



St Peter's C of E primary School Bereavement Policy

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Contents page

Section		Page
1	Introduction and purpose of the policy	2
1.1	Background and rationale	2
1.2	Policy links	2
1.3	Purpose of the policy	3
2	Our charter for bereaved children and young people	3
3	Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording	4
4	Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement	4
4.1	Role of the governing body	5
4.2	Role of the head teacher	5
4.3	Role of staff	5
4.4	Role of the Local Authority- the education psychology service	6
5	Procedures	6
5.1	When a death is expected	6
5.2	Following a bereavement	7
5.3	Following a sudden and unexpected death	9
6	Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs	9
7	Young asylum seekers and refugees	10
8	Supporting staff	11
8.1	Support for bereaved staff	11
8.2	Staff training	11
9	Curriculum	11
10	Additional information and links	12
10.1	Who is supporting us	12
10.2	National support services and support resources	12

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Vision Statement

'Faith, Family, Future'

Jesus built his church upon the strength of St Peter - who was his rock. At St Peter's, we provide a solid foundation on which our community thrives through our rich, aspirational curriculum. As a family, we nurture and unlock individual potential through mutual love and respect; enabling all to flourish now and in the future.

'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others'

1 Peter 4 v10

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy is based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish. It has included input from staff, governors, medical professionals, parents and carers. It may be used:

- For children who lose a loved one
- For staff who lose a loved one
- For children and staff who lose a member of the school community

1.2 Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Child Protection Policy
- Business Continuity Plan / Critical Incident Policy
- RSHE education policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Equality policy
- Health and safety policy
- Leave of absence policy (staff)

1.3 Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to pupils and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school, through Kent County Council's education service and the wider community.

2 Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#) and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges

	Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

3 Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school systems to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement or is likely to experience a bereavement.

4 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

4.1 The role of the governing body is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every two years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

4.2 The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the Local Authority in the case of a sudden and unexpected death via the school's Area Education Officer for media support (if applicable) or to access any other support that may be on offer e.g. from Educational Psychology Service
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- keep the governing body appropriately informed
- deal with media enquiries following advice from the local authority media team.

4.3 The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed

- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and inclusion team
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

Our school counsellor has had more advanced training about bereavement. She can offer professional support to other members of staff.

(Mrs M Charlton-Taylor)

4.4 The role of the local authority

KCC Educational Psychologists apply psychology within the educational system. They specialise in promoting learning, development, emotional wellbeing and positive outcomes for children, young people and their families by:

- supporting teams and organisations who work with children and young people
- promoting an understanding of children's psychology;
- promoting better outcomes for vulnerable children, and enabling them to express their own views on how their needs might be supported
- supporting schools in challenging circumstances.

Their work involves the following activities:

- consultation with teachers, parents or carers and other adults who work with children and young people
- psychological assessments, advice and interventions
- professional development and training
- research and evaluation
- support for critical incidents in schools.

The school and family may feel that a referral to this service may be applicable.

5 Procedures

5.1 When a death is expected

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the bereaved family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change (Mrs T Browne/Mrs S Goodwin- Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher)
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil / pupils
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish, Slide Away or a local hospice, including support for other members of the school community who may be affected
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

5.2 Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate. It is important that admin staff check records and create a genogram for the child to ensure that we have recognised any family connections including, other relatives attending school e.g. siblings who might have different surnames, cousins etc. who will need support.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process

- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child or children and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- in the case of a child or staff member who attended the school the headteacher will liaise with the family if possible and release a short statement explaining the sad news and support on offer. The family may wish to contribute to the message. If appropriate, the headteacher will also link in with the school's media contact and chair of governors before releasing the statement.
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed if possible, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.
- where appropriate, contact external bereavement agencies or hospice for advice

It may be that flowers are placed at the school gate or other prominent place. We will ensure these are treated with respect and agree a date when they are collected and the cards collected (and checked) before being given to the family.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school (if applicable)
- ensure friendships are secure - peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference
- signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement
- consider an in-school memorial if a member of staff or child has died. This needs to be done sympathetically and in a planned way with the family. Family members might also wish to have possessions returned or they may wish to collect them from school

5.3 Following a sudden and unexpected death

Suicide

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 4.3 we will seek advice from trained members of staff As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days if possible.

It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/>

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used - for example using phrases such as 'died by suicide' or 'ended his / her life' rather than 'committed suicide' or 'successful suicide', and saying 'attempted to end his / her life' rather than 'unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed attempt at suicide'.

Homicide

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area - away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston's Wish recommend taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston's Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their websites: <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

Other sudden and unexpected deaths

Sadly our community may also be affected by other sudden and unexpected causes of death. Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal

- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

6 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

7 Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate.

8 Supporting staff

8.1 Support for bereaved staff

Staff may also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the school's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with the headteacher about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

8.2 Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers a [free online training course for](#)

[school staff](#) which may be accessed. Some members of staff will also access costed training courses linked to their responsibility in school.

9 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death - such as Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

10 Additional support and links

10.1 National support services and support resources

We will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.

Picture books with reference to bereavement which may be of use

GRANPA

John Burningham (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3)

Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

GRANDAD, I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU

De Bode and Broere (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8)

A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

WHEN DINOSAURS DIE

L & M Brown (Little, Brown, 1996, hb, ISBN 0-316-10197-7)

Charming busy anthropomorphic pictures of dinosaurs illustrate topics and questions and a range of answers about death: Saying Goodbye; Customs and beliefs about death; Why do people die? What does "dead" mean?. It is also quite acute psychologically, acknowledging that disbelief, anger, fear, and sadness are common feelings when someone dies.

REMEMBERING GRANDAD

Sheila and Kate Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)

A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel.

LIPLAP'S WISH

Jonathan London and Sylvia Long (Chronicle Books, 1994, ISBN 0-8118-0505-0)

Liplap the rabbit's grandma has died, and his mother tells him of the rabbit legend that "long ago, when the first rabbits died, they became stars in the sky. And to this day, they come out at night and watch over us. And they remind us that our loved ones shine forever in our hearts... When Liplap asks if a star might be his grandma, his mother replies, "I think you could wish it were."

FRED

Posy Simmons (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)

When Fred the cat dies his owners, Nick and Sophie, attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

LIFETIMES

Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9)

Full title: Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between - a beautiful way to explain life and death to children. This book places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants. For people. For birds". Whilst not exactly comforting, it tells the truth, puts death in perspective, Don't let the rather murky cover put children off - it belies the attractive illustrations within of plants and creatures, alive and dead.

BADGER'S PARTING GIFTS

Susan Varley (Collins Picture Lions, pb, 1992)

An old favourite, a charming illustrated book in which a very old and much loved badger dies. The forest animals gather and reminisce about the important part Badger played in their lives, and as time passes memories of Badger make them smile. These memories were different for each of them, including very recognisable things like a favourite recipe or showing someone how to knot a tie - Badger's "parting gifts.

WE LOVE THEM

Martin Waddell (Walker Books, 1990, ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)

Death is seen very much as part of life in this nicely illustrated story of life in the country, which conveys the idea that life goes on and that old creatures give way to young ones.

GRANDMA'S BILL

Martin Waddell (Macdonald Young Books, pb, ISBN 0-7500-0307-3)

Bill's grandma is a widow, and he learns about her "other Bill" by looking through her photo album with her.

I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU

H Wilhelm (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985)

A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated.

I FEEL SAD

(Wayland, ISBN 0-7052-1406-6)

Not specifically about death, but about different ways of expressing sadness. Could be a useful opening for a conversation about a bereavement, or about coping with feelings.

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR DANIEL

Juliet Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)

This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly",