

St Anne's CE Primary School and Nursery



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School Bereavement Policy

Responding to a death within the school community

Adopted by the Governing Body: 9th March 2021

Review: March 2024

At St Anne's CE Primary School and Nursery, 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. 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. Whilst 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, email, or social media sites.

Our "School Bereavement Team"

Bereavement Team Leader: Mr Malcolm Tipping – Headteacher
Staff Wellbeing/Pastoral – Mrs Joanne Harvey – Deputy Headteacher
Mental Health Leader/First Aider – Mrs Polly Montague – Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion)

Reverend Megan Gibbins – Parish Vicar
Mrs Diana Sutherland - School Governor
Miss Lucy Plowright – Early Intervention Family Worker
Mrs Stacey Page – Office Manager

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by **trained staff** from Bereavement Support Worcestershire:

<https://www.bereavementsupportworcestershire.org.uk/information-for-professionals/>

Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

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

1. Agreed Procedures To Be Followed In The Event Of A Death Within The School Community:

Our 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, examples, support networks and channels of appropriate communication as well as being aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.
- Also contact Reverend Megan Gibbins: 07982 611493 or the Church Wardens: Paul Warnett (07768 177412) or John Iles (07711 795118)

- For emergency situations that need additional support the Worcestershire County Council current number: 07624909756.

2. 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 breaks 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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: -

- Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff.
- Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes
- 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.
- Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- 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.
- 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.

6. The Death Of A Partner Of A Member Of Staff

All of the above applies in this situation, however if a member of staff partner dies unexpectedly and they cannot take the call, delivery of the news will be handled with the utmost care, ensuring that a work colleague can be with them and that they are taken to somewhere quiet. Each situation will be different and will be treated as such giving the respect and time to the staff member.

7. Breaking Sad News

Should we need to break sad news to children or young people we will first refer to Winston's Wish Information Pack for Schools 'Bereavement'

<https://www.bereavementsupportworcestershire.org.uk/information-for-professionals/>

Managing Bereavement: A Guide For Schools

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb>

8. Memorials And Funeral Services

Should we need to consider our involvement with any funeral services or memorial services or memorials, we will first refer to the "Guidelines for Memorials and Funeral Services"

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. The Place Of Death And Bereavement Within The Curriculum

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During November or December each year we will hold a special assembly/liturgical/act of remembrance as appropriate, to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died.

We will ensure we have approval from the family of the deceased to record the deceased name in our school memorial book / memorial garden / memory tree.

We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement within the curriculum. This will take place within the RE curriculum and work around pupils' wellbeing across the school and also addressed where significantly appropriate with individuals or groups.

Consult the 'Never the Same' School Leadership Resources for Grief, Bereavement and Loss based on the Church of England Vision for Education.

https://cofeworcester.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Never_the_Same_-_Bereavement_Grief_and_Loss_Resource_-_May_2020.pdf

12. Long Term Support For Those Who Grieve

We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through Worcestershire County Council information and guidance page:

http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20594/end_of_life_care_and_bereavement/1539/bereavement_support

13. Support For Staff Who Support Bereaved Pupils And Colleagues

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this guidance 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.

The outline for this guidance and procedures is taken from “When Somebody Dies”

Support and guidance are also available from: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

Managing Bereavement: A Guide For Schools

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb>

This guidance has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Children Act 1989

Employment Rights Act 1996

Equality Act 2010 DfE (2018)

‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’ DfE (2019)

‘Keeping children safe in education’ 2019

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018)

‘Good Work Plan’ The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018 1.2.

This guidance has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

Winston’s Wish (2019) ‘A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education’ Winston’s

Wish (2019) ‘A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death’ Samaritans (2017) ‘Help When We

Needed It Most’ Child Bereavement UK (2018)

‘Schools’ Information Pack’ 1.3.

This guidance operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Guidance Social,

Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Guidance

Behavioural Guidance Anti-Bullying Guidance

Disciplinary Guidance and Procedure Leave of Absence Guidance

Appendix 1

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO INFORM CHILDREN

(Taken from The Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust)

Remember it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important we model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear.

- Be honest and factual.
- Use clear language – use the person’s name, do not use euphemisms like ‘passed away’ or ‘lost’ use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death (even if that is the death of a pet).
- Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- Acknowledge some days will be harder than others
- Do not expect to go straight into maths, allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical outlet.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

Suggested scripts to use when someone dies:

Script 1

“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. _____, NAME / ROLE, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday in hospital”.

Script 2

“Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.

TEMPLATES

Dear Parents,

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of [name], who has been [a teacher, TA, Lunch time supervisor] at this school for [a number] years.

Our thoughts are with [name's] family at this time and in an effort to try and respond to his/her death in a positive, all children have been informed.

The children were told that [name] died from an [e.g. asthma attack] on [date]. A number of pupils have been identified as being asthmatic and, the School Nurse has today reassured them that it is unusual for a person to die from asthma.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but should you wish, we are able to put you in touch with external support which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in.

The funeral details will be forwarded to you in due course. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

TEMPLATES

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher has had the sad task of informing the children of the death of [name], a pupil in [year?].

They were told that [name] died from an illness called [e.g. cancer]. Sometimes people who have [cancer] can get better, but other times people die from it. [Name] had been ill with for a long time and died at home yesterday.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion - these are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but should you wish, we are able to put you in touch with external support which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in.

The funeral details will be forwarded to you in due course. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's class teacher if this is the case.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

childbereavement.org.uk – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk - Childhood bereavement. childline.org.uk - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

crusebereavementcare.org.uk - All aspects of bereavement.

griefencounter.org.uk - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

hopeagain.org.uk - Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

papyrus-uk.org - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

seesaw.org.uk - Grief support service for children and young people.

sands.org.uk - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

teenissues.co.uk – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

theredlipstickfoundation.org – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

uk-sobs.org.uk - Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.

Widowedandyoung.org.uk – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

winstonswish.org.uk - Help for grieving children and their families.