

ST. TERESA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, LEXDEN, COLCHESTER

Bereavement

MISSION STATEMENT

We love God and each other and follow the example of St Teresa.

We enjoy learning together and doing our best in a happy, healthy and welcoming community.

We learn to be responsible and caring citizens.

"Let us do little things well today".

St Teresa

Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of children under the age of 18 years dies. This equates to around 23,600 annually. As a consequence around 111 children are bereaved of a parent every day.

Approximately 1 in 29 school children has lost a parent or sibling.

In 2014 2,129 children and young people between the ages of 1 and 19 died. Many more families experience loss as a result of miscarriage and stillbirth (Source: Child Bereavement UK).

Children who have been bereaved are:

- 60% more likely than non-bereaved children to have a stay in hospital
- 55% more likely to have a diagnosable mental health disorder
- 80% more likely to have a parent with a serious mental health illness
- 40% more likely to experience a major financial crisis
- 60% more likely to be excluded from school

Source: Childhood Bereavement Network

It is therefore almost inevitable, that at any time, someone at St Teresa's Catholic Primary School could be dealing with the effects of bereavement either as an individual or as a whole community. Such inevitability implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in order that we might be proactive rather than reactive when dealing with these sensitive situations.

While this policy is primarily concerned with the effects of death within our community the school should be mindful that loss in an individual's life can take many forms. Behaviour associated with bereavement may be caused by events such as divorce or separation within a family, the military deployment of a parent or sibling, illness/loss of health within the family or loss of financial security.

Aims

- To support the pupils, staff and families of St Teresa's School before, during and after bereavement.
- To provide sensitive, effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between the family, the school and the wider community.
- To identify key staff within school and LA to provide effective, appropriate support.

The Role of the Governing Body

To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

To review the policy in three years.

The Role of the Head Teacher

- To establish contact with the deceased's family and maintain communication in order to provide sensitive support
- To communicate information about the loss to all staff
- To ensure that staff are adequately prepared to pass information on to their pupils
- To respond to media enquiries if the death of a pupil or member of staff is the result of an incident likely to attract media attention.

The Head Teacher should refer to the Local Authority Press Officer and follow the procedure detailed in the school's Critical Incident Plan Policy.

Contact in office hours: Angus Shaw or Robbie Bryson 01245 430096

Out of Hours: Contact a Designated Senior Officer from the LA Emergency Support Team

- To monitor the affected pupil's ongoing progress by liaising with their family, Class Teacher and any external support e.g. BCCS, CAMHS

Pre-Bereavement Support

On learning that a pupil or someone close to a pupil has a life changing or life limiting condition contact should be made with the family by the Head Teacher. The child's Class Teacher and Teaching Assistant should be informed. Further dissemination of information should be in line with the family's wishes.

In discussion with the family, the Head Teacher and Class Teacher should decide what level of support is appropriate e.g. a watchful eye, monitoring the child's demeanour, external agencies etc.

Procedures following the death of:

- **a pupil**
- **a member of staff**
- **a parent or sibling of a pupil**
- **someone close to a pupil or member of staff**
- **the parish priest**
- **a governor of the school**

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head Teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion. All communication must be sensitive to cultural and religious considerations. If pre-bereavement support has been given and it is deemed appropriate, this initial contact may be made in conjunction with those who have previously established a relationship with the deceased's family.

2. Staff should be informed of the facts before pupils and be prepared to share the information in an age appropriate way as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are directly affected, should be informed in small groups by someone known to them e.g. their Class Teacher
4. Where appropriate, a letter to all school families should be composed by the Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom and how it is distributed.
5. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher in conjunction with the LA Media Office as detailed in *The Role of the Head Teacher* on page 2 of this document.
6. The school timetable may require a degree of flexibility to accommodate children's needs. However, minimal disruption provides a sense of security and familiarity which may in itself provide comfort for those affected.
7. In consultation with the family of the deceased arrangements for funeral attendance should be clarified. Full or partial closure of the school should be considered where appropriate.
8. Staff affected by the bereavement may be offered ongoing support as appropriate either within school or by outside agencies.
9. The school should be aware of the impact of the loss throughout the pupil's school life. It should be recorded in the pupil's file and shared with the relevant parties, in particular at times of transition e.g. the move to KS3.
10. Sensitivity should be shown to pupils around significant dates e.g. the anniversary of the loss, birthdays, Mothers' / Fathers' day, Christmas
11. Staff should be aware of who in school has been trained to provide bereavement support. In our school this is Mrs Sarah Dyball

Useful Websites and Organisations

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society	bccs.org.uk	01268 784544
Winston's Wish	winstonswish.org.uk	Helpline 08452 03 04 05
Child Bereavement UK	childbereavementuk.org	Helpline 0800 02 888 40
The Lullaby Trust	lullabytrust.org.uk	0808 802 6868

Suggested Templates for Letters to Parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of someone connected to the school permission must be received from the deceased's family. In the case of a pupil this permission must be given by the child's parents (or legal guardian if applicable). The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents (or legal guardian) and the school.

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents

Today your child's class teacher/form tutor had the sad task of informing the children of the death of [Name], a pupil in Year [x] . [Name] died from an illness called ????. As you may be aware, many children who have ??? get better but sadly [Name] had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in school in the next few months as a means of celebrating life.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Sample letter on death of a staff member:

Dear parents

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news.

No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news.

Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk.

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to their colleague.

I am conscious that a loss such as this impacts on the whole school community but trust that we will, together, be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Role / Organisation	Name	Telephone No.
Head Teacher	Mrs Rebecca Maguire	01206 508445
Senior Management Team	Miss Lydia Spratt	01206 508445
	Miss Gabby Hilton	01206 508445
Chair of Governors	Mr Peter Johnson	01206 508445
Vice Chair of Governors	Mrs Shelley Gwyn-Jones	01206 508445
Admin (Emergency Management Team)	Mrs Deborah Chapman	01206 508445
Admin (Emergency Management Team)	Mrs Elaine Moclair	01206 508445
Admin (Emergency Management Team)	Mrs Sarah Hale	01206 508445
Site Caretaker	Mr Richard Price	01206 508445
Essex County Council Health & Safety Helpline		01245 436896 <i>Checked February 2024</i>
Essex County Council Emergency Planning	24/7 Mobile	07767298483 <i>Checked February 2024</i>

Approved by Governors: February 2024

Reviewed: Spring term 2024

To be reviewed: Spring term 2026