



St Matthew Academy

BEREAVEMENT

Policy

*Our motto is 'Let your light shine'. It is taken from St Matthew's Gospel and captures our belief in the uniqueness of each individual.
Our aim is to ensure that the talents and strengths of each pupil are encouraged, developed and celebrated*

Successful, confident learners

High expectations, outstanding achievements

Inclusive, caring, Catholic community

Nurturing talent, cultivating ambition

Excellence for all

Date of Approval	Summer 2020
Review Date	Summer 2022

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

1. Aims and Ethos

At the heart of our Academy ethos is our belief in promoting an ‘inclusive, caring, Catholic community.’ This means we welcome pupils and staff from every faith and none; we encourage everyone to take responsibility for their actions and words; we develop our pupils’ respect for other faiths and we learn together within the Gospel Values. Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. St Matthew Academy exists as a distinct community because it has Christ as its foundation. His teaching and example are the basis for its daily life, relationships and future hopes. It should be possible to meet Christ in all aspects of the life of the school and the spiritual dimension should underpin all its work. The attitudes and values of the school are those of Christ’s radical command to love one another as I have loved you (Jn 13:34), where this love means putting others first (Mk 9:35) and going the extra mile (Mt 5:41).

2. Vision

In the event of a death of a staff member or pupil, the Academy strives to ensure all pupils, parents and staff, are informed, feel supported and are given space and time to grieve. The Academy endeavours to allow people to grieve normally and in their own way by providing all staff and pupils with the necessary facts and information. The Academy will provide support to pupils and staff during their grief, ensuring that all stakeholders encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

3. Rationale

We understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times and that when the loss is of a member of our school community – such as a young person or staff member, it can be particularly difficult. Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school. The emotional health and well-being of all stakeholders is fundamental to our philosophy and aims, so our support will be vital in the face of bereavement. In the UK, a parent of dependent children dies every 22 minutes, 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 children who are struggling with bereavement – 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 challenging 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.

4. 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 the Local Authority and clarify the pathway of support
- To provide a clear standard operating procedure to follow following a bereavement – see Appendix 1
- To endorse The Children Act 1989 which ensures that the welfare of the child is paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2)
- To endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being

5. The Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body will approve this policy and ensure its implementation as an active document, reviewing it every three years. This includes:

- Reflecting on its effectiveness in practice
- Utilising the expertise within the school and sharing responsibilities

6. The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the governing body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies.

The Headteacher will:

- Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- Respond to media enquiries
- Keep the Governing Body fully informed
- Be the first point of contact for family/child concerned
- Advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways and help with the identification of more complex grief

7. The Role of Pastoral Staff

- To have bereavement support training and cascade their knowledge to other staff
- To support pupils during and after a bereavement
- Establishing and coordinating links with external agencies
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools

NB: It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils, supporting each other and implementing this policy. To this end it is desirable that the whole school staff have some awareness of bereavement through a whole school training if possible.

8. The Role of the Chaplaincy Team

The Chaplaincy Team will offer at the request of the person(s) experiencing bereavement the following:

- A listening ear
- Prayer support
- Pastoral support at times of difficulty or crisis
- Help with bereavement – recommending resources and external agencies to further support pupils and staff
- Support in practicing your faith or spiritual tradition

- Contact with local faith leaders
- Full access to the prayer and wellbeing rooms
- Organise and lead a remembrance service

NB: The actions taken by the Chaplaincy team will be directed by the Senior Leader in charge of Catholic Life.

9. Additional Information

Additional information and resources including useful contacts can be accessed at:

www.childbereavement.org.uk

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1.Guidance-on-FIRST-RESPONSE-regarding-Bereavement-in-Schools.pdf>

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.Sudden-Bereavement-flow-chart.pdf>

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/resources/bereavement/>

10. Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

After a bereavement, the academy will review what was done at each stage and will evaluate the actions taken to see what was effective and what could improve.

