



Achieving together in faith

Holy Cross Catholic MAC

**Bereavement and Loss Policy and Guidelines
2023 - 2026**

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Bereavement and Loss Policy

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Bereavement and Loss Policy

1. Rationale

At Holy Cross Catholic Multi Academy Company (HCC MAC) we understand that bereavement is an experience which is likely to be faced by all members of our school community at some point. We appreciate that there will be significant challenges when the loss is of a member of our school community, a child or staff member. Pupils will need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives.

As the Holy Cross Multi Academy Company core is “Living out Gospel values and celebrating the Catholic ethos in all our schools with reconciliation and peacefulness at the heart of all we do.” We firmly present the promise of eternal life, the Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed the power of death. As prayed in the preface of the dead from the Roman Missal we believe that life is changed not ended; therefore, we should aim to instil this assured hope when responding to bereavement within the life of our Academies by “Achieving together in Faith” and as we pray “Holy Cross of Jesus – Be Our Hope”.

Whilst there are a range of resources readily available to help schools, for our Catholic schools, it is imperative that such a policy is founded upon the beliefs and teachings of the Church.

This policy has been created to provide guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. The level and extent of support in all of these situations will differ accordingly and may alter dependent on Local Authority, Government and Diocesan advice.

HCC MAC is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We are dedicated to the continual development of ‘healthy schools’. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that supports and prepares pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death, divorce or separation.

Aims of the Bereavement Policy

- To provide a response to death and bereavement which is enshrined in our faith and hope of the resurrection and in our duty of care to provide a ministry of consolation to those who mourn.

To provide clear procedures which are to be followed in the event of:

- a bereavement suffered by pupil or member of staff
- the death of a pupil or member of staff or member of the wider school community e.g. governor, former pupils and members of staff etc.
- a critical incident involving one or more pupils or members of staff

These procedures will

- identify the roles and responsibilities of key members of staff within the school and/or academy including members of the governing body/Local Academy Board/Board of Directors
- identify the lines of communication and dissemination within the school community and, where relevant, to those outside of the school community e.g. DES, Diocesan Communications Team or LA
- provide signposts towards prepared templates for letters, resources and organisations to support the bereaved
- provide responses in the immediacy of a situation as well as support for the weeks and months to follow
- honour the memory of those who have died and those who mourn within the traditions of the Church whilst being sensitive to the faith and cultural backgrounds of the bereaved.

Death and Bereavement: The Mission of Catholic Schools

'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die.' John 11:25

For the Catholic community our faith in Christ Jesus is rooted in the firm belief that it is through death that we may receive eternal life: death is not a final end but heralds the promise of eternal life whereby we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The liturgy and prayers of the Church that are used when someone has died, 'offer worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the gift of a life which has now returned to God, the author of life and the hope of the just.'¹ Through prayer we can express our grief and sorrow for those who have died and our hope that our separation from them is only temporary: that 'one day we will be reunited in the joy of God's kingdom'.¹ Our prayer 'commends the deceased to God. In this way it recognises the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead and proclaims its belief that all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more.'¹

'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more' Revelation 21:4

¹ Free resource: *Managing Bereavement: A guide for Schools* from Child Bereavement UK. www.childbereavementuk.org/education-sector

Whilst we celebrate the hope of the resurrection, we are also called by the Church to be part of the ministry of consolation and to comfort those who mourn both in the immediacy of a death and through the weeks and months to come.

It is for these very reasons that every time Mass is celebrated, we pray for the eternal rest of those who have died and that the month of November is dedicated to a special time of prayer for the Holy Souls.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted' Matthew 5:4

2. Following a Bereavement:

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- be given space and time to grieve
- be given or signposted to support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise that:

- grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but it's invisibility makes it no less real.
- differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far reaching contacts.

3. The Management of Bereavement in School

A universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

4. Guidelines/Roles Responsibilities

- a. Schools will respond in a planned and agreed manner, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute in a way that is consistent with the Catholic ethos of the school. When sharing the news with both staff and pupils ensure that it is a time rooted in prayer and reflection.

- b. The Headteacher will co-ordinate the school's response and be vital in creating an appropriate atmosphere. They will be the first point of contact and will liaise with all parties concerned and affected. They will allocate a specific person to support the bereaved. This person would, in the later stages of bereavement, offer support and check on the progress of any students involved.
- c. In addition, a small group of staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention. This group could include the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), a Mental Health First Aider, a Pastoral Lead, School Chaplain and Parish Priest.
- d. The Headteacher or their representative will inform all staff of the death(s) together with informing the Chair of Governors, CSEL and Parish Priest.
- e. Where there may be press interest the Headteacher should release a press statement **only after taking advice** from the CSEL, DES and Press and Communications Officers of the Archdiocese.
- f. Where possible students and parents/carers will be informed at the same time and as promptly as circumstances will allow. Students in school will be informed face to face and parents or carers by letter/email on the same day. Absentees from school will be noted to ensure that they are also informed on their return by their teacher. Staff who are absent will be informed by their line manager.
- g. The school should ensure that they do not deny young people the opportunity to grieve and mourn within the traditions of their own culture and religious beliefs.
- h. Where required the Headteacher or a representative from HCC MAC will liaise with the media and if appropriate the police.

5. The Death of a Pupil

The school may be notified in a number of ways:

- It is usually parents or a close relative that inform the school directly about the death. The person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends parents or close family will usually contact whoever they can. Whichever member of staff is contacted they must make contact with the Headteacher as a matter of urgency to inform them.
- However, deaths are often reported on social media and it may be that members of staff (particularly those living within the community) may discover the news before senior staff. In this instance staff should immediately contact

the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

6. Death of a Pupil from the School Site

- If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they will contact a first aider and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or school chaplain.
- In the case of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the first aider or a member of the SLT.
- The incident should be logged on CPOMS by the first aider and any other staff attending the incident and any other reporting methods specific to an individual school undertaken.
- Inform the Headteacher or, in their absence, the most senior member of staff on site.
- The Headteacher, Lead DSL or member of SLT will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital.
- If the child stops breathing a trained school staff member will administer Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In some cases, parents may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incidence.
- Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered.
- In the rare event where the parents have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring - e.g. no resuscitation - this protocol will be handed to the paramedics.
- Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. **NB:** Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone.
- Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Headteacher or designated member of staff.
- The school will notify the MAC, the Diocese and the local authority if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity.
- All press enquiries are to be rooted through the Catholic Senior Executive, Chair of the MAC Board and the Diocesan Communications Team. The relevant Parish Priest should also be informed.

7. Death of a Pupil on a School Trip

- If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher.
- The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents.
- Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.
- The off sites visit protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed.
- The school will notify the CEO of the MAC, the Diocese and also the local authority at the earliest opportunity, if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply. The relevant Parish Priest should also be informed.

8. Sharing Information

It is important to agree, with parents/carers, before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child.

The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

The following people should be considered:

- Current school staff not in school that day – including therapeutic support staff, counsellors, School Chaplain etc
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Social Work team if applicable
- SEND team
- Chair of Governors
- Parish Priest
- Other professionals who work with the child – e.g. Ed Psych

9. Informing Children and Young People of a Death Within the School Community

The process for telling the pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with senior leaders. For example, the age of pupils will be considered and a decision made as to who the best person/people would be to speak to the children about the death.

We are aware that children and young people, even very young children will want to know what happened, how it happened, why it happened and perhaps most importantly of all, what happens next? We recognise that children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances, or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process may be affected.

The following guidelines are to be used when informing children of the death of another pupil, a teacher or other member of staff:

- Identify those children who had a long-term and/or close relationship with the deceased so they may be told together as a separate group.
- Pupils with specific needs including: pupils with past history of loss; pupils with a learning disability and pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour will be identified and informed appropriately.
- The pupils in the school community will be informed either in their classes or in assemblies.
- In an attempt to reduce the shock of the news of the death to the children and young people the language used to inform them will be carefully chosen and delivered by a senior member of staff.
- The school will signpost pupils to or seek direct, additional support from external agencies/charities to ensure all children and young people feel supported.

10. Informing Staff and Governors of a Death within the School Community

A death can affect the school community in different ways and depends on:

- The role that the deceased person had in school.
- How well known they were in the local community.
- Circumstances surrounding the death, particularly suicide, or other violent or sudden deaths.

Adults and children benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. The following guidelines may help when informing staff and governors:

- A staff meeting will be held as soon as practicable. Identify any absent staff.
- If a death has occurred in a holiday period all staff will be informed on the first day of term or through the school's urgent communication system.
- The Headteacher will inform staff what happened leading up to the death and give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed.

