



# **Bereavement Policy for St. Clement's CofE Academy**

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#Learning For Life Anchored in Christ

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

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

Bereavement can come in many forms:

- a pupil or a member of staff in school
- a pupil or member of staff who has left the school, but is still part of the school's memory
- a close family member of a pupil or member of staff in school

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 At St. Clement's, part of the Church of England, we believe that **all** people are made in the image of God and unconditionally loved. Our school is a place where we love one another as God loves us. We want everyone to thrive, irrespective of the situations they face. Therefore, we aim to support pupils and staff as they cope with the stresses of life and respond to needs as they arise, enabling pupils and staff to flourish.

### **2.0 School Background**

2.1 We are a small primary Church of England academy serving our local community. Our Christian vision shapes all that we do.

Our vision is to inspire happy, **courageous**, independent, curious and creative, life-long learners. We aim for all to achieve their full potential, striving both academically and socially with **humility** and **dignity**.

We believe being anchored in Jesus Christ will guide us all with **hope**, **compassion** and **wisdom** in becoming successful members of a global community.

### **3.0 Rationale**

3.1 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 child 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. This policy will provide

guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens.

- 3.2 Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively, and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. This school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or divorce.

#### 4.0 Aims

At St Clement's CE Academy, we aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within a Christian context. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on and gain some much-needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

##### **Following a Bereavement:**

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- be given space and time to grieve
- be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise that:

- grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

## 5.0 Objectives

We will encourage a consistent, yet flexible approach based on a belief in the wellbeing of the 'whole individual'. We aim to reflect our Christian vision, including a belief in life after death, whilst being sensitive to various other beliefs and practices. This policy provides a framework within which all staff, can work; and gives guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in very difficult and upsetting circumstances.

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after the initial phase of bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school, the Trust and the Diocese, with whom to liaise, and to clarify the pathway of support.

## 6.0 Procedures

### 6.1 Overview

Within school we work in partnership with parents. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child to tailor the academic, social, and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies etc).

If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs etc.) should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family. A universally accepted procedure outline will not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement.

Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional, and ongoing support.

## 6.2 Situation Specific Procedures

### 6.2 (a) **Family Bereavement**

When school is informed of 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 sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child become withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse, Psychological Service, Barnardos).
- **For a member of staff experiencing close family bereavement**, absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate time off in line with the Absence Management Policy. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate.

### 6.2 (b) **Death of a child or member of staff**

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action 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 in school.
- The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Head Teacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be told

that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Psychological Service).
- The funeral: It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private. The Head Teacher and/or the Deputy Head Teacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not, consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance. Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision. Cultural and religious implications need consideration.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support.
- 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.
- 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.
- The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child/ staff member are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised. The following people should be considered:
  - Current school staff not in school that day
  - Previous school staff who worked closely with the child/ staff member
  - Chair of Governors
  - Other professionals who work with the child – Ed Psych

- Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a letter to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children.

#### 6.2 (c) **Terminally Ill Pupils/Staff**

- In the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/guardians/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.
- Should the member of staff wish to attend school- a discussion with themselves and the Trust should be had and any risk assessments/support plans put in place. The support plan will be drawn up in a meeting with the staff member/DSL/HT/Gov and if possible the SIA/CEO.
- 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 just no other way.

#### 6.2 (d) **Return to School**

- For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic, meeting should be arranged with the class teacher, DSL, class support staff and the parents/carers. This meeting will be to discuss the support the child may need/want both in school and at home. A plan of support is then drawn up and this is shared with the child so they know what is going on and can make some decisions themselves.
- Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teaching, support staff, volunteers and pupils if appropriate) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/guardians of the bereaved pupil agree- can also ask pupil if/how they would like to share news to peers).
- Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief.
- Teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate yet disciplined.
- Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite.

- Staff should be 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.

