

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, 207, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 2NL

Bereavement Policy

"To live, love and learn, in a caring Christian community."

School Background:

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is an inclusive community that supports all pupils. At St Joseph's, we recognise the impact that bereavement can have on a pupil, parent, or member of staff. Our Catholic faith will be central to any discussions around death and bereavement.

Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent child/ren dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and LEA, and clarify the pathway of support.

Responsibilities

The role of the governing body is:

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed every two years.

The role of the head teacher is:

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.

- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.

The role of the LEA is:

- To advise and support staff.
- To consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

The role of pastoral staff is:

- To familiarise themselves with the policy.
- To receive training, where appropriate

Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
5. The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support, as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
8. If deemed appropriate, a press statement will be prepared by the Head Teacher.
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