- To enable absent staff to feel part of a caring team, arrangements should be made to inform them over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical. Consider the relationship between the absent colleague and the deceased.
- For a death that may attract media coverage, (e.g. if the member of staff or pupil (pupil family) are well-known within the community or died tragically), contact with the diocesan communication team should be made and identify a nominated spokesperson (e.g. Headteacher, Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL), Chair of the MAC Board or Diocese) to provide a 'media statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion. Liaison with the individual's family is essential, prior to reporting information to the media, in order to respect their privacy and wishes.
- Establish good lines of communication with all relevant parties, this will always include family and staff, Parish Priest, in some cases it may involve communication with emergency services, health, the local safeguarding team, Social Care, and other support services.
- Provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. This person could advise the family of support services available if required.
- The Headteacher will prepare a letter/email to parents and carers to inform them of the situation.
- Staff will be provided with a script about what has happened so that consistent information is given to all of the pupils. Guiding responses to difficult questions that staff may be asked by the children will be included.
- Encourage everyone to consider how to meet their own support needs and take care of themselves, this may be from friends, family, support services and/or buddying up with other members of staff. Provide contact details for support in your local area.
- Consideration how Church, Chapel, Prayer Room, Prayer Garden or other such space will be utilised.
- Ensure pastoral care is available.
- Consider creating and upkeeping a permanent Book of Remembrance or other methods of remembrance.

11. The Funeral

The funeral may be a Requiem Mass or funeral service in the parish church or a funeral service elsewhere. The wishes of the family remain paramount at this time.

It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.

- The Headteacher and/or the CSEL will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and

transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not, consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance and will be on a case by case basis always in conjunction with pupils own parents or carers.

- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.
- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed. Past experience has shown that this can be helpful in their grieving.

12. Informing Parents of the Death of a Pupil or Member of Staff

We consider that it is vital that parents and carers are provided with information as soon as possible so that they can support their children and help them make sense of what has happened. The Headteacher, possibly the Chair of Governors and the MAC CEO or Chair of the MAC Board will communicate information in relation to the death(s) to parents/carers via email or letter rooted in the Catholic mission. Again advice from the Diocesan communications team may help.

13. Support for Pupils - Examples

- In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach to speak to when they need support with their emotions or the school chaplain.
- The priest of the school's local church and also the Diocese will be able to offer spiritual support to children and their families.
- The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) co-ordinator will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss.
- Social Stories may be one way to help some pupils to understand loss.
- The Thrive team may offer group or individual pupils support
- Areas for reflection may benefit pupils. The provision of a calm environment in which to meet with others and spend some time in reflective mode could offer support to individuals.
- Some children may be supported by a referral for therapeutic support or for focused counselling.
- Rainbows Bereavement UK offers support to children and young people experiencing bereavement due to loss and separation.

14. Return to School

We acknowledge our responsibility to 'keep a special watch' on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and for at least a two-year period and at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns.

Ensure awareness of other times in the year where sensitivity is needed e.g. Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas etc.

15. Transition

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

16. The Place of Death and Bereavement within the Curriculum

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During November (Month of the Holy Souls) each year we will hold a special Mass of remembrance to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died. A book of remembrance will be available for staff and children to place the names of deceased relatives and friends whom they wish to pray for.

We will ensure we have approval from the family of the deceased to record the deceased name in our school memorial book / memorial garden / memory tree. We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement. Small groups or 1:1 sessions will be arranged when children are in need.

Identify age appropriate opportunities in the curriculum where death grief and bereavement can be included. Ensure that this focuses upon Catholic beliefs and traditions and also includes those of other faiths and religions and none. Within the curriculum of Science, Religious Education (R.E.) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE/STLB); the process of life cycles and the reality of death and loss should be approached and explored; though great sensitivity should be given to those who are recently bereaved in these lessons.

Also links with Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PHSE) and Spiritual, Moral, Vocational, Social and Cultural development (SMVSC) and age appropriate books within the library.

17. Memorial Assemblies

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

The consideration and planning of any funeral, memorial services or memorials will need to consider, choosing who is involved, readings, poems, music, hymns, pictures,

tributes etc. all assist in the grieving process. It might be appropriate to invite members of the bereaved family to share in such a service. Again, on such an occasion, staff members should be on hand to lend support to the pupils who could be upset when sharing in this part of the grieving process.

Schools may also work with pupils and staff to decide on other ways of remembering those who have died. Schools may develop a prayer garden/outside space for quiet reflection, have a dedicate bench or seating area etc.

18 Support for Staff - Examples

- A specific room could be allocated to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- Access to one to one time with a member of staff who is trained in bereavement support.
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school, eg: CRUSE and Rainbows
- Pastoral support from the Parish priest.

Where **death has been through suicide** children, families and staff may benefit from the support from charities such as Papyrus, the Samaritans or Winston's Wish.