Appendix 1

Standard Operating Procedure

1 Death of a Close Relative of a Child

Depending on the closeness of the relationship between the child and the deceased the degree of support required may vary. In general, the following guidelines will be followed:

- 1.1 Headteacher or another member of the SLT to discuss proposed approach by school with appropriate family member.
- 1.2 SLT member to liaise with the respective Director of Learning (DoL) to advise appropriate staff of the situation and give an indication of the length of absence (if appropriate) of the child.
- 1.3 Advice may be given to staff, by the DoL or Senior Leader leading Catholic Life on how to support the child on his/her return to school.
- 1.4 The DoL may also deem appropriate to speak to classmates and/or school friends on how best they might help in supporting the child on his/her return to school.
- 1.5 The SLT will carefully consider whether appropriate members of staff should contact the family during their period of mourning. They will also consider whether the school should be represented at the funeral.
- 1.6 The respective DoL and member of the Chaplaincy team will meet with child on his/her return to school and offer appropriate support where required.
- 1.7 The DoL and member of the Chaplaincy team will regularly monitor child over the next few months.

2 Death of a Child

On hearing of the death of a child the following steps will be taken:

- 2.1 The Headteacher will meet immediately with the appropriate SLT member(s) and DoL/primary class teacher to plan the school's response. Decisions as to which group(s) of pupils should be informed will need to be made. e.g. classmates, close friends, year group, friends or siblings of the deceased.
- 2.2 With great sensitivity, a member of SLT will be assigned to ascertain the circumstances of the death. Where possible he/she should discuss with a close family member how the school will be dealing with the bereavement.
- 2.3 As soon as possible the Headteacher will inform all staff about the child's death. Staff will also be given details as to which groups of children will be informed and when and how this is to occur. They will be advised of the details that the children can be told. In addition, the parish priest will be informed, if not already cognisant, in order to provide additional support.
- 2.4 The normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible. If the death occurs near the end of term, then consideration should be given as to whether certain extra-curricular activities should be suspended.
- 2.5 Staff will be asked to be especially vigilant and provide immediate information to the DoL/or SLT about children who may be showing signs of distress and who may need support.

- 2.6 The Headteacher, in discussion with the Senior Leader leading Catholic Life will decide as to whether appropriate members of staff (2 persons) should visit the family of the deceased.
- 2.7 The Headteacher and Senior Leader leading Catholic Life will also consider a selection process as to which members of staff and which pupils will, if applicable, attend the funeral. In this matter the wishes of the family will be taken fully into account.
- 2.8 Staff attending the funeral must be prepared to offer comfort and support as required. It is essential that the school has adequate staff to supervise the children not attending the funeral. This may limit the number of staff who can attend.
- 2.9 Should the death be of interest to the media then the Headteacher will formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority Press Office and the Education Commission (Diocese of Southwark).
- 2.10 It may be necessary to advise staff, children and their families not to speak to the media and to avoid making innocent comments that might be misconstrued.
- 2.11 Where appropriate the Senior Leader leading Catholic Life will inform relevant external groups.

3 Death of a Member of Staff

On hearing of the death of a member of staff the following steps will be taken:

- 3.1 The Headteacher will meet with appropriate members of SLT to plan the school's response (Senior Leader leading Catholic Life, Senior Leader leading Wellbeing). At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. The Headteacher will also immediately inform the Chair of Governors and the Senior Leader leading Catholic Life will inform the parish priest. Decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made.
- 3.2 Adequate support for staff and pupils will be available including the Chaplaincy team and external agencies where appropriate.
- 3.3 If applicable, staff may consult the Senior Leader leading Staff Wellbeing, Senior Leader leading Catholic Life or HR officer to provide more specialist resources including the support of the Chaplaincy team.
- 3.4 Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral will be discussed with the deceased's family by the SENIOR LEADER leading Catholic Life.
- 3.5 The Headteacher, in conjunction, with the Senior Leader leading Catholic Life and SLT responsible for cover, will inform staff if their leave of absence has been accepted. This will enable staff members where possible, to attend the funeral. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

4 Death of a Close Relative of a Member of Staff

On hearing of the death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff the following steps will be taken:

- 4.1 The Headteacher will meet with other members of SLT to decide how other members of staff will be informed.

- 4.2 The Headteacher or assigned member of SLT will contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate in the immediate period of mourning.
- 4.3 On his/her return to work the staff member's Line Manager and other close colleagues must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances.