



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE  
Cardiff

# Bereavement Policy

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**St John's College, Cardiff**

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

**This policy applies to all sections of the School:**

Sixth Form, Senior School, Junior School,  
Infant School & Nursery.

***Version: September 2024***

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 - Background and rationale

At St John's College, we are an inclusive school that strives to ensure that all children feel safe when with us. Our values focus on openness, honesty, and trust, and we work with the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they achieve their very best.

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That equates to nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend, or other significant person. Experiencing bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether an expected death because of illness, or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff and pupils. We focus on this in all aspects of school life, and aim to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents, carers, Trustees, visitors, and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community. We recognise that a range of losses, including separation and divorce, will affect members of the school community. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases. This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish.

## 1.2 - Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Critical Incident Policy (*internal*);
- PSE Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- ALN and Disability Equality Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Special Leave Policy (*staff*).

## 1.3 - Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy helps us to provide effective support to pupils and staff, before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of bereavement is complex.

**The objectives of this policy are to:**

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time;
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services;
- make best use of the support available in school, and the wider community.

## 2. Our charter for bereaved children and young people



To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#) and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

<b>B</b>	<p><b>Bereavement support</b></p> <p>Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.</p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Express feelings and thoughts</b></p> <p>We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.</p>
<b>R</b>	<p><b>Remember the person who has died</b></p> <p>We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.</p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Education and information</b></p> <p>All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered through the PSE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.</p>
<b>A</b>	<p><b>Appropriate response from schools and colleges</b></p> <p>Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.</p>
<b>V</b>	<p><b>Voice in important decisions</b></p> <p>We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives, such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.</p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Enjoyment</b></p> <p>We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy his or her lives even though someone important has died.</p>
<b>M</b>	<p><b>Meet others</b></p> <p>We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.</p>
<b>E</b>	<p><b>Established routines</b></p> <p>We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.</p>
<b>N</b>	<p><b>Not to blame</b></p> <p>We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.</p>
<b>T</b>	<p><b>Tell the story</b></p> <p>We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if those important people in their lives hear these stories.</p>

# 3. Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

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We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils, parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school system, MyConcern, to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

# 4. Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

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## 4.1 - The role of the Board of Trustees is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation;
- ensure the policy is reviewed every year, or when national or local policy directs a change;
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum;
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs;
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

## 4.2 - The role of the Head Teacher and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training, and support provided for staff;
- be the first point of contact for the family / child / staff directly affected by a bereavement;

- record bereavements affecting children;
- designate liaison and support to other members of staff, when appropriate;
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies;
- keep the Board of Trustees appropriately informed;
- issue statements to the media, if necessary.

#### 4.3 - The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training, and cascade learning to other staff, if appropriate;
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed;
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm;
- know how to support a child when they are distressed, and how to refer to specialist support if needed;
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change;
- provide individual support as and when needed, and in consultation with the Mr. Shaun Moody (Head Teacher), Mrs. Emma Jones (Assistant Head, Pastoral and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)) and the pastoral team;
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of Form Tutor;
- inform Mr. Shaun Moody and / or Mrs. Emma Jones, at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community.

Our school counsellors have had advanced training about bereavement, and their service is available for pupils and for staff to access.

## 5. Procedures



### 5.1 - Pre-bereavement

- In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.
- In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with Mr. Shaun Moody and / or Mrs. Emma Jones in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.
- When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:
  - contact the family to confirm factual information, and explore what support could be provided to them;
  - identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange, and to update when things change;
  - ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil;
  - keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion;

- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations, such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice;
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family;
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice;
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil;
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community, for example the pupil's peer group;
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death.

## **5.2 - Following a bereavement**

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from St John's College is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

### **As an immediate response we will:**

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (Mr. Shaun Moody or Mrs. Emma Jones).
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process.
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school.
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required.
- send letters, or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected.
- prepare a press statement, with support from the Board of Trustees if required, and with due regard to the family affected (Mr. Shaun Moody).
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to ensure that all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school.
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and/or letters to parents.

- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

#### **For the funeral we will:**

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not).
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family, and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances, it may be appropriate to close the school.
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes, and the wishes of staff and pupils.
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

#### **After the funeral we will:**

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school.
- ensure friendships are secure - peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person.
- continue regular contact with the family.
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils, provide listening time, and ongoing appropriate support.
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed.
- continue to assess the needs of the children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.
- direct pupils and staff affected by bereavement to the school counselling service.

#### **Longer term we will:**

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSE. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.



### **5.3 - Following a sudden and unexpected death - suicide**

Suicide is a very sad and difficult event to deal with. It can also present the risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 4.3 we will seek advice from Mrs. Emma Jones and / or Mr. Shaun Moody. As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days. It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death, will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours);
- an understanding that death is permanent;
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death - expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal;
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope;
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual;
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help;
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself, does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death;
- does not include details of any suicide note;
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide;
- takes care with the language and terminology used - for example using phrases such as 'died by suicide' or 'ended his / her life' rather than 'committed suicide' or 'successful suicide', and saying 'attempted to end his / her life' rather than 'unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed attempt at suicide'.

### **5.4 - Following a sudden and unexpected death - murder**

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage directed towards the person who has caused their loss, and deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the child will also know the person that is responsible. This can cause huge confusion and an additional loss, as for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area - away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston's Wish recommends taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach, when the time comes to discuss what has happened with children. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston's Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

## 6. Equality and inclusion, values, and beliefs

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We recognise that there are a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

## 7. Young asylum seekers and refugees

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Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate.

## 8. Supporting staff

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### 8.1 - Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with the support needed, and know how they can access additional help should it be required. Our school counselling service is available for staff, and details of how to be referred can be found in the Counselling Policy.

We will work within our Special Leave Policy and if necessary, the school's occupational health team, to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum they feel uncomfortable to teach, or require support to teach.

## 8.2 - Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided, to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy.

# 9. Curriculum

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Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSE curriculum - *available at* <https://www.stjohnscollegecardiff.com/about/policies>

It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death - such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class, having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

# 10. Additional support and links

## 10.1 - National support services and support resources

As part of PSE and our safeguarding work, we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.



**Winston's Wish:** [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org) Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.



**Cruse Bereavement Care:** [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) Support for anyone who has been bereaved.



**Childhood Bereavement Network:** <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.



**Hope Again:** <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.



**Papyrus:** <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.



**Samaritans:** <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.

## 10.2 - Local support services



**Barnardo's Child and Family Bereavement Service:**  
02920 577074



**Cruse Counselling and Support Groups:**  
02920 886913