<https://papyrus-uk.org/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-suicide/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

19. The Death of a Member of Staff

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. Please refer to the school's Health and Safety Policy regarding a reportable incident – RIDDOR. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg453.htm>

20. Support for Staff who support Bereaved Pupils and Colleagues

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

21. Talking to children about the death of someone close

When talking to a child about the death of someone close, the language used, and the child's need for information and understanding, will vary according to their age and developmental stage and the specific cause of the death. However, the child's basic needs will always remain the same.

22. Links for Support

Advice should be taken from the DES and Press and Communications Officers of the Archdiocese:

DES: 01675 464755 Director or one of the Deputy Directors

Press and Communications: Caroline Blesto or Faye Fawcett Tel: 0121 230 6286

caroline.blesto@rc-birmingham.org

faye.fawcett@rc-birmingham.org

For urgent communication matters out of office hours the team can be contacted on the following mobile numbers:

Caroline Blesto - 074 6467 4630

Faye Fawcett - 078 2378 94 57

Rainbows Bereavement UK offers support to children and young people experiencing bereavement due to loss and separation.

<https://rainbowsgb.org/corona-virus-how-rainbows-can-help/>

For more information on staff training and resources please contact Rebecca Brolly (Primary) r.brolly@bdes.org.uk or Richard Smith (Secondary) r.smith@bdes.org.uk

If you require any additional support for staff from the DES, contact the Deputy Director for Catholic Education Maggie Duggan m.duggan@bdes.org.uk Tel: 01675 464755 Ext:115

The **Catholic Education Service** has created a web-page where you can access a range of resources which support mental health & wellbeing. These resources focus upon spiritual wellbeing in particular.

<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/mental-health-resources>

www.winstonswish.org.uk – a useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

How to get support from Winston's Wish

- National Freephone Helpline*: [08088 020 021](tel:08088020021) (open 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday)
- ASK email support: ask@winstonswish.org
- Crisis Messenger: Text WW to 85258 (available 24/7)
- Online chat: [click here](#) (available 12-4pm, Wednesdays and Fridays)

www.childbereavement.org.uk – a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/> An organisation offering bereavement support

Useful on line documents

<p>On line tributes to staff members</p>	<p>Lovely exemplar of a tribute to a former headteacher. https://twitter.com/NewmanSchool/status/1247086440409903106/photo/1</p> <p>Another tribute. https://thornsca.org.uk/tragic-news-miss-fox/</p>
<p>Guidance that could go on website taken from Child Bereavement UK</p>	<p>Guidance for parents on how children deal with Death. https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4ad94b98-cdf7-45f7-a606-3e5b78d5b002</p> <p>How we grieve. https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=69eb580b-bd54-4929-a959-37828c6f00ca</p> <p>Booklet for under 7s to go on website https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3053ca76-0a7c-488b-8ae3-528317e90cf1</p> <p>Booklet for 7-11s to go on website https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=454b3ca6-e69e-4054-85f6-fee146505a26</p> <p>Death of grandparents https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=6d1294d7-758f-401e-80fd-89c85c2205d2</p>
<p>Resources on Bereavement taken from Cruse</p>	<p>Restoring Hope; A guide to bereavement and how to support others. https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default_images/pdf/Documents-and-factsheets/Restoring_Hope_Jul2017.pdf</p> <p>A basic, helpful introduction to bereavement, whatever the circumstances. https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default_images/pdf/Free-leaflets/94149%20After%20the%20death%20of%20someone%20very%20close.pdf</p>
<p>Links that could go to staff.</p>	<p>Support for Staff</p>

	https://www.childbereavementuk.org/primary-schools-support-for-yourself
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Appendix 1



This policy and procedure is taken from “When Somebody Dies”
Rainbows Bereavement Support GB (www.rainbowsgb.org)

Breaking Sad News:

Guidelines for Breaking News of a Death to a Class, or School Assembly

On receiving news of the death of a student or a member of staff please follow the agreed procedures which will include the following points:

- Consult with the bereaved family concerned to ascertain their wishes.
- Those to be informed of a death should be gathered together in an appropriate place. This is best done in familiar groupings by someone they know.
- Whoever is giving the news should prepare themselves with what to say.
- Try to be as composed as possible as this helps to reduce the possible over emotional reaction of some students. Remember, however, it is perfectly human and understandable if you are moved by the events.
- Start by acknowledging that you have some sad news to give them.
- Be honest; give the news stating simple facts which have been checked for accuracy.
- Talk briefly about the person who has died.
- Let the students know of any arrangements already in place or of any arrangements agreed by the family.
- Underline how important their support is at this most difficult time and that it may be appropriate to involve them in a school response e.g. letters, flowers, cards, funeral attendance, memorial etc.
- Keep a watching brief throughout the assembly/meeting and for a period of time afterwards to pick up and support students and staff showing signs of distress.
- Keep in contact with the family suffering the loss. Make a note to remember the anniversary.
- Confirm any agreed arrangements by email or letter to parents and ensure details are posted on the school’s website but not before all members of the bereaved family have been informed.

