Saint Edmund's Catholic Primary School

'Together we learn and grow through worship and celebration'

Bereavement and Loss

Committee responsible for policy	Community Committee
Approved by **Committee**/FGB	September 2025
Statutory/Non-statutory	Non-STATUTORY
Frequency of Review	Free to determine - 4 YEARS
Date of last review	**September 2025**
Date of next review	**September 2029**
Purpose of policy	To enable staff to support children and colleagues at times of loss and/or bereavement in the context of a Catholic school community.
Consultation	Partner Catholic schools School Community – parent governors and staff.
Links to other policies	PSHE RE Safeguarding Science

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Bereavement and Loss Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Catholic School exists to provide an education that is God centred. It is based on the belief that everything of worth comes from God and builds on the faith already established by the family through Baptism.

Together we grow through worship and celebration.

We encourage our children to develop their spiritual and academic potential and individual talents. We nurture qualities of honesty, tolerance, forgiveness, caring and patience. All are made welcome and the worth of every individual is recognised, valued and celebrated.

Underlying Principles in Addressing Bereavement and Loss

At St Edmund's Catholic Primary School we

- Believe that loss is a natural part of life and is experienced in many different ways from birth to death.
- Need to allow ourselves the freedom to grieve and opportunities to talk freely about our feelings without fear or ridicule.
- Recognise loss experienced by others, care about their loss and seeks to support them in their grief.
- We seek to create a Christian understanding of hope and celebration where all members are valued.
- Aim to develop strategies to enable children to cope with crises or imminent need before they occur.

Our policy is intended to reflect the ethos of our school and contribute positively to the emotional health and well-being of our school community.

Aims of the policy

- For all staff to have a clear and informed understanding of the underlying principles of bereavement.
- To ensure that all staff and pupils faced with a bereavement or loss are provided with appropriate support.
- Where bereavement is complex we will sign post families to relevant agencies/ professionals.
- To ensure that all staff can respond appropriately when pupils of the school experience bereavement/loss.
- To recognise the wider impact bereavement may have on the school community.

In the event of a sudden or unexpected bereavement within our school community staff should

- Refer/talk to the Headteacher as soon as is practicable.
- In the absence of the HT refer to the Deputy Head/ Inclusion Manager /member of

leadership team.
- The school should also inform the Parish Priest at the soonest appropriate time.

The Headteacher should then advise the leadership team of the situation and outline the circumstances and support that is available for the individual staff/pupil as appropriate.

Immediate School Response
- A phone call to express sympathy and offer support.
- A home visit if appropriate.

Continuing communication/ support for the family will be vital and can be expressed by:
- Passing on verbal support through family and friends.
- Where the bereavement is complex the Head Teacher may contact the family providing addresses and telephone numbers of support agencies.
- Links can also be made between parents with similar experiences.
- Cards from the school/ prayers/ Mass cards/memory boxes.
- Supplying books and prayers for the family to use as a resource.

By addressing bereavement and loss in our school it is intended
- To give individual children strategies for coping with loss.
- To help each child recognise and appreciate loss as experienced by others.
- To create a caring environment where loss is recognised and supported.
- To ensure all children affected by the loss are supported appropriately – where a friend loses a parent they may feel vulnerable that this could happen to their parent.
- To understand that God is there to comfort them.

Strategies for Dealing with Loss that may help

Talk
- Offer reassurance and comfort.
- Recognise that loss hurts and allow children to cry.
- Encourage talk about feelings without imposing any feelings.
- Make children feel valued.
- Involve parents in discussions.
- Talk in concrete terms.
- Be honest and answer questions directly.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Listen sensitively.
- Pray with children.

Support
- Appoint an active listener to provide continuing support.
- Discuss how whole community can help.
- Identify people we can turn to for help internally and through external agencies.
- Keep personal journals, scrap books of photos, records.
- Use games and drama as a means to cope with the loss.

Celebrate
- Celebrate life of people we have lost.
- Celebrate animals or pets that have died(often a child's first experience of grief).
- Recognise strong emotions – write about them, bring in things which remind us of them.

- Collate an anthology of poems, stories, artifacts connected with the losses.
- Use drama, music, dance to explore feelings and celebrate memories.

Areas for consideration

What information...

Is confidential to the Headteacher?
Can be shared with staff?
Can be shared with the rest of the school?

Permission to divulge any information regarding the bereavement should be sought from the family in consultation with the procedures arranged and agreed by the head teacher.

What follow up support could be considered?

- Home visits.
- Notification of all parents/classes of parents.
- The appropriate use of school assemblies.
- Provision of personal time for any staff member when necessary to give them space to reflect on their own losses.

Any of the above actions concerning the family involved must be discussed and agreed sensitively with the family first.

Working with pupils

The Headteacher will monitor the needs of all relevant pupils through class teachers and other key personnel.
Where necessary s/he will delegate responsibility as appropriate.
Monitoring/supporting these pupils can involve a number of strategies:

- A confidential record which is accessible by all relevant staff may be used to record any relevant information which will enable good communication between any external agencies.
- Opportunities can be provided for pupils to include the name of their deceased loved one within Mass, liturgies and prayers (whole school and class).
- An Individual plan to incorporate strategies such as a memory box and 1-1 support time with a trained counsellor.
- A memorial service (particularly for a pupil/staff member who has died) to mark and anniversary.
- A number of appropriate books have been purchased by the school which can be read with the class, a group or an individual child.

Where a parent has a terminal illness and the children are aware of the imminence of the situation, the school will seek to work with the family to support the children through the process and what will happen next
Where appropriate the school will work with outside agencies to ensure the family and children are well supported whilst trying to bring some kind of routine back to their lives.

As previously stated any actions concerning the family involved must be discussed and agreed sensitively with the family first, particularly with regard to confidentiality and adhering to the family's wishes.

Supporting staff who have experienced a bereavement

The Headteacher will remain the main the point of contact for any member of staff. The Head Teacher will put strategies into place to provide support which may include,

- Provision of time to be absent from work
- Removal of burden of routine work where appropriate.
- Counselling service – see Staff Handbook for details and numbers to call

Curriculum provision

Within the Science, PSHE and Religious Education schemes of work the children will be taught at an age appropriate level about bereavement and loss.

In addition to the above curriculum provision, on a daily basis all classes have opportunity for circle time, reflection, prayer and meditation.

Suggested Resources

Answers	John Foster (Collins Ed)
Badgers Parting Gift	Susan Varley
Emma Says Goodbye	Carolyn Nystrom
Mog says Goodbye	Judith Kerr
Dragonflies and Butterflies	

NHS – Bereavement support for young people
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/bereavement-and-young-people/

Catholic Children's Society (Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme) – The programme provides training for school staff so they can deliver support groups for children who have experienced a significant loss in their lives
https://www.cathchild.org.uk/rainbows-bereavment-support-programme

Child Bereavement UK – Is a UK charity supporting families and education professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement
https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children

Winston's Wish – Is a UK charity which supports bereaved children, young people, their families, and the professionals who support them
https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/

Citizen's Advice Bureau – Information and support on a bereavement in the family
https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/claiming-bereavement-support-payment/

Richmond CAMHS Service – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for the Richmond Borough
https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/children_and_family_care/childrens_services_professionals/child_and_adolescent_mental_health_services

We have three Emotional Literacy Support Assistants who can all support children as they come to terms with their loss. We also have access to the Education Psychology service through the Local Authority who can counsel and support class teachers in how to support children who may

need their specialist help.

The intent of this policy is to provide guidelines to support the children and adults in the school but any individuals who need help, please ask and know that we are here as a community to share support with each other. Everyone deals with bereavement differently and we want to make sure that people feel they can ask and will receive assistance.

Appendix 1
A Catholic school's response to a death in the community
Updated during COVID-19
(St Edmund's)

Staff should be aware that if they receive any news that a member of the community is seriously ill or has died, they should inform the Headteacher immediately. They should not pass the information to other staff or post any information on social media.

Informing staff

- Headteacher to phone Deputy Head/SLT/Business Manager/ Chair of Govs and Parish Priest.
- Teachers will be contacted by phone calls via phase leaders.
- TAs and LSAs will be contacted by phone calls via the SEND Lead.
- Site Manager and lunch time staff contacted by phone calls via Deputy Head.
- Cleaning staff contacted by phone calls via Site Manager.
- Messages regarding the reason for the call not to be left on answerphones, simply a request to call back as soon as possible. Text messages are not appropriate in these circumstances.
- Staff to be asked not to post anything on social media until 24 hours have passed.
- Staff to be asked not to notify any pupils until they hear via parents through School Communicator.
- Particular care should be taken if this news concerns a pupil with the calls made to the pupil's Class teacher and any linked staff e.g. Inclusion Lead etc.
- Particular care should be taken if this concerns a member of staff with the calls made to those known to be close friends/colleagues first.
- Headteacher to email all staff 8 hours after phone calls have been made via line managers.

Contact responsibilities

- H/T to contact Parish Priest and discuss how pupils are being informed so it is not announced on parish websites until all pupils are told.
- H/T to email other local primary Headteachers as/if appropriate
- H/T to contact LA if appropriate
- Inclusion Lead to contact LA EP service for support for pupils and staff.
- Business manager to contact additional governors.

How we tell students

- We would want pupils to be told by their parents and carers

How we tell parents

- A letter from the H/T to parents to be sent out via school communicator/email to all year groups.
- Pupils/Parents/Carers to be asked not to post on social media or to talk on the phone for 4 hours or to allow others to hear the news appropriately.
- A photo of the person may need to be included in the announcement – decision to be made at the time
- No announcements to be made by school via social media (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram).
- If press contact school, they may be given the text of Headteacher's letter. A tribute may or may not go out to press later, after the funeral.

Help and support for pupils/staff

- Pupil's encouraged to support one another and especially to look out for those who may not be in touch with others/isolated socially.
- Pupil's to be supported through circle times and opportunities to talk about what has happened. Inclusion Lead and RE Lead will have resources to hand that may be useful to support pupils in class.
- Pupils to be reminded they can talk to all/any members of staff – ELSA staff / sessions may be appropriate
- Staff to be emailed resources regarding bereavement.
- Staff encouraged to support one another
- Staff encouraged to request support via line manager if needed.

Prayers

- RE Lead to prepare prayer resources which will be sent out with the staff email and school communicator.

Mass

- H/T and/or RE Lead to liaise with Parish Priest and family, if appropriate, to request a Mass.

Funeral

- Whilst funerals are necessarily held in private, no details would be made available to the community of the venue of the funeral although perhaps the date of the funeral might be made known if the family agreed
- Plans would be made in close liaison with the family for a memorial Mass in the future if deemed appropriate.