



Grays Convent

HIGH SCHOOL

Bereavement and Loss Policy

Committee responsible for policy	Safeguarding and Curriculum
Approved by Committee/FGB	7 July 2020
Statutory/Non-statutory	Non-STATUTORY
Frequency of Review	Free to determine - 4 YEARS
Date of last review	
Date of next review	July 2024
Purpose of policy	To enable staff to support children and colleagues at times of loss and/or bereavement in the context of a Catholic school community.
Consultation	Suggested: Feeder Catholic schools, Parish Priest, Wider School Community – Parent Governors and Staff.
Links to other policies	PSHE, RSHE, Pupil and Staff Mental Health and Well-being Policies, Child Protection Policy

Our Mission Statement

At Grays Convent we recognise the value of each individual as a gift from God to the world. We are a Catholic school founded by the La Sainte Union Sisters and our ethos is one of unity, prayer, worship, service and work. We strive to follow the example of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by enabling learning to take place in a caring and accepting community. We are blessed by Jesus the Good Shepherd, try to follow him in everything that we do, and in doing so make the most of our God given talents. We are one with God.

The intent of this policy is to provide guidance to support children, young people and their families and adults in our school community that may be experiencing feelings of loss, grief or bereavement.

Addressing bereavement and loss

At Grays Convent High School we:

- Believe that loss is a natural part of life and is experienced in many different ways from birth to death.
- Need to allow ourselves the freedom to grieve and opportunities to talk freely about our feelings without fear or ridicule.
- Recognise loss experienced by others, care about their loss and seek to support them in their grief.
- We seek to create a Christian understanding of hope and celebration where all members are valued.
- Aim to develop strategies to enable children to cope with crises or imminent need before they occur.

Our policy is intended to reflect the Christian ethos of our school and contribute positively to the emotional health and well-being of our school community.

Aims of the policy:

- For all staff to have a clear and informed understanding of the underlying principles of bereavement.
- To ensure that all staff and pupils faced with a bereavement or loss are provided with appropriate support.
- Where bereavement is complex we will signpost families to relevant agencies/ professional support
- To ensure that all staff can respond appropriately when pupils of the school experience feelings of grief, bereavement or loss.
- To recognise the wider impact bereavement and loss may have on the wider school community.

In the event of a sudden or unexpected bereavement within our school community staff should:

- Inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher/DSL or another member of the Child Protection team, School Chaplain and/or Heads of Key Stage as soon as possible.
- The school should also inform the Parish Priest if this is appropriate.

The Head Teacher should then advise the leadership team of the situation and outline the circumstances and support that is available for the individual staff/pupil as appropriate.

Immediate School Response:

- A phone call to express sympathy and offer support.
- A home visit if this is in line with social distancing guidance or an invitation for family members to attend a meeting at school in line with COVID 19 safety guidance.
- Prayers for the individual/family, and opportunities provided for young people to be together in the Chapel or quiet space to express their sadness or grief.

Continuing communication and support for the family will be vital and can be expressed by:

- Passing on verbal support through family and friends.
- Where the bereavement is complex the Head Teacher or another Pastoral lead may contact the family providing addresses and telephone numbers of support agencies.
- Cards, flowers and Mass cards sent to the family from the school community
- Prayer resources shared with family as appropriate along with invitations to memorial/celebration services at school

By addressing bereavement and loss at Grays Convent we intend:

- To help give individual children strategies for coping with loss.
- To help each child recognise and appreciate loss as experienced by others and therefore show empathy with the feelings of others.
- To maintain a caring environment where loss is recognised and supported.
- To ensure all children affected by the loss are supported appropriately.
- To share our belief that God is there to comfort them.

Strategies for Dealing with feelings of loss and grief:

- Offer reassurance and comfort but do not diminish the child's feelings.
- Recognise that loss hurts and allow children to show their feelings.
- Encourage pupils talk about how they are feeling; this may not be easy at home if the whole family is experiencing sadness and loss.
- Make children feel valued.
- Involve parents in discussions.
- Be honest and answer questions directly.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Listen sensitively.
- Prayer.
- Appoint an active listener, Peer mentor or Mental Health Ambassador to provide continuing peer support.
- Involve wider teaching staff with agreed support strategies.
- Referral to specialist agencies, at local or national level.
- Keep personal journals, scrapbooks of photos, records.
- Use the arts to celebrate feelings and lives lost through music, drama, dance and artwork.

Confidentiality

Permission to divulge any information regarding a bereavement should be sought from the family in consultation with the procedures arranged and agreed by the Headteacher.

What follow up support could be considered?

- Home visits in line with social distancing guidance.
- Notification of all parents/ wider school or local community.
- The appropriate use of school assemblies.
- Provision of personal time for any staff member when necessary to give them space to reflect on their own losses.

Any of the above actions concerning the family involved must be discussed and agreed sensitively with the family first.

Working with pupils

The Headteacher will monitor the needs of all relevant pupils through Form Tutors, Pastoral leads and other key personnel.