Appendix 1

Ways to explain to a child that someone has died

Some suggested words:

“We know that all living things will die someday. Flowers, animals, trees, butterflies, people all die eventually...”

“... however, the great majority of people will die when they are very old.”

“Occasionally, someone will die before they are old because, for example, of an accident or serious illness.”

“When someone dies, their body stops working and they are no longer able to do the things they could when they were alive, such as move or talk or hug or play.”

“Sadly, [name] has died. Everyone wishes they had not died and had lived for many more years. However, their body was not able to keep working and so they died. Their heart stopped beating, their lungs stopped breathing and their brain stopped thinking, and so they died.”

“We are very healthy and we’re going to do all we can to keep that way, because I want to be around to [play with my great grandchildren/travel to Mars/celebrate the year 2100].”

Balancing truth and reassurance

One continual challenge for parents and carers supporting children facing bereavement or those who have been bereaved is hitting the right mixture of truth and reassurance. Children are expert at knowing if they are not being told the truth; if there are things that seem too difficult to share, explain that.

Equally, they will know the difference between genuine and false reassurance. Rather than saying “nobody we know is going to die”, maybe consider saying: “from all I’ve heard, it is extremely unlikely that anyone we know will die and we will do everything we can do to keep safe.”

Look after yourself

Super-parents or super-carers don’t really exist. Simply doing the best you can at this time is all that your children need. Take time to look after yourself too and reach out for support.

There are many resources available on the Rainbows website to help parents and carers support grieving children.

Appendix 1

Other articles you might find helpful:

[Death through serious illness](#)

[Ways to manage your anxiety about coronavirus](#)

[Should children attend a funeral?](#)

[Preparing a child to attend a funeral](#)

[Alternative ways to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible](#)

Appendix 2

Other Support Organisations.

Teacher Support Network:

Get Support: 08000 562 561

Spectrum:

Rainbows:

<https://www.cathchild.org.uk/rainbows-bereavment-support-programme/>

Samaritans:

116 123

Hours: 24 hours, 7 days a week

Website: www.samaritans.org

Cruse Bereavement Care:

For bereavement support call our helpline on **0808 808 1677**.

www.cruse.org.uk > a

Appendix 3

Bereavement Protocol

Prior actions	SLT to have copy of up to date staff contact details.
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Timescale	Actions	Extra notes
First hour It is likely that you will be feeling shocked yourself so give yourself time to process the information you have received	1. Check the Bereavement Policy. 2. Contact SLT, School Chaplain to help you 3. Contact the family, to ensure you have correct and up to date information. Agree on what family would like to be released and how to maintain contact. 4. Liaise with HCCMAT. 5. Liaise with Parish Priest	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 wider school community.
	6. Decide on how to contact whole school staff remembering absentees and part-timers. 7. Use script on right when speaking to staff on phone. 8. Identify any vulnerable staff members and agree on how they will be notified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree priority for contacting staff including those needing a personal call and those for whom an email will be appropriate. • Be aware that social media may mean that some people know information more quickly than others. <p>Script for phone call</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give. • Be honest. Give the news by stating simple facts. Use the words dead/died -not passed away. • 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.

Appendix 3

Timescale	Actions	Extra notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct, if known. • Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them. • Mention any funeral arrangements already in place, Make reference to support mechanisms and counselling as appropriate
	<p>9. Agree on, if/ how to inform parents and wider community in accordance with family's wishes.</p> <p>10. Update website with statement and remove photos and staff log if agreed.</p>	<p>Consult and amend letter templates. Send agreed notifications to parents</p>
Next day	<p>11. Consider setting up an online memorial on behalf of school in accordance with the family's wishes.</p>	<p>The location for an online tribute/book of condolence needs to be secure, easily accessible and supervised by a designated member of staff. Or School Twitter account be used as first port of call – again this will need to be managed very carefully.</p>
	<p>12. Keep school staff informed about funeral arrangements in accordance with family 's wishes.</p> <p>13. Ensure additional support is in place for members of staff who are vulnerable.</p>	<p>Be aware that funeral arrangements may change in light of current pandemic. Agree with bereaved family about contact arrangements.</p>
	<p>14. Decide how school should be seen to respond to the death.</p>	<p>Depending on the impact of the bereavement, it may be appropriate to have period of public mourning signified by a closure of a given period. Factors to be taken into account.</p>

Appendix 3

Timescale	Actions	Extra notes
	15. Further advice and guidance for professionals from Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Status of staff member• Impact on school community• Date and time of death <p>Professionals are welcome to call our National Helpline 0800 02 888 40 or Live Chat via our website, both are available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.</p>

Template Letters

Template: Letter to go to bereaved following the death of a member of the community.

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXX

On behalf of staff and pupils at **[School]**, I want to express my deep sadness on hearing the sad news of **[Name's]** death. There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

At **[School]**, we will miss **[Name]** very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to **[his/her]** friends, classmates and teachers. **[Name]** was a **[valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly]** member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan **[Name's]** funeral, please let us know. We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can and keep you and **[Name]** in our prayers.

Eternal rest grant unto **[Name]**, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

With sympathy

[Headteacher]

Appendix 4

Template: Letter to parents and carers - death of a pupil

Dear Parents and Carers,

I have the sad task to inform you of the death of [Name], a pupil in [Year] at [School]. [Name] died [suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness] [yesterday/ last week/over the weekend /during half term].

[He/ She] was a [valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly] member of the [class/school] community and will be missed by everyone at [School] who knew him/her.

Our thoughts and prayers are with [Name's] family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will [celebrate/remember] [Name's] life.

Eternal rest grant unto [Name] , O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Your Sincerely
[Headteacher]

Appendix 4

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our school community was deeply saddened to learn of the illness and death of [Name]. [Name] was an outstanding teacher who cared very deeply about the success and wellbeing of each and every one of [his/her] pupils. We will all miss [him/her] very much and will spend many difficult moments grieving [his/her] loss.

Our thoughts are with [Name's] family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our [School] will celebrate/ remember [Name's] life.

Experiencing, witnessing, or even hearing of a traumatic incident such as this may affect children or adults in a variety of ways. Therefore, it is very important that children can ask questions and talk about their reactions. For some children a death of someone they know may remind them of some other loss in their lives. For others, this may be their first encounter with death.

Children may display behaviours such as the following:

- Cling closely to adults
- Display regressive behaviours
- Appear not to be affected
- Think about it privately
- Ask a lot of questions
- Appear frightened
- Appear agitated and angry
- Appear sad and withdrawn
- Display difficulty sleeping
- Stomach aches and/or headaches

We suggest that you make an extra effort to listen to your child during this time. It is important that you deal honestly and directly with any questions that he or she may have. It is appropriate that you use the word "death" in your discussions. Should you have difficulty approaching this issue or if you would like additional information about talking to your child about death, we have material available on our school website. Below are some other suggestions that parents may find useful in helping their child:

- Be a good listener. Listen carefully for any misconceptions or distortions your child may have.
- Provide physical closeness. Spend extra time with your child. Talk and offer reassurance. At this time we take comfort from our faith and pray.
- Encourage your child to ask questions and to discuss their feelings.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school if we can be of additional assistance to you and/or your child during this difficult time. Eternal rest grant unto [Name], O Lord, and let

Appendix 4

perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Yours Sincerely,
[Headteacher]

Appendix 5

Words/Phrases of Use

The words below are an example of wording you might want to use. You may also want to add your own phrases that you would find helpful.

In the event of having to break the news of a death within the community please take a little while to consider what you will say; how you will say it and how you and colleagues will manage the situation

Start:

There is no easy way to say this to you and the event that has happened will affect us all in one way or another but I have to tell you...

You may have heard already...

That [Name] has died ... The information that we have and therefore can tell you about is that...

While we are all deeply shocked at this awful, sad news, before we do anything else and while we are all together to support and help each other, may I suggest that we be still now for one or two minutes to honour and remember [Name]

Thank you...

Appendix 6

Poems

[Name] was a gift to our community here and we are so deeply grateful for the privilege of knowing him/her. In some way we are all better people because of [Name]

I ask you to close your eyes for a moment and to remember the unique part that [Name] played in our lives. We think of good times together, training, travelling on school trips, etc. We reflect on her/his many talents and blessings. [Examples: think of her/his delight on the occasion that she sang, that he scored that goal..., that he/she represented the school at ...]

We all feel the loss of [Name] Place a circle of light around [Name's] face now and think lots of love and thanks and hope for [Name]

We do not know much about what happens after death but it is possible that our loving thoughts and wishes and prayers this morning may help [Name] to a place of great happiness and peace. There will be many opportunities for us to show our feelings during the next few days. As more details come to us, we will let you know what is happening and how the family would like us to be involved.

There will be a variety of ways of honouring [Name's] life and their life amongst us. Your ideas will be most welcome. Talk to ... but talk to any of the staff with your thoughts and feelings. We are all here to help each other; that is what our community is about.

