

Our Lady Queen of Peace RCVA Primary School

In our school we believe that each person is unique and created to flourish in God's image. We aspire to excellence through a nurturing environment in which every child takes Jesus Christ as their model and develops their individual gifts so that they live fully and serve others.



Bereavement Policy

Introduction and Background:

From time to time every school is touched by the death of a pupil, member of staff or an extended 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 a school to reflect upon an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop flexible contingency plans that reflect how the School could or should respond in a tragic situation.

When a death occurs:

The Head Teacher, and in her 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 Parish Priest, Chair of Governors and other members of the school and wider community, as appropriate, in supporting the bereaved.

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 rumours are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress. Essentially, all staff will be informed straight away, ideally before pupils. Pupils will be told as soon as possible. This will be done in familiar groups by class teachers or teaching assistants. Staff will be given guidance on the words to use and approach to take by the Head Teacher. Staff will be encouraged to seek to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable. For example, someone who may have witnessed the death may require special attention.

The death of a pupil:

In the case of the death of a pupil appropriate pastoral support will be provided for the whole school community. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Parish Priest and other pastoral staff will be deployed appropriately to provide comfort and support. Support will be made available in the chapel at times during the School day. Mass will be celebrated as soon as possible after the death and this will be followed by a Mass of Remembrance, as appropriate. A book of remembrance will be set up in the chapel where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving pupils is important and staff will 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. If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the Head Teacher will consult with the Local Authority and Diocese regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the School timetable and so the structure and regularity of the School day will be maintained wherever possible; some flexibility may be required. If a pupil is too upset to attend lessons, their parents will be informed.

The death of a member of staff:

In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate pastoral support will be provided for the whole school community. The SLT and the Parish Priest will be deployed appropriately to provide comfort. Support will be available in the chapel at times during the School day. Mass will be celebrated as soon as possible after the death and this will be followed by a Mass of Remembrance, as appropriate. A book of remembrance will be set up in the chapel 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. If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the Head Teacher will consult with the Diocese and the LA regarding an official statement on behalf of the School.

In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the School timetable and so the structure and regularity of the School day will be maintained wherever possible, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care will be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

The death of a family member of a pupil:

In the case of the death of a family member of a pupil, 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 or class teacher to give the death notification. Before notifying fellow pupils, the School will speak with the bereaved pupil's family to determine what information will 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 pupil decide when to talk about the death.)

The Head Teacher will consult with the bereaved pupil's family to determine what is appropriate in terms of classmates attending the funeral and/or sending flowers. Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved pupil may have a reduced capacity for school work. The bereaved pupil may need extra help at a later time, when working capacity becomes normal again.

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

Should the death of a pupil or staff member occur during the School day or on a school trip the Head Teacher will quickly put in place the Business Continuity Plan. The first priorities will be to offer support to pupils and staff who may have witnessed the death and to inform the family of the deceased. The Deputy 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 Headmaster will consult with the police and emergency personnel in determining the most appropriate and timely method of informing the immediate family of the death.

Funeral Procedure:

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that the School is sensitive to and will abide 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, 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 also determine what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance. It may be necessary for school to be fully or partially closed for the duration of the funeral and the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors will make this decision.

Ongoing Support for Pupils :

Our Lady Queen of Peace RCVA Primary School is a registered *Rainbows (Bereavement Support)* school. We provide specific and targeted programmes for children experiencing grief and loss. These are offered according to perceived need; children themselves, parents and teachers all may refer individuals for the programmes. Parental approval is given before any child accesses this support.

The school also has a pastoral care programme and a mission to nurture all children. This culture permeates the work of the whole school and underpins the support offered to all. It is central to the school's commitment to placing Christ at the heart of what we do.

Equality statement

- The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all pupils, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background. All pupils have access to the curriculum, and the right to a learning environment, which dispels ignorance, prejudice or stereotyping.
- This policy has been impact assessed by governors in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

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