Bollington St. John’s Church of England

Primary School



*Where talent grows*

Head Teacher: Mrs M. Walker

Head of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Mrs E. Watson

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord”*

***Colossians 3:23***

Bereavement Policy

At Bollington St John’s, we are committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of our staff, pupils and school community. We work to provide an environment which supports our school community in coping with the loss of a loved one through separation or death.

This policy gives guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. It outlines the basic principles and procedures that underpin our approach. We recognise that each experience of bereavement and loss, and the circumstances, in which it occurs, is unique. As a result, the guidelines developed must take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved.

It has been developed to complement our Critical Incident Management Strategy. All aspects of Safeguarding are embedded into the life of our school and are the responsibility of all staff.

Aims:

* Support all those affected by loss and death in a familiar, caring and supportive environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances
* Offer understanding of the impact of loss and grief on children and young people’s health, both physically and emotionally
* Provide pastoral support for pupils, parents and staff
* To provide a framework, acknowledging that different strategies may be appropriate for different pupils, taking account of age, individual circumstance and individual needs

Much of the information and guidance in this policy follows the advice given by the Child Bereavement Charity and further advice can be found on their website, [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/)

Rationale:

* 1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen-years old have been bereaved of a parent or sibling
* Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person
* Within a 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:

* A framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with bereavement
* To support pupils and/or members of staff before (when applicable), during and after bereavement
* To enhance communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community
* To identify key staff within the school and the governing board
* To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death
* To provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment

The Death of a Pupil, Family Member or Member of Staff

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

Headteacher

* To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned
* To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
* To respond to media enquiries
* To keep the Governing Board fully informed
* In circumstances, when the Headteacher is unavailable, this should be done by the most senior staff member.

In responding to a death, when breaking the news to staff, pupils and families-

* When news of the death of a close member of a child’s family or the death of a pupil or member of staff is received, immediately try and obtain factual information, in order to avoid unnecessary rumour and assumption, which could lead to further distress
* When possible, liaise directly with the family and agree exactly what information should be passed on to staff and pupils. The family’s wishes should be taken into account before any information is given to the pupils
* When possible, ensure staff are informed before the pupils, taking account of part time and peripatetic staff that may not be in school. However, in order to avoid rumour and uncertainty, pupils should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone the pupils know well, probably their class teacher. Opportunity for questions should be given. The bereaved child may or may not wish to be present when the news is broken
* It may be appropriate for a letter to go home to all parents that same day, again being respectful at all times of the wishes of the family. A suggested letter can be found on the Child Bereavement Charity’s Website <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/developing-a-bereavement-policy>
* Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher

The First Few Days

* School should provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, but flexibility may be necessary
* Bereaved young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings. Being able to leave the classroom and take time out in a safe space should be welcomed
* The location of a temporary tribute book/book of condolence maybe used. This needs to be safely accessible and where pupils can be supervised. The family should be offered the opportunity to visit, if they wish to, or photographs may be shared with them later. Staff, pupils and the family should be consulted before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare beforehand

The Funeral

* Rather than making assumptions, consult the family to find out whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend
* Consider if pupils will be involved in choosing flowers or organising a collection
* 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)
* Consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral, and how they will be supported/supervised

Support for Pupils and Staff

* In supporting the bereaved child and other pupils, staff will act sensitively at all times, seeking advice when necessary, from the Headteacher and families involved. The Child Bereavement Charity provides a wealth of information and support
* The class teacher will be the first line of support for the child, but teaching assistants will offer extra support should the pupil need support away from the classroom. For example, if the child becomes upset in the classroom
* Both school and families need to work together to note changes in behaviour and if necessary counselling from outside agencies may be sought. Where appropriate, this will involve agreement with families
* It should be noted that not everyone needs outside counselling, grief is a natural process that can be aided by the family and school working together
* Children bereaved through suicide or violent death are likely to need skilled help and support. However, support in school by familiar adults is still vitally important
* Supporting a bereaved child is very upsetting and emotionally demanding for staff. Support between staff in important and staff should be given opportunity to discuss their feelings. Support and counselling is available to any staff member and can be accessed via the Headteacher
* School should be aware that the impact of grief follows a child throughout their school life. Information should be recorded and shared when appropriate, particularly at transition points
* Any memorial, assembly or tribute should be planned in consultation with the family of the person who has died
* If a permanent memorial is used, its removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed with sensitivity

Pupils Returning to School after Being Bereaved

* After returning to school following a bereavement, it is helpful to meet with the pupils and family to discuss their return to school. The purpose of the meeting should be to:
  + Acknowledge the death
  + Find out how the pupil would like to share their news
  + Organise a safe space and how the pupil should access this
  + Consider ‘time-out’ activities when appropriate. For example, journals, art and crafts, books, screen time, memory boxes etc.
  + Set guidelines for communication
  + Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend

Longer Term Support

* The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life. Significant dates, such as anniversaries, Mother’s/Father’s day etc, may be particularly difficult. Communication with family and reviews with the pupil will need to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping
* Grief may impact a pupil’s progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put extra pressure on themselves to succeed, whereas other may find it difficult to focus. Staff should be aware of changes of behaviour and consider how to support pupils
* Vulnerable pupils should be considered as they may need additional support, particularly with transitions

Date March 2025