The Headteacher will inform staff of any death and agree how information will be shared with pupils and the wider school community
3. The Headteacher and staff will agree how to share information with pupils in a supportive and age-appropriate way
4. The Headteacher will prepare a communication to all parents / carers to inform them of the death and advice about how to support their child, should they be affected
5. The Headteacher will agree a statement for the media, where this is required, linking with the local authority / Diocese as appropriate
6. The Headteacher will adapt the school day and timetable if necessary, to enable appropriate support to be provided. This support may be from school staff and / or from the local authority Education Psychology Service or other appropriate agencies
7. The Headteacher will make arrangements in school for a book of condolence and / or an area where flowers may be placed
8. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance will be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances

9. The Headteacher and staff will monitor the wellbeing of all pupils identifying any concerns and escalating where additional support may be required
10. The school will record any concerns about a child's wellbeing on their file to ensure any future school is aware that additional support may be required

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