A poet has written these lines to help us at a time like this; you may like it:

[Name], may you continue to inspire us:
to enter each day with a generous heart;
to serve the call of courage and love,
until we see your face again
in that land where there is no more separation,
where all tears will be wiped from our mind,
and where we will never lose you again.

Appropriate ending:...perhaps the poem itself; music; a prayer; a moment of silence...

Poems to help bereavement:

Look for me in Rainbows
Time for me to go now, I won't say goodbye;
Look for me in rainbows, way up in the sky.
In the morning sunrise when all the world is new,
Just look for me and love me, as you know I loved you.
Time for me to leave you, I won't say goodbye;
Look for me in rainbows, high up in the sky.
In the evening sunset, when all the world is through,
Just look for me and love me, and I'll be close to you.
It won't be forever, the day will come and then
My loving arms will hold you, when we meet again.

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Time for us to part now, we won't say goodbye;
Look for me in rainbows, shining in the sky.
Every waking moment, and all your whole life through
Just look for me and love me, as you know I loved you.
Just wish me to be near you,
And I'll be there with you.
Conn Bernard (1990). Vicki Brown

Do not stand at my grave and weep.

Do not stand at my grave and weep, I
am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush Of
quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.
Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there, I did not die!
Mary Frye (1932)

Turn Again To Life

If I should die and leave you here a while, be
not like others sore undone, who keep long
vigil by the silent dust. For my sake turn again
to life and smile, nerving thy heart and
trembling hand to do something to comfort
other hearts than thine. Complete these dear
unfinished tasks of mine and I perchance may
therein comfort you.
Mary Lee Hall

Epitaph on a Friend

(Good for a teacher with changes)

An honest man here lies at rest, The
friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth:

Appendix 6

Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd; If
there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.
R Burns

Passages of Scripture for Bereavement

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” **John 14:1-4**

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. **Romans 8:16-17**

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11**

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” **John 11:23-26**

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 15:54-57**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither

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shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” **Revelation 21:1-4**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil , **Psalm 23:4.**

Appendix 8

Scripture Quotations and Readings

Readings for the Commemoration of all the faithful departed (Holy Souls 2 November):

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalms 26:1, 4, 7-9, 13-14 The Lord is my light and my help

Romans 5:5-11

Gospel: Year A: Matthew 11:25-30, Year B: Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6, Year C: Luke 7:11-17

Prayers for those who have died

The Art of Dying Well

[The Liturgy Office](#)

Eternal rest grant unto (Insert name), O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Lord Jesus, I am very sad at the death of my friend/brother/sister/dad/mum, I feel very separated from them. I know that they are with you and you are looking after them. I also believe that you are everywhere, so where ever I go both you and my friend/brother/sister/dad/mum will be watching over me. Amen.

God, I want to thank you for the life of (insert name), for all the happy times we had together. When I am sad and missing them help me to remember all these happy memories and that now they are happy with you in heaven. Amen.

Dear Jesus, We ask you to look after (Insert name) and bring them into your Kingdom of Heaven. We also pray for all their family and friends who are very upset. Amen

Loving Father and God, You sent your Son to us so that death would not be the end, you have given us eternal life so that life is now changed not ended. We pray for (Insert name) who has died, welcome him in paradise where there is no more pain, no more suffering and no more tears. Help all of us who miss them and are now very sad with their passing; give us strength to live our lives knowing that we will meet them again in heaven. Amen.

Possible activities for allowing children to express grief

A. Writing a prayer:

It is in moments of great tragedy that many people turn especially to God, feeling powerless they turn to Him who is omnipotent. The prayer written by the child could be asking God to look after their loved one, hoping they are happy in heaven, for the repose of the deceased's soul, asking the deceased to look after them from heaven, thanking God for the life of the deceased. Encourage the child to write the prayer from the heart expressing everything they are concerned about.

B. Writing a letter to the deceased/parted:

Often a bereavement can come unexpected and leaving the child unprepared. They may feel like there were things that were left unsaid, if left unaddressed this could cause harm to the child, maybe leaving them with a strong sense of guilt or frustration. Encourage the child to write everything they want to say in a letter to the deceased, this could include feelings of: sorrow; anger; thankfulness or just an opportunity to say goodbye. This can also act as an on-going coping mechanism allowing the child to express different emotions as they move through the different stages of the grieving process.

C. Drawing a picture:

This can be particularly affective for younger children and those who feel less able to vocabularies their feelings. The opportunity to draw allows the child to gain control again of the situation and also allows those supporting the child to be aware of what the child is thinking.

