



ST.MARY'S RC
PRIMARY SCHOOL

WE PRAY, PLAY & RESPECT ALL

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Introduction and Background:

From time to time, every school is touched by the death of a student, member of staff or a family member. Individuals and families react to bereavement in their own very unique ways. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the school community. So it is important for our school to reflect upon an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop flexible contingency plans that reflect how we could or should respond in a tragic situation.

When a death occurs:

The Head Teacher, and in their absence the Deputy Head, will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred. The Head Teacher will consult and seek the assistance of the priest, the SLT, PSHE/RSE leads, the Children's Welfare Officer (CWO), CARITAS staff (counsellors).

The Head Teacher will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the School community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumour are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress. It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before pupils. Pupils should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. Staff will need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience significant emotional or psychological distress. For example, someone who may have witnessed the death may require special attention. The school will involve CWO and members of CARITAS (counsellors) to assist.

The death of a student:

In the case of the death of a student, the Chair of Governors and Priest should be informed immediately. Appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The SLT, Priest, CWO, PSHE/RSE leads and CARITAS counsellors should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. (If required, further CARITAS counsellors will be made available to assist.) This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the school day. A book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Services of remembrance may be offered at various times. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving students is important and staff should have the opportunity to meet in the staff room at the end of the school day, to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. The Head Teacher will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. The Head Teacher will consult with the LA Media Officer regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the school timetable. The structure and regularity of the school day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required.

The death of a member of staff:

In the case of the death of a member of staff, the Chair of Governors and Priest should be informed immediately. Appropriate pastoral support should be provided for the whole school community. The SLT, Priest, CWO, CARITAS counsellors and PSHE/RSE leads should be deployed appropriately to provide counselling and comfort. This may include pastoral support being available at designated areas and times during the school day. A book of remembrance should be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Services of remembrance may be offered at various times. Special support including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who were particularly close to the deceased. The Head Teacher will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. The Head Teacher will consult with the LA Media Officer regarding an official statement on behalf of the school.

In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the school timetable. The structure and regularity of the school day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care will need to be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

Funeral Procedure:

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that the school is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Head Teacher, in consultation with SLT, CWO, CARITAS counsellors and PSHE/RSE leads, will identify which staff and pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Head Teacher will liaise with pupils' families to ensure it is their wish that the staff/pupils attend. The Head Teacher will also consult with staff and pupils in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance.

The death of a family member of a student:

In the case of the death of a family member of a student, if the death happens while the child is at school, a representative for the family, preferably a parent should come to the school to inform the child. In some circumstances it may be necessary for the Head Teacher and Class Teacher to give the death notification. SLT, CWO, PSHE/RSE leads and CARITAS counsellors will be available to the pupil to provide counselling/comfort. Before notifying fellow pupils, the school should speak with the bereaved student's family to determine what information should be given to classmates. Classmates should be informed how the bereaved classmate wants to talk about what has happened (i.e. speak openly and take initiative, or let the bereaved student decide when to talk about the death.)

The Head Teacher and Class Teacher should consult with the bereaved student's family to determine what is appropriate in terms of classmates attending the funeral and/or sending flowers. The Head Teacher will liaise with classmates' families to ensure it is their wish that they attend. Following the death of a family member, it can be expected that the bereaved student may have a reduced capacity for school work. The bereaved student may need extra help immediately or at a later time,

The death of a student or member of staff while at school or on a school trip:

Should the death of a student or staff member occur during the school day, or on a school trip, the Head Teacher will quickly assemble an emergency management team. The first priorities will be to offer support to students and staff who may have witnessed the death, to inform the family of the deceased, to inform the LA, the Chair of Governors and the Priest. The Head and the emergency management team will deal immediately with issues at the school including contact with accident and emergency personnel, organising support and counselling for the school community and communicating information to the school community as appropriate. The Head Teacher will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

Revised and adopted by the Governing Body

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2029