

# St James's CE Primary School



*Faith: "So God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:26-27)*

*At St James's C.E. Primary School, we believe that every child is made in the image of God; inherently valuable and unique among God's creations. We are an inclusive and welcoming family who celebrate each other's achievements. Our Christian Values are at the heart of all that we do; nurturing a sense of belonging and shared identity.*

*Friendship: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people." (Luke 5:10)*

*It is our vision that all of our pupils will have courage and belief in themselves, to follow their dreams.*

*Fulfilment: "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."(Matthew 14:27)*

*In a safe and nurturing environment, we support each child to reach their full, God given potential.*

## **Bereavement Policy 2020/2021**

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## 1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- › Set out a guideline for how the school will respond to a death in our school community
- › Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- › Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- › Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- › Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 The headteacher – Mrs Lindsay Mason

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The headteacher will:

- › Liaise with the family of the deceased
- › Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- › Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- › Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- › Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- › Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff

### 2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support lead (Mrs Lamming), class teacher and the head teacher, will take responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

## 2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through [insert how you'll do this, for example you may have a link governor/committee focusing on bereavement, who might have regular catch-ups with the headteacher or pastoral team]
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through [insert how you'll do this, such as regular meetings between the headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor if relevant]
- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately

## 3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

- Regular welfare meetings with SLT
- Supervision from a bereavement specialist if required
- Liaison with other professionals where appropriate.

## 4. Immediate actions following a death

### 4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- Lindsay Mason will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how
- If news of a death starts to circulate via social media prior to being able to gain clarification from the family, school will reassure pupils in a manner appropriate to their age that they will inform them of the death as soon as clarification has been provided. Reassurance will be offered to pupils who will be understandably concerned.

### 4.2 Sharing the news with staff

- Lindsay Mason will share bereavement information with staff once information has been gathered. This will be done in a prompt and sensitive manner with those closest to the deceased being informed first.

How the news will be delivered will be dependent on the situation. Sometimes it would be appropriate to call a prompt staff meeting and inform all staff at the same time. Other times it would be more appropriate to notify staff in smaller support groups. Judgement will be made by SLT according to the circumstances of the death.

### 4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

- Decision as to who is best placed to notify the pupils will be made by SLT and class teachers of those affected. In most circumstances, the head teacher will notify the pupils. However, staff may feel that class teachers are better placed to make this announcement dependent on the circumstances and age of the pupils affected.
- Pupils will be notified in as timely a manner as possible to prevent news from spreading from elsewhere and children being misinformed. Parents will be contacted if their child has received such news so that they can support from home.

### 4.4 Informing parents/carers

- Parents and carers of pupils affected by the death will be informed and sign posted to where information and support can be obtained. Information will be sent via email and SLT will make themselves available to respond to any follow up correspondence that may occur.

### 4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation. For example,

- If the death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)
- The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which you can find at the bottom of [this page](#))
- If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team

### 4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The head teacher will be responsible for responding to any media enquiries. Staff will not make any comment to the press and parents will be advised to do the same.
- The head teacher will act in line with advice provided by the Local Authority and Diocese Education Team

## 5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

### 5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- School staff will all be available to support pupils. Advice will be sought from outside agencies to support class teachers and the pastoral care team to support the children. School will make contact with the School Nurse to ensure that families are suitably signposted to support their child from home.

### 5.2 Timetables

- Children will be given the time and support that they need to begin to come to terms with the news that will be challenging for them to be processed. Additional PSHE lessons will be provided to meet the children's needs and time table consideration will be made.

### 5.3 Tributes and condolences

- Age appropriate activities will be planned by class teachers to commemorate the deceased for example, a memory box, book of condolences, planting of a tree etc. this will be done in line with what the family of the deceased feel is appropriate.
- The Diocese Education team will support the school with appropriate religious support.

### 5.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- Staff will notify the head teacher that they wish to attend the funeral and cover arrangements will be made.

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- SLT will make arrangements for staff to travel to the funeral together in order to be able to support one another.

## 6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### 6.1 Reintegration meeting

Mrs Lamming will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

### 6.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. Information will be passed on to class teachers to ensure that certain times of year are handled sensitively and that the pupil affected has the opportunity to discuss tricky issues prior to the lesson.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will ensure that the affected pupil has a safe place and a trusted adult allocated to them so that they can discuss issues arising privately and sensitively.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

## 7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

### 7.1 Reintegration meeting

Lindsay Mason, head teacher, will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member

### 7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include:

- Regular welfare meetings with a member of SLT
- Agreed method of notifying SLT should the member of staff require cover to take some time to breathe and sit quietly or chat to another member of staff should they feel overwhelmed unexpectedly. For example, an agreed code word that could be sent to the SLT in order to notify them that their attention is required.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Lindsay Mason, head teacher. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing body.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour policy
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing policy