### 6.2 (e) **Talking to the Bereaved Pupil**

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible, arrange a one-to-one session with the Pastoral Manager/ Learning Mentor as soon as possible after the pupil 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 you presume 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 that it is OK to cry
- Talk honestly and share your feelings
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Have appropriate physical contact
- 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 your pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful
- Be frightened of sharing your own feelings

### 6.2 (f) **If a Child Dies in School**

- If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they will follow the academy procedures: contact a first aider and ideally the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

- In the case of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the first aider or a member of the SLT.
- Immediately inform the Head Teacher or, in her absence, the most senior member of staff on site.
- The Head Teacher will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital.
- If the child stops breathing a trained school staff member will administer CPR. In some cases, parents may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incidence. In rare cases, this may include a request that mechanical resuscitation is not administered. However, whilst the school respects the parents' preference in this matter, due to the statutory responsibility imposed on the school regarding "duty of care", the need for school staff to administer manual CPR overrides such preference.
- Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered.
- Where the parents have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring - e.g. no resuscitation - this protocol will be handed to the paramedics.
- Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. **NB:** Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone.
- Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Head Teacher and/or the Deputy Head Teacher.
- The school will notify the CEO (BDMAT) & the LA if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be rooted through the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors and BDMAT Central Team.( See BDMAT guidance)

#### **6.2 (g) *If a Child Dies on a School Trip***

- If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Head Teacher.

- The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents.
- Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.
- The off sites visits protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed. The school will notify the CEO/ LA, at the earliest opportunity, if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply.

#### 6.2 (h) **Responding to the media**

- Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention.
- All members of staff are advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Head Teacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from BDMAT & the Local Authority Press Office.

#### 6.2 (i) **The Death of a Member of Staff**

- All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. *For a letter template see Appendix 5*
- In addition to the above, the school will notify the BDMAT as employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Head Teacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.

#### 6.2 (j) **Memory Assembly**

- It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child/ staff member. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

### 6.3 **On-Going Support**

#### 6.3.1 **For Staff**

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection.

The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room could be allocated- e.g. the Meeting Room - for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- Access to one-to-one time with a member of staff who is trained in bereavement support.
- The Educational Psychology team offer counselling support and staff will be reminded about this service.
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school, e.g.: CRUSE

### 6.3.2 **For Pupils**

Experience in many special schools has shown that most pupils can be supported by the school staff.

- In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach.
- The Pastoral Manager has suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss.
- Social Stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss.
- The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

### 6.3.3 **For The Family**

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection /flower to be sent as appropriate.
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents/family at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.

- If the parents/family wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed.
- Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. This can be helpful in their grieving. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents'/family's wishes. It will then be for the family to decide if they wish to maintain on going links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

## **7.0 Pre-bereavement procedures**

7.1 In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur imminently, usually because of a long illness.

7.2 In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the headteacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

7.3 When the expected death is of a child, or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations or a local hospice
- look to involve faith or community leaders, in particular the school's incumbent, when appropriate, and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's peer group
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

## 8.0 Points to note

- 8.1 Factual information is essential so people do not make assumptions, avoiding rumour and any confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
- 8.2 All staff should be made 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.
- 8.3 The 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. This is particularly important on the age of the pupils affected by the bereavement and on transition from one school to another of the bereaved pupil/s.

## 9.0 Staff leave

### 9.1 Compassionate leave

This is paid leave granted at the 'Line Manager's' discretion and is for a maximum of 5 days in a rolling 12 month period in total and is for incidents related to **close relatives only**.

Close relatives are defined by BDMAT:

<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Mother-in-law</i>	<i>Stepfather</i>
<i>Husband</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Father-in-law</i>	<i>Stepmother</i>
<i>Partner/Civil Partner</i>	<i>Brother</i>	<i>Grandmother</i>	<i>Stepchildren</i>
<i>Son</i>	<i>Sister</i>	<i>Grandfather</i>	<i>Stepbrother</i>
<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Guardian/Ward</i>	<i>Grandchild</i>	<i>Stepsister</i>

## 9.2 Funerals

This is granted outside of compassionate leave and is for one day per funeral and is restricted to family or close friends. This will be paid leave for members of close family only (those defined in 3.12), other funeral attendance (including other family members and friends) will be unpaid and discretionary. Where the funeral is a significant distance from the member of staff's home then up to an additional two days paid leave may be granted.

## 10.0 Roles and Responsibilities

### 10.1 The Trust:

- approve the policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed every three years
- CEO/Executive staff to provide support and advice to the Headteacher
- consider arranging bespoke training for school staff on bereavement issues

### 10.2 The Local Academy Board:

- advise and support staff who are supporting the bereaved children including offering wellbeing support to the headteacher and advise on referral pathways
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection, and access to support if they need it.

