



Bereavement Policy

Death and Bereavement: The Mission of a Catholic School

'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die.' John 11:25

For the Catholic community our faith in Christ Jesus is rooted in the firm belief that it is through death that we may receive eternal life: death is not a final end but heralds the promise of eternal life whereby we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The liturgy and prayers of the Church that are used when someone has died, 'offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.'¹ Through prayer we can express our grief and sorrow for those who have died and our hope that our separation from them is only temporary: that 'one day we will be reunited in the joy of God's kingdom'.¹ Our prayer 'commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognises the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more.'¹

*'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more,
neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more'* Revelation 21:4

Whilst we celebrate the hope of the resurrection, we are also called by the Church to be part of the ministry of consolation and to comfort those who mourn both in the immediacy of a death and through the weeks and months to come.

It is for these very reasons that every time Mass is celebrated, we pray for the eternal rest of those who have died and that the month of November is dedicated to a special time of prayer for the Holy Souls.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted' Matthew 5:4

Saint John Wall Catholic School, Bereavement Policy

What is the purpose of a Bereavement Policy?

The Bereavement Policy will provide clear information and procedural direction so that in the event of a death and bereavement a school is able to respond calmly and efficiently. It will help us give the necessary guidance and support to those who are grieving in a sensitive and compassionate manner. This policy will also signpost to resources and organisations which may be relevant as part of the response needed according to the given circumstances.

When a death occurs, whether it is anticipated or unexpected, it is an emotional and sometimes traumatic time. This policy helps enable all members of staff to know the expectations of themselves and others and the various roles and responsibilities. It should give them confidence in dealing with the given situation.

This policy is applicable to different situations: whether it is supporting a bereaved pupil or member of staff; or following the death of a pupil or adult member of the wider school community or responding to critical incidents. The level and extent of support in all of these situations will differ accordingly.

As a Catholic school, it is imperative that such a policy is founded upon the beliefs and teachings of the Church.

This policy should also be applied alongside other relevant school policies such as our safeguarding policy. Elements of this policy can also be applied for other types of 'bereavement' that may affect members of the school community for example family breakdown, loss of a pet or other traumatic circumstances.

Aims of the Bereavement Policy

- To provide a response to death and bereavement which is enshrined in our faith and hope of the resurrection and in our duty of care to provide a ministry of consolation to those who mourn.

To provide clear procedures which are to be followed in the event of:

- a bereavement suffered by pupil or member of staff
- the death of a pupil or member of staff or member of the wider school community e.g. governor, former pupils and members of staff etc.
- a critical incident involving one or more pupils or members of staff

These procedures will

- identify the roles and responsibilities of key members of staff within the school and/or academy including members of the governing body/Local Academy Board/Board of Directors
- identify the lines of communication and dissemination within the school community and, where relevant, to those outside of the school community e.g. DES, Diocesan Communications Team or LA
- provide signposts towards prepared templates for letters, resources and organisations to support the bereaved
- provide responses in the immediacy of a situation as well as support for the weeks and months to follow
- honour the memory of those who have died and those who mourn within the traditions of the Church whilst being sensitive to the faith and cultural backgrounds of the bereaved

Section 1: The death of a pupil or member of staff

Saint John Wall policy	Key guidance and matters to consider	Other points and useful information for reference
<p><u>Roles and responsibilities</u></p> <p>Lead staff will include the Headteacher, Head of Catholic Life and school Chaplain. Any other member of staff who knows the bereaved person well may also be asked and supported to take a lead.</p> <p>Lead staff will meet to identify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of bereavement and likely impact • Main people affected • Who to communicate to and the times and ways to do this. • A timeline and package of support from the strategies that follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the role of the Parish Priest/Chaplain is included and that they are in the list of people to be contacted. • Ensure contact with Chair of Governors is included. • Ensure contact with DES is included particularly where there may be press interest. • Headteacher should release a press statement <i>only after taking advice.</i> • When sharing the news with both staff and pupils ensure that it is a time rooted in prayer and reflection. • Communications with all parents should also include prayer. • Identify those able to offer additional pastoral care to the school community e.g. Lay Chaplains, Family Workers, Deacon, Parish Sisters etc. 	<p>Advice should be taken from the DES and Press and Communications Officers of the Archdiocese: DES: 01675 464755 Director or one of the Deputy Directors Press and Communications: Caroline Blesto or Faye Fawcett Tel: 0121 230 6286 caroline.blesto@rc-birmingham.org faye.fawcett@rc-birmingham.org For urgent communication matters out of office hours the team can be contacted on the following mobile numbers: Caroline Blesto - 074 6467 4630 Faye Fawcett - 078 2378 94 57</p> <p><i>When Somebody Dies: Sample letters Sudden Bereavement Flow Chart Scripture Quotations and Prayers for those who have died Art of Dying Well (prayers for those who have died)</i></p>
<p><u>Procedures</u></p> <p>Will be determined by the lead staff and will be adapted depending on the circumstances, and link to other school policies i.e. staff absence policy, safeguarding policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the 'script' is rooted in the Catholic Mission. 	<p><i>When Somebody Dies: Sample Policy and Procedures</i></p>
<p><u>The first few days</u></p> <p>Lead staff will plan and prepare a range of activities and support for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how Church, Chapel, Prayer Room, Prayer Garden or other such space will be utilised. • Ensure pastoral care by named people above is available. • Consider creating and upkeeping a permanent Book of Remembrance 	<p><i>Children's Understanding of Death</i></p>
<p><u>The funeral</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funeral may be a Requiem Mass or funeral 	

