



SAINT NICHOLAS SCHOOL

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Note: This policy applies to all sections of the School including EYFS

Reviewed February 2021

Review date February 2023

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 the School community and family;
- to identify key staff within School and within specialist services, and clarify the pathway of support.

The Headmaster and Senior Leadership Team will:

Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.

Respond to media enquiries.

Be first point of contact for family/child concerned.

Procedures

In the event of death within the School community, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headmaster and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
NB: We need to be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time as rumour and gossip spread quickly.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils. It should be ascertained if those staff who may be required to share the information with pupils feel able to do so. Clear guidance will be given in terms of what and how the information should be explained to the pupils.

3. Pupils should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision should be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole school approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed.
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. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headmaster in consultation with the Governors.
9. 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, particularly at transition points. The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new pupils. To this end it is important to have effective communication with 'feeder' schools.

Many of the guidelines here are only appropriate when the School community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a pupil or another staff member. Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a pupil experiencing the death of a parent. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual pupil should still be given careful consideration and the pupil may wish to see the school counsellor.

If a child has been bereaved it is important to involve them in decisions about how the School manages issues relating to their loss. Talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers and staff about what has happened and about the support they need.

Informing Pupils

If any member of staff feels unable to tell their class, they need to know that this is acceptable and alternative arrangements should be made. Be aware of children/young people who have recently been bereaved.

Where possible the whole school should be informed at the same time, preferably in small class groups as early as possible after the event.

There needs to be clarity about what information can be shared with the children, e.g. what is in the public domain and what has been agreed by the family

Give the information about the cause of death if possible. Use age appropriate, simple and clear language, avoid euphemisms. If children ask questions, be clear about what information can be shared with them. Answer questions open and honestly. It is acceptable to say *'I don't know'* or *'We don't know yet'* or *'Maybe we will be able to find out later'*.

Acknowledge that different people will react/feel differently. All possible responses are fine. Tell children they should talk to someone if they feel really upset, worried, anxious, can't sleep, etc. Say that it is also acceptable to be happy and have fun.

Encourage pupils to take care of/look after each other – and be aware of other's feelings. Let children know that, *"There will be opportunities for us all to have time to think, talk and remember ... in our own way. We will talk to you again at some point about how we want to do this."*

"School will continue as normal." Talk about any exceptions and arrangements, e.g. support available for pupils who are very upset and how to access this support.

"Your parents / carers will be emailed at the end of the day."

Exemplar Action Plans

In the case of the death of a member of staff

On the day of notice:

- i. School receives news of a bereavement.
- ii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls the family of the member of staff to offer condolences and enquire about any preferences with regard to communication with the School community.
- iii. Headmaster or appropriate member of SLT calls a staff meeting at an appropriate time to inform staff. Staff offered support as required.
- iv. Form Tutors / Class Teachers inform pupils and explain how and where they may seek further support. Heads of School / Deputy Heads of School and SENCO are available to offer support as required. Where possible the School timetable will continue as normal.
- v. Headmaster writes to parents informing them of the situation.

As appropriate:

- vi. An Assembly may be held either for the whole School or a section or sections of the School.
- vii. Where possible counsellors are contacted to provide further support to pupils and staff as required.
- viii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls the family of the member of staff to enquire

about if and how they may wish the School to be involved in the funeral or another celebration of the member of staff's life.

- ix. Contact 'Grief Encounter' to access further support.

In the case of the death of a pupil

On the day of notice:

- i. School receives news of a bereavement.
- ii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls parents of the family to offer condolences and enquire about any preferences with regard to communication with the School community.
- iii. Headmaster or appropriate member of SLT calls a staff meeting at an appropriate time to inform staff. Staff offered support as required.
- iv. Form Tutors / Class Teachers inform pupils and explain how and where they may seek further support. Heads of School / Deputy Heads of School and SENCO are available to offer support as required. Where possible the School timetable will continue as normal.
- v. Headmaster writes to bereaved parents offering condolences and to the other parents of the school community explaining the situation.

As appropriate:

- vi. An Assembly may be held either for the whole School or a section or sections of the School.
- vii. Where possible counsellors are contacted to provide further support to pupils and staff as required.
- viii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls parents of the family to enquire about if and how parents may wish the school to be involved in the funeral or another celebration of the pupil's life.
- ix. Contact 'Grief Encounter' to access further support.

In the case of the death of a parent

On the day of notice:

- i. School receives news of a bereavement.
- ii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls the family to offer condolences and enquire about any preferences with regard to communication with the School community.
- iii. Headmaster or appropriate member of SLT informs staff. Staff offered any support as required.
- iv. Form Tutor / Class Teacher of the pupil whose parent has died informs pupils in the tutor group and explains how and where they may seek further support and/ or support the pupil who has lost their parent. Heads of School / Deputy Heads of School and SENCO are available to offer support as required. Where possible the School timetable

will continue as normal.

As appropriate:

- v. Where possible counsellors are contacted to provide further support to pupils and staff as required.
- vi. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls the family to enquire about if and how they may wish the School to attend the funeral or another celebration of parent's life.
- vii. Contact 'Grief Encounter' to access further support.

Should the death of a member of staff or a pupil occur on site during the school day

- i. The Headmaster should immediately be informed
- ii. If other members of the community are around at the time they should be moved to another room and supported appropriately
- iii. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls the family to inform them.
- iv. Headmaster or appropriate member of SLT calls a staff meeting at an appropriate time to inform staff. Staff offered support as required.
- v. Form Tutors / Class Teachers inform pupils and explain how and where they may seek further support. Heads of School / Deputy Heads of School and SENCO are available to offer support as required. Where possible the School timetable will continue as normal.
- vi. Headmaster writes to the bereaved family offering condolences and to the parents of the school community explaining the situation.

As appropriate:

- vii. An Assembly may be held either for the whole School or a section or sections of the School.
- viii. Where possible counsellors are contacted to provide further support to pupils and staff as required.
- ix. Headmaster (or an appropriate other) calls parents of the family to enquire about if and how parents may wish the school to be involved in the funeral or another celebration of the pupil's life.
- x. Contact 'Grief Encounter' to access further support.