### 10.3 The Headteacher:

- to have bereavement support training on request and cascade learning to other staff
- to refer to other relevant policies
- to contact and liaise with the school's incumbent or representative of the Parish Church
- to keep the Trust fully informed via the CEO
- to monitor situations and liaise with external agencies if appropriate
- to respond to media enquiries **after** speaking with the Trust and Birmingham Diocesan Communications [comms@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:comms@cofebirmingham.com)
- to be the first point of contact or nominate someone to be the first point of contact for the family/child
- to advise and support staff and consider referral pathways

- if a someone dies by suicide, ensure that staff know that the Samaritans provide a step-by step programme to support schools.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/>

#### 10.4 School staff:

- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- not to use social media to disclose any information
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral team
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum
- inform the headteacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

#### 10.5 Bereavement Pastoral Team

For advice and support for staff:

- Headteacher- Miss Shryane
- DHT- Mrs Nizamis
- Pastoral Lead- Miss Akers

#### 11.0 Related policies

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding policy
- PSHE policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Equality policy
- Health and safety policy
- Leave of absence policy (staff)

## APPENDIX 1: List of Online Resources and Information

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community. Winston's Wish Family Line - 0845 2030405

[www.keech.org.uk](http://www.keech.org.uk)

The website of Keech Hospice Care, our local Children's Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers.

[www.chums.info](http://www.chums.info)

A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309

[www.juliesplace.com](http://www.juliesplace.com)

A support resource for bereaved siblings

[www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature](http://www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature)

British Heart Foundation site to help children come to terms with loss using cartoon creatures. An animated film and we have a printed pack to go with it.

[www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement\\_helpchildren.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml)

Information on the way bereavement affects children

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk>

An organisation offering local bereavement support to both adults and children CRUSE Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm>

Federation of organisations

## **APPENDIX 2: Books dealing with death and loss.**

*Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide* - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

*As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill* - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

*The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer* - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

*I Miss You - First Look at Death* - Pat Thomson

*Grandpa* - John Burningham

*Always and Forever* - Alan Durant

*The Huge Bag of Worries* - Virginia Ironside

*What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies?* – Trevor Romain

*Badger's Parting Gifts*- Susan Varley

*Saying Goodbye to Daddy* – Judith Vigna

*Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children* - Doris Stickney

***There is also a Bereavement Box kept in the Pastoral Office***

### **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, 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 more 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 behaviours 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 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 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.

### Information Text

Age	Understanding of Death	Child's Needs	Phrases/Techniques
<b>Infancy</b> 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.”
<b>Pre-school</b> 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 judgement.	Avoid euphemisms such as sleep, 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
<b>School Years</b> 6- 11 years  Uses concrete thinking, begins rational thinking	Death is final, perhaps not inevitable  Occurs to others  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 anger and guilt.  It’s OK to cry  Accept fluctuating grief

## APPENDIX 5: Template letters to parents and carers

***Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the bereaved parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents/family and school.***

### a) Letter on the death of a pupil:

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your child's class teacher/form tutor had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from ... (insert something like – an illness called cancer). As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully **<at home yesterday/died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term.>**

<Name> was a **<valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly>** member of our school family 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 and teaching assistants / Learning Support Assistants 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 would be more than happy to help you.

For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website [childbereavementuk.org](http://childbereavementuk.org)

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name's> life.

*Bible quote....*

Yours sincerely

<Name>  
Headteacher

February 2024

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**b) Letter to bereaved parents after death of their child:**

**<Address>**

**<Date>**

Dear **<Name>**

We are so very sorry to hear of **<Name's>** death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss **<Name>** very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to **her/ his** friends and classmates. **She/He** was a **<valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly>** member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan **<Name's>** funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of **<Name's>** that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

As a Church School, we are well supported by our vicar: **<Name>** from **<Church name>**. If you would like them to contact you, please let me know and I will put you in touch with each other.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts and prayers at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

**Appropriate Bible quote.....**

With our greatest sympathy at this so difficult time.

**<Name>**  
Headteacher

c) **Letter informing parents of the death of a staff member:**

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents & Carers,

I am very sorry to have to tell you that a **<well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/ well-known>** member of our school community **<Name>** has died **<suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness>**.

The children were told today, and many will be reacting to this 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.

When someone dies, young people respond in different ways, and may experience many feelings, such as sadness or anger, . Some may have many questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. Others be numb or confused. These are normal and healthy behaviour.

Children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand. We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. If there is anything else 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.

For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, you will find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) and [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

We will all keep **<Name>** in our thoughts and prayers and remember them with such fondness. Our thoughts and prayers are with **<Name's>** family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will **celebrate/remember <Name's>** life.

**Bible quote..**

Yours sincerely,

**<Name>**

Headteacher