



St. Francis Xavier's RC Primary School

Love one another as I have loved you

Bereavement Policy

Our Mission

Share God's love with one another

Follow your dreams

EXcel in citizenship

Our Mission is to:

- Be a witness to the values, teaching and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church
- Promote achievement and enjoyment for all
- Expect the best for individuals
- Inspire learning
- Collaborate with the community
- Promote a healthy and safe life style
- Create a sustainable school
- Continually strive to be effective

Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children 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 a bereavement. 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

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 LA, and clarify the pathway of support.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

The role of the Governing Body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation. Review in three years

The role of the headteacher

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To respond to media enquiries, in consultation with the Local Authority
- To nominate a first point of contact for the family/child concerned
- To keep the Governing Body fully informed

The role of the Local Authority

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

The role of pastoral staff

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff

Procedures:

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the headteacher or her representative and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations
- Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance
- Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them
- 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
- The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and well-being of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity
- Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
- 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
- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the headteacher
- 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.

Suggested templates for letter to parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission will be gained from the child's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school

Sample letter on death of a pupil

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of *[pupil name]*, in *[class]* who sadly died *(from an illness called cancer)*. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly *pupil's name* had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class 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 are willing 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. We will be arranging a school Mass in the next few months to which you are more than welcome to attend.

May *pupil's name* sleep in the peace of Christ.

With my thoughts and every good wish,

Mrs Diana Pearce

Headteacher

Sample letter to bereaved parents

Dear *Parents' names*

We are so very sorry to hear of *child's name* 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 him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and classmates. He/ she was a much loved member of our school family. If there is anything at all that our school community can do to help now, or in the future, please know you have our constant prayers and support.

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. In the fullness of time, we will hold a Mass in thanksgiving for everything that *pupil's name* brought into our lives.

With deepest sympathy from us all at St Francis Xavier's School

May God bless you and keep you in the comfort of his love.

Mrs Diana Pearce

Headteacher

Sample letter on death of a staff member

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [*name*] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the 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. Children respond in different ways so may move in and out of sadness whilst playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

With my thoughts and prayers,

Mrs Diana Pearce

Headteacher

This policy was written 18th February 2021 and updated 11th February 2024. The policy was adopted by the Pastoral Committee of the Governing Body of St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School on 11th March 2024.

The policy will be monitored by members of the Senior Management Team and Chair of the Pastoral Support Committee.

The policy will be reviewed in 3 years March 2027

Signed: *Ivan Powell*

Date: 11.3.24 Chair of Pastoral Support Committee

Signed: *Diana Pearce*

Date: 11.3.24 Headteacher