The following support strategies could be used:

- A confidential record accessible by all relevant staff may be used to record any information which will enable good communication between any external agencies.
- Opportunities can be provided for pupils to include the name of their deceased loved one within Mass, liturgies and prayers. Form group, Year group, Whole school.
- An Individual plan to incorporate strategies such as a memory journal and 1-1 support time with in house counsellor or bereavement counsellor.
- A memorial service to celebrate the life of a deceased pupil or member of staff.
- A memorial plaque, tree or annual award in the name of the deceased person to keep their memory alive in the school community.

Where a parent has a terminal illness and the children are aware that their parent will not recover the school will work with the family and other agencies to support the children through this difficult time and seek to offer a place of safety and stability with trusted adults who are available to help.

As previously stated any actions concerning the family involved must be discussed and agreed sensitively with the family first, particularly with regard to confidentiality and adhering to the family's wishes.

Supporting staff who have experienced a bereavement

The Head Teacher will remain the main the point of contact for any member of staff. The Head Teacher will put strategies into place to provide support

Curriculum provision

Within the Religious Education, PSHE, RSHE, and Science schemes of work pupils will learn about bereavement and loss.

In addition to the above curriculum provision, on a daily basis all classes have opportunity for reflection, prayer and meditation.

NHS – Bereavement support for young people.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/bereavement-and-young-people/>

Catholic Children’s Society (Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme) – The programme provides training for school staff so they can deliver support groups for children who have experienced a significant loss in their lives.

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

Child Bereavement UK – Is a UK charity supporting families and education professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement.

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

Winston’s Wish – Is a UK charity which supports bereaved children, young people, their families, and the professionals who support them.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

Citizen’s Advice Bureau – Information and support on a bereavement in the family.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/claiming-bereavement-support-payment/>

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) Thurrock

<https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-ewmhs/>

Child Bereavement UK - help children and young people (up to age 25), parents, and families, to rebuild their lives when a child grieves or when a child dies.

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

Rainbows - a well respected national charity having a proven, positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives.

<https://rainbowsgb.org/>

Cruse Bereavement Support - offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

St Luke’s Hospice

<https://stlukeshospice.com/>

Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Appendix 1

How to respond to a death in the community

Updated during COVID-19

Staff should be aware that if they receive any news that a member of the community is seriously ill or has died, they should inform the Headteacher or member of SLT immediately. They should not pass the information to other staff or post any information on social media.

Informing staff

- Headteacher to phone Deputy Head/SLT/Finance Manager/ Chair of Governors and Parish Priest.
- Teachers will be contacted by email or phone call from Line Manager.
- TAs and LSAs will be contacted by email or phone call by SENCO.
- Site Manager and lunch time staff contacted by phone calls from Finance Manager.
- Cleaning staff contacted by phone calls by Site Manager.
- Messages regarding the reason for the call not to be left on answerphones, simply a request to call back as soon as possible. Text messages are not advised in these circumstances.
- Staff to be asked not to post anything on social media.
- Staff should not notify any pupils until they hear from SLT that this has been agreed with the family.
- Particular care should be taken if the news concerns a pupil when passing the news on the form tutor, subject teacher, Head of Key Stage or Pastoral Lead as they may be distressed.
- Particular care should also be taken if the news concerns a member of staff when calling those known to be close friends or colleagues first.

Contact responsibilities

- Headteacher to contact Parish Priest and discuss how pupils are being informed so it is not announced on parish websites until all pupils are told.
- Headteacher to email other local school Headteachers as appropriate.
- Headteacher to contact LA if appropriate.
- DSL/Pastoral Manager to contact LA EP service for support for pupils and staff.
- Headteacher's PA to contact additional governors.

How we tell students

- We would want pupils to be told by their parents and carers

How we tell parents

- A letter from the Headteacher to parents to communicate the news to their children/email to all year groups.
- Pupils/Parents/Carers to be asked not to post on social media to allow others to hear the news appropriately.
- A photo of the person may need to be included in the announcement – decision to be made at the time.
- No announcements to be made by school via social media (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram).
- If Local Press/Online Newspaper contact school, they should be given the text of Headteacher's letter. A tribute/eulogy may also be prepared for the deceased person and posted on social media or in the press after the funeral with the family's permission.

Help and support for pupils and staff

- Pupils and staff will be encouraged to support one another and especially to look out for those who may not be in touch with others.
- Pupils and staff to be supported through quiet time and opportunities to talk about what has happened. The School Chaplain, School Counsellor and Pastoral team will have resources to hand that may be useful to support pupils in their form groups.
- Pupils to be reminded they can talk to any members of staff and staff will have access to resources on bereavement.
- Staff encouraged to request support through their line manager if they need it.

Prayer Life

- Our School Chaplain will prepare prayer resources for the whole school community at this time.

Mass

- Headteacher and School Chaplain to liaise with Parish Priest and family, it may be appropriate to request a Mass to be celebrated.

Funeral

- Headteacher to liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements and to arrange representation from the school community to attend if this is in line with the family's wishes along with sympathy cards and flowers from classes and the school community as a whole.
- Plans to be made in conjunction with the family for a Memorial Mass, similar service, or tree planting to be celebrated in school at a later date.