	<p>service in the parish church or a funeral service elsewhere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wishes of the family remain paramount at this time. Any arrangements which include the involvement of the school must be in consultation with the family. • In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the school to be closed for some or all of a day. 	<p>Decisions over whether pupils from the school should attend a funeral need to be carefully considered on a case by case basis and always in conjunction with their own parents or carers.</p>
<p><u>Support for pupils</u></p> <p>Our Lay Chaplain and Head of Catholic Life have completed relevant training.</p> <p>See further detail in section 2 of this policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify suitable resources and support materials taking into account pupil age, needs, other circumstances. 	<p><i>Children's Understanding of Death</i></p>
<p><u>Support for staff</u></p> <p>See further detail in section 2 of this policy.</p>	<p>Pastoral care from the Parish Priest, Chaplain, Deacon or Parish Sisters</p> <p>Support from the DES</p>	<p>If you require any additional support from the DES contact the Deputy Director for Catholic Education Maggie Duggan m.duggan@bdes.org.uk Tel: 01675 464755 Ext:115</p>
<p><u>Remembering</u></p> <p>The school is close to Handsworth Cemetery and Saint Augustine's Church, which can be used for visits and reflection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is a system for recording dates of anniversaries E.g. Book of Remembrance. This can be kept in the Chapel/prayer room and left open on the current month. • Ensure that the Month of the Holy Souls is used as a time to remember and pray for deceased pupils, staff and family members. • Ensure awareness of other times in the year where sensitivity is needed e.g. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas etc. 	<p>Anniversaries can be commemorated at a Mass said for the person who has died and by including their names in the Prayer of the Faithful. Liturgies can also be used to commemorate the deceased and to pray for those who mourn.</p> <p>Spaces such as a Memorial Garden within school can include specific items of furniture or trees, plaques, pieces of art etc, dedicated to those who have died.</p> <p><i>Scripture Quotations and Prayers for those who have died</i></p> <p><i>Art of Dying Well (prayers for those who have died)</i></p> <p><i>Activities for allowing children to express grief</i></p>

Section 2: Supporting a bereaved pupil. This section can also be applied, alongside HR policies, to support a bereaved member of staff.

Saint John Wall Policy	Key guidance and matters to consider	Other useful information
Returning to school after a bereavement	Include pastoral care from the Parish Priest, Chaplain, Deacon, Parish Sisters or Lay Chaplain as appropriate. Include Chapel, Prayer Room and Prayer Garden as safe spaces for time-out.	<i>Children's understanding of death</i> <i>Scripture Passages and Prayers for Bereavement</i> <i>Activities for allowing children to express grief</i> <i>Beliefs of different faith traditions regarding death and the afterlife</i>
Longer term support	Please refer to remembering section above.	
Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum	Identify opportunities in the curriculum where death grief and bereavement can be included. Ensure that this focuses upon Catholic beliefs and traditions and also includes those of other faiths and religions and none.	Identify how this links in with RSE, PHSE and SMVSC. <i>Children's understanding of death</i> <i>Beliefs of different faith traditions regarding death and the afterlife</i> This will need to be age appropriate. Source age appropriate stories which can be incorporated into school and/or class libraries. Books and Resources p41-58 <i>Managing Bereavement: A guide for Schools</i>
Support for staff We will aim to ensure lead staff, and over time, all staff, receive some CPD linked to bereavement	Include pastoral care from the Parish Priest, Chaplain, Deacon, Parish Sisters or Lay Chaplain as appropriate.	

Section 3: Useful Phone Numbers & Resources

You can also refer to relevant resources.

Winston's Wish

Website: <https://help2makesense.org/>

Email: ask@winstonswish.org

Cruse Bereavement Care

Website: <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

Phone: 0808 808 1677

Childline

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Phone: 0800 1111

Grief Encounter

Website: <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/young-people/>

Phone: 0808 802 0111

Section 4: Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

Following a bereavement, it is good practice to review the effectiveness of what was undertaken at each stage and identify any aspects which could have been better. Improvements, if required, should be put in place.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, and/ or following a significant bereavement, whichever is sooner.

Ratified by Governors: 05/07/2023

Review Date: 07/07/2026

(This policy will remain in force beyond the review date if no updates are required)