D. A memorial space:

This could be particularly helpful for a group of children who are grieving together. The space should be accessible to the students and marked clearly, maybe with a photograph, they should be able to place here flowers, pictures, prayers, candles etc. as signs of expressing this grief. After the funeral this should be carefully removed by informing the children beforehand and asking them to help plan a lasting memorial such as a tree, bench

Beliefs of different faith traditions regarding death and the afterlife

What is presented here is not meant to be an in-depth exploration of the beliefs of all major religions. Rather it is a short overview of the religious beliefs of the majority of the members of the Academy communities.

Buddhism: Buddhists do not believe in a God, so remembrances would not mention a deity. They believe in the concept of rebirth, after the person dies the Karma (the accumulated effects of a person's actions) will direct their next standard of life. Buddhist funerals are dignified but not sad events, and the body is usually cremated.

Christianity: Christianity is focused on the promise of eternal life that is entered into after death, thanks to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cremation or burial of the body is permitted. Most funerals will take place in a Church; Catholics Funerals can either be a similar service or a Mass. Depending on the denomination these funerals can be celebrations of life or solemn and reflective; flexible in content or a set liturgy. Catholics believed that it is important to pray for those who have died as this can aid in the soul's journey into heaven. Most protestant will not pray for the dead as they believe what happens to the soul after death is determined by their life and faith while on earth.

Hinduism: Hindus believe in reincarnation; they believe this is because it is the soul's desire to return to the Supreme Spirit (creator). To do this it must be clean and the purification takes a number of life times. Post mortems are prohibited and adults must be cremated; though infants and young children may be buried. This should be done as soon as possible preferably the same day. White clothing is a sign of mourning.

Islam: The Islamic Faith has very particularly funeral rituals. They believe the soul leaves the body at the moment of death and the body then belongs to God. Cremation is not allowed as it believes it will prohibit the soul from returning to God. Muslims prefer to bury the body with 24 hours, women do not attend funeral services and men wear white clothing as a sign of respect.

Judaism: The Jewish scriptures do not make many references to the afterlife and there are divided thoughts upon it. Cremation is not permitted and it is disrespectful to delay the burial it should take place within 24 hours. There are four stages of mourning for Jews: the first is between the death and the funeral when the mourners should be released from all other obligations; the second is the week after the funeral when the mourners stay at home and receive fellow Jews to pray with them; the third is the first month which allows for gradual return to normal life; the final period last eleven months when male mourners are required to recite the Kaddish prayer every morning.

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Secular Humanists: Do not believe in a God or afterlife but highly value human life and personality. Humanist funerals remember and honour the person who has died while facing the finality of death with courage.

Sikhism: Hold similar burial rites and beliefs as Hindus; bodies are cremated not buried. White is the colour for mourning.

Memorial and Funeral Services

Funerals and memorial services are a way in which the family, friends and society can say goodbye to someone who has died.

The values of funerals and memorial services are:

- They acknowledge the deceased person and provide an opportunity for the person to be remembered,
- They give the opportunity for the death to be put in a religious context, if that is appropriate for the family and/or for the school community
- They give significance to what has happened,
- They provide a time when the bereaved try to come to terms with what has happened,
- They provide a time to express sorrow. Such an occasion helps in the grieving process and should be encouraged at every opportunity.

If the funeral is that of a parent, then the school may wish to send a representative or representatives in support of the pupil who has lost a parent. Should the school wish to send children then please check with the family of the bereaved and ensure permission has also been given from the parents of those attending.

If the funeral is that of a pupil or member of staff then the numbers of pupils and teachers wishing to attend may be considerable. Again, please check with the family of the bereaved and with the parents of those attending.

The following should always be considered:

- An appropriate member of the school should always contact the family of the deceased to discuss funeral arrangements and to ascertain the family's wishes regarding representation from the school.
- Such wishes are paramount and should always be respected.
- If the school is to be represented at the funeral by pupils, it would be good if the pupils received support from members of the appropriate members of staff before and after the funeral service.
- Under certain circumstances a form/class close to the bereaved may wish to send messages of sympathy to the bereaved family. These messages may be in the form of poems, cards, flowers etc. The appropriate staff should ensure that all such presents are appropriate.
- Often a memorial service may be held in school. This could be a whole school assembly or within a class situation.

The planning of such an occasion, choosing readings, poems, music, hymns, pictures, tributes etc. all assist in the grieving process. It might be appropriate to invite members of the bereaved family to share in such a service. Again, on such an occasion, staff members should be on hand to lend support to the pupils who could be upset when sharing in this part of the grieving process.