



Bishop John Robinson
Church of England Primary School

Bereavement Policy

Be the best we can;

Join in Learning, Play and Prayer;

Remember God's Word

"Jesus is the Anchor of my Soul." Hebrews 9:16



The Diocese of
Southwark


ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

Mission Statement

We want all adults and children to: **Be the best they can** in order to have best possible start in life and to make the most of the gifts God has given. To achieve this, we teach everyone *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart"* (Colossians 3:23) by;

- Set ambitious targets for all pupils and staff
- Continually look for ways to improve
- Have high expectations of behaviour for all

We encourage children to: **Join in Learning**, to promote academic excellence and to inspire everyone to value the importance of education in wider society. The bible teaches us God will *"Instruct us in the way of knowledge and wisdom and lead us along straight paths"* (Proverbs 4:11). To achieve this we;

- Provide an engaging curriculum with opportunities for learning in a variety of contexts
- Strive for all lessons to be focussed and engaging to allow all children to achieve
- Support deeper levels of understanding so that children can apply learning to different settings

For children to: **Join in Play** is important at BJR because Play is essential for everyone's social and emotional development. It is a vital life skill which helps children to form the adult they will become building trust, forgiveness and resilience. Play is the foundation for learning compassion and the Golden Rule *"Do to others as you would have them do to you"* (Luke 6:31). To promote positive play we;

- Have dedicated staff who promote play EVERY PLAYTIME
- Promote the importance of play through PLAY DAYS
- Invest in the playground as a learning resource

We want the school community to: **Join in Prayer** as Christians believe that this is fundamental to developing a relationship with God as well as giving thanks and praise. We should *"Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Whatever happens, give thanks, because it is God's will."* (Thessalonians 5:16-18). We encourage this though;

- High quality collective worship for all children
- Daily acts of prayer
- Valuing the essential role of our School Chaplain

We believe that we should: **Remember God's Word**, as this is at the very Foundation of being a Christian school. In promoting a practical understanding and application of Christian Values we strive to; *"Train up a child in the way they should go, And when they are old they will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6) through;

- Providing High quality RE teaching and daily collective worship for all children
- Regular visits to church and other places of worship

In all aspects of school life, our school vision is key to ensuring that Bishop John Robinson CofE Primary School offers the best education money can't buy. Our history and naval links, our entire spiritual and ethical ethos, and our approach to the school's curriculum is rooted in our individual and corporate identity: *"Jesus is the anchor of my soul."* (Hebrews 9:16).

1. Introduction

The main aim of the policy is to provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and nonteaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

2. Aims

At Bishop John Robinson Church of England Primary School, we aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within a Christian context. As a church school, we aim to talk about how faith can support and guide us, in whatever we do, and through whatever happens. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be the place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child, a sibling or a member of staff, the whole school community, including the Church, will work together, with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

3. Procedures

Within school and together with St Paul's Church Thamesmead, we work in partnership with parents and carers. When children join our school, we find out as much as possible about every child in order to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents and carers are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving schools, moving house, new baby etc.). If there has been a bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of details of the death, religious beliefs etc.) should be sought, in order that school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family. When a child moves from another school, information is passed on from the school via CPOMS, telephone call or documentation and uploaded onto our CPOMS. The staff closely involved with the child may be told some of the details within that information.

a. Family Bereavement

When school is informed of a bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support (See Appendix 1 for addresses and relevant telephone help lines)
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and how they have been involved.
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
- The importance of working together and liaison will be explained- both parties assessing any changes in behaviour. (Eating and/or sleeping patterns may change, behaviour in school or home may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. School Nurse, Psychological Service, Barnardos, Child Bereavement UK

For a member of staff experiencing close family bereavement, absence will be arranged for attendance at the funeral and appropriate time off in line with the Staff Absence Policy. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate.

b. Death of a child or member of staff

When the school is informed of the death of a child or a member of staff, the following actions should be considered:

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children at school.
- Counselling should be available, if necessary. E.g. In the case of sudden or violent death, outside agencies should be involved with this- Psychological Service, School Nurse for example.

- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate and they wish to do so.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone showing signs of stress should be offered appropriate support.
- Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents or carers.
- The class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family to assist in the planning of the service. (See Appendix 2)
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.
- A small battery operated candle could be lit in Collective Worship that stays alight in the classroom of the child or member of staff.
- A Collective worship could be held in the school, conducted by either the SLT or Incumbent, where all children and staff can reflect and pray.
- A book of prayers and thoughts could be opened in school for children, staff and members of the community to contribute to.

c. Terminally ill pupils, close family members or staff

- In the event of a child, close family member or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their close parents/ carers/ next-of-kin should always be respected.
- Should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child's condition. (See Appendix 2)
- Occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach. Sometimes there is no other way.

d. Returning to school (see Appendix 3)

- For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic.
- Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teaching, support staff and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupils returns (providing the parents/carers of the bereaved pupil agree)
- Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression of those suffering grief.
- Teachers should foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined.
- Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained and the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite.
- Staff should be made aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement.
- Staff might keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate.
- The pupil or member of staff should be made aware that prayers were and will be said for them.

e. Talking to the Bereaved pupil

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible, arrange a 1-1 session with a counsellor e.g. Child Bereavement UK, as soon as possible after the pupils returns to school.
- Be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions.
- If people feel like crying, they should cry - crying is not a sign of weakness but often a sign of deep feeling

- Beware of using platitudes e.g. 'I know how you feel' (young people may feel offended that an adult presumes how they feel)

Do

- Let the child know that you genuinely care
- Make time to be available and listen
- Accept all that the child is saying
- Allow them to express their feelings their way
- Let them know their feelings are normal
- Let them know it is okay to cry, be angry or feel afraid
- Talk honestly and share your feelings
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Have appropriate physical contact (remembering that Safeguarding remains priority)
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation

Don't

- Stop the child talking
- Tell them how they should or should not feel
- Avoid contact
- Change the subject
- Deny shared or person pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful
- Be frightened of sharing your own feeling

Appendix 1

Useful websites for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community:

- www.winstonswish.org
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.childbereavement.org.uk
- www.cruse.org.uk

Appendix 2

Books dealing with death and loss

- Beyond the Rough Rock- supporting a child who has been bereaved through suicide- Julie Stokes and Diana Crossley
- As Bug as it Gets- supporting a child when someone in their family is seriously ill- Julie Stokes and Diana Crossley
- The Secret C- Straight talking about Cancer- Julie Stokes and Diana Crossley
- I miss you- First look at Death- Pat Thomson
- Let's talk about when someone dies- Molly Potter
- The Huge bag od worries- Virginia Ironside
- How are you feeling today- Molly Potter
- A kids guide to feeling lonely- Kirsty Holmes

Appendix 3

Support and further suggestions for teachers

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement.

It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's development and emotional needs.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death will disrupt the family for many months; in fact, the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child, it is helpful to minimise, if possible, the changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to acknowledge the child's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviour such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness.
- The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, becoming clingy, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused and unsafe.
- The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the dead person or child. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know that this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.

- Teachers should remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family; looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children.
- Teachers may also require their own support structures. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining.

Appendix 4

Developmental Stages relating to an understanding of death

Age	Understanding of death	Child's needs	Phrases/Techniques
Infancy Birth-two years	Death as separation and/or abandonment. Careful listening and watching Death is when the body stops working	Brief simple, honest explanations with familiar examples Reassurance of safety, parental support and attention	'We'll be here to take care of you'.
Pre-school 2-6 years	Uses magical and intuitive thinking Death as sleep, temporary, reversible, impersonal. Or as a person who comes to get you, can be catching. Egocentric thinking causes feelings of responsibility or guilt	Clarification and expanded answers. Permission to attend funeral with assistance. Acceptance of feelings without qualification, corrections or judgements.	Avoid euphemisms such as sleep or lost. Check and see if explanations are understood Expect repeat questions Acknowledge everyone's feelings of sadness and loss. Anticipate and counteract guilt. Look out for unusual or subtle expressions of grief.
School years 6-11 years	Uses concrete thinking, begins rational thinking Death is final, perhaps not inevitable. Occurs to other Perhaps retaliatory	Reassurance that grief is ok, to feel bad is normal Open communication and opportunity to express feelings when ready Encouragement to attend the funeral	Acknowledge adult feeling, including guilt and anger. Its ok to cry. Accept fluctuating grief