Shenfield St Mary's CE Primary School

Bereavement Policy

Ratified: September 2026

Unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God

"May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, that being rooted and grounded in love, you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." *Ephesians 3: 17-19*

Our aim is to ensure that every child's unique strengths are celebrated and strengthened alongside gaining an excellent academic, social, emotional and physical education.

Bereavement Policy

Resources to support: Shenfield St.Mary's Church of England Primary School - Bereavement Support

Shenfield St Mary's Primary School bereavement policy is in place to deal with death, grief and bereavement. It applies to supporting a bereaved pupil or member of staff as well as reacting to a critical incident or tragedy, such as the death of someone within the school community. Our bereavement policy is a useful working document which enables our school to:

- Consider the impact of a death within the school.
- Recognise that everybody grieves in a different way, and we are aware and supportive of peoples uniqueness.
- Support siblings: Sibling Support
- Use expertise and share responsibilities.
- Make appropriate plans, produce guidelines and draft letters.
- Collect resources for support.
- Recognise and support the link between grief and long-term mental health.
- Use the updated RSE policy to prepare staff and organise any training; and
- Create a bereavement-aware culture within the community.

Framework for our schools' bereavement policy.

- Aims and Ethos
- Rationale
- Objectives

Section 1 - The death of a pupil or member of staff

- Roles and responsibilities
- Procedures
- The first few days
- The funeral
- Support for pupils
- Support for staff
- Remembering

Section 2 - Supporting a bereaved pupil

- Returning to school after a bereavement
- Longer term support
- Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum
- Support for Staff

Section of policy	Questions/Points to address	Points to consider/useful information
Aims and Ethos	How will this bereavement policy fit with your school ethos?	May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, that being rooted and grounded in love, you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. At Shenfield St Mary's we have an empathetic understanding of all children, adults and stakeholders. The familiar surroundings of the school may be all the bereavement support that some pupils, or member of staff require. Where the impact of grief is more complex, referral to more specialist support may be needed to be considered. Additional information and resources can be found at: www.childbereavementuk.org
Rationale	Why have a bereavement policy for your school?	1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen-years olds has been bereaved of a parent or sibling - that is one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person. Within our school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.
Objectives	How will your policy help to create a bereavement aware culture?	This framework is for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement. To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement. To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community. To identify key staff within school and the governing body/Local Authority/ academy trust. To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

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Section 1: The death of a pupil or member of staff

See also Managing a Sudden Death resource: childbereavementuk.org/managing-a-sudden-death

Section of policy	Questions/Points to address	Points to consider/useful information
Roles and responsibilities	Who will take overall charge? Who will be responsible for communicating with the family or families? How will the news be shared with the school community? How will the news be shared with the pupils? Classes, tutor groups, year groups, whole school assembly If the press is involved, who will liaise with journalists? What support is available for staff/ pupils?	Liz Bundy (Head of School) will take overall charge working closely with Sophie Chandler (Assistant Head of School) and Hannah Jones (SENDCo). In the case of sudden or traumatic death of a pupil, the school may be called upon to be a part of a multi-agency review. Sally Taggart (Head Teacher) will be called upon to represent the school. The best person to liaise with the family may depend on the specific situation, relationship with the pupil/family and experience of the member of staff. Sally Taggart (Head teacher) and Liz Bundy (Deputy Head) will be the families first point of liaison. They would then work closely with specific class teachers/LSAs depending on circumstances. The indiscriminate spread of news via social media may mean that some members of the school community hear the news before others. Liaising closely with the bereaved family we will endeavor to inform the school community via the school email system. We will endeavor to inform staff face to face or by phone as the impact of hearing the news via text/email/social media may be traumatic. Depending on the circumstances the SLT will be responsible for informing all parties being fully directed by the Head and Deputy. A follow up email from and to individual work/school email addresses will outline next steps. When delivering news to pupils, we will do this in small groups or in whole classes, this will depend on their relationship with the person who has passed. We will ensure that it is a familiar adult delivering the news and available for support after. If a pupil has died, we will share the news with their class/year group first, ensuring that it is a familiar adult delivering the news and available for support after. Once the news has been given to the children/staff members they will be reminded of a safe place grieve (e.g. the Zen Zone), always having a person available to talk to e.g. class teacher/LSA. This will be different for all children/adults. Staff will also be reminded of and directed to our Insurers support programme (SAS) for confidential guidance and support. Additional support and information can be found on the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools. They can be contacted on: 0808 168 2528

Procedures	Create a school procedure which will: Clarify information and the wishes of family/families. Share the news with staff and pupils. Prepare a script. Inform parents/carers.	At Shenfield St Mary's we recognise that every case of bereavement is unique and different and therefore we will respect the views and each individual family/case at this time of upset. Some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family consulted. The school can help to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community. It helps to feel prepared when delivering sad news, so a script will be particularly useful. We will not be afraid or surprised to show emotion, this is a human reaction. Suggestions for writing a script: - Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give. - Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died. - If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred. - If not known, say so, and that you will endeavor to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct, if known. - Where appropriate, remind pupils of their responsibilities and the impact when posting on social media. - Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them. - Mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support. - Acknowledge that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is OK. Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out. A template letter to parents/carers is provided (in the appendices). www.childbereavement.org website provides information for parents to help them discuss a death with their children. As well as guided support from Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or **Live Chat** on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

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Section of policy	Questions/Points to address	Points to consider/useful information
The first few days	Is it appropriate for the timetable to remain the same or will some adjustments be needed for all, or some, pupils? Will school provide a space for grieving pupils? Will support be available for them? What support will be available to staff? Will there be somewhere within the school grounds for pupils and staff to pay their respects/contribute to a book of condolence?	Although Shenfield St Mary's Primary School can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, some flexibility may be necessary. Each passing will vary and we will respect this. Bereaved young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to leave a classroom and take time out in a safe space can be very welcome. We will ensure that each pupil and member of staff has allowances in place for them to grieve throughout the day. If appropriate and wanted by the family a temporary tribute/book of condolence will be kept in a safe, accessible location and ideally where pupils can be supervised. We will offer the family the opportunity to visit, if they wish to, or take photographs to share with them later. We will consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.
The funeral	What will the arrangements be for the funeral? Will school send flowers or make a collection? How will pupils be supported?	Rather than making assumptions, we will consult the family to find out whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend. Can/will pupils be involved in choosing flowers or organising a collection? We will carefully identify the practicalities of issues such as staff cover to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so. (For some circumstances, it may be appropriate to close the school, for others, it may not). We will carefully consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral, and how they will be supported/supervised.
Support for pupils	What support will be provided for pupils?	All members of staff are available for support. Drop in sessions/time to talk sessions/ongoing parent and family liaison Schools Advisory Service 01773814400 www.schooladvice.co.uk Samaritans 116123 www.samaritans.org Havering Bereavement Services www.hbbscounselling.org Winston Wish 08088 020 021 www.winstonswish.org Kids Inspire 01245 348707 www.kidsinspire.org.uk Child Bereavement 0800 028 8840 www.childbereavementuk.org

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Support for staff	How will the wellbeing of staff be monitored when managing this stressful situation? Consider training requirements for all staff. How will staff welfare be reviewed?	Supporting bereaved pupils can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Consider how school can support these members of staff and whether there is capacity to utilise other staff members to help share the load. Further information about training can be found at childbereavementuk.org or contact Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or **Live Chat** on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
Remembering	How will the pupil/member of staff be remembered by the school? Will there be a permanent memorial, assembly, event? How will the family be involved in the plans? How will the pupils be involved in the plans?	We will consult the family of the person who died about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute. A more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork, a bench) may be appropriate, but in future the removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed sensitively.

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Section 2: Supporting a bereaved pupil

See also resource: https://childbereavementuk.org/online-learning-for-schools

Section of policy	Questions/Points to address	Points to consider/useful information
Returning to school after a bereavement	Who will meet with the pupil and their family/carers to discuss their return to school or upon their return to school following a bereavement?	Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert', they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person. It can be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school. This could be a familiar adult, such as the class teacher, SENCO, a Deputy or Headteacher. The purpose of this meeting should be to: • Acknowledge the death. • Find out how the pupil would like to share their news. • Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'. How will they inform staff of this? For example, a 'time-out' card, a non-verbal signal or message. How will this be communicated to all staff? • Consider whether to provide 'time-out' activities – journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc. • Set guidelines for communication – with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school. • Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend. A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website: childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after- being-bereaved
Longer term support	Is there a method within school to record significant dates for the bereaved young person? Who will communicate with the family/carers and pupil? How will communication with pupils, members of staff, the family/carers and the wider community be managed and reviewed? How will the progress (both in learning and emotional wellbeing) of the pupil be monitored? Who will be responsible for passing on details of the bereavement at transition points?	The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support. Significant dates or anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day, etc. may be particularly difficult. Regular contact (formal and informal) with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping. The grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. There may be changes in their behaviour, these will be managed on an individual basis and will require close liaison between the school and family. Bereaved young people can find change difficult, so preparing them in advance (where possible) may help them to voice their worries and ease the process. We will consider vulnerable pupils as they may need additional support, particularly on transition.

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Section of policy	Questions/Points to address	Points to consider/useful information
Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum	How could death, grief and bereavement be included in the curriculum?	Teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. We do this though our Worship, RE and PSHE lessons Informing parents and carers in advance will help to gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson. Recently bereaved pupils may find it helpful if they are given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.
Support for staff	How will staff be trained and supported? What process is in place to identify vulnerable members of staff? How will staff welfare be reviewed?	Being alongside anyone experiencing a loss can be emotionally draining, and supporting a bereaved pupil particularly so. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Consider how school can support these members of staff and whether there is capacity to utilise other staff members to help share the load. Provide details of support agencies for staff. Further information about training can be found at childbereavementuk.org Or contact Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or **Live Chat** on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

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