Osbaston Church in Wales School

Policy Name	BEREAVEMENT
Policy owner	OSBASTON CHURCH IN WALES SCHOOL
Policy agreed	September 2026
Policy review date	September 2028

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

'Death neither obeys the school timetable, nor appears on it … it enters the classroom without knocking.'

Introduction

Death is a subject that nobody ever wants to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point, our school community will be affected by a death. This might include the death of a pupil, the death of a staff member, the death of a pupil's family member, or the death of a key member in the school community such as a governor or popular visitor to the school.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

Everyone will react to bereavement in their own unique way and the effects of this are dependent on their levels of awareness, understanding, emotional security, faith and, not least, their relationship with the deceased.

Osbaston Church in Wales School is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff, pupils and wider school community. We are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school.' 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 the separation or loss of a loved one through death.

Aims

Our aim is to help children and young people explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death as well as to support those personally affected by it.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents/carers, prospective parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It outlines practical measures to be taken when a member of the school community dies and people are in shock or upset. It should be read in conjunction with the Monmouthshire County Critical Incident Framework.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head Teacher will have overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

In addition, the designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is Mrs Clare Cooper.

Responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies;
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice;
- Obtaining and sharing accurate information;
- Communicating with those directly involved;
- Supporting children, parents and staff;
- Establishing and coordinating links with external agencies;
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools and
- Accessing and coordinating training and support for staff.

The person responsible will take into consideration the following short term support:

- Who should break the news;
- What exactly will the children be told;
- How they will be told (e.g. whole school, class, individual);
- When they will be told;
- How the information will be communicated to parents and staff (Appendix 1) and
- What questions might be asked by pupils, parents/carers, staff.

Staff Support and Training

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and each other. The role of the Parish Priest will be central in supporting and guiding staff. Some staff may wish to 'opt out' of direct work around bereavement because of personal circumstances. Support is available from www.winstonswish.org.uk and Home - Cruse Bereavement Support

Further support for staff can be accessed through Wellbeing Solutions, counselling service for school based employees. This can be accessed directly through consultation with the HR Business Partner (emmalawrence@monmouthshire.gov.uk) or via the Head teacher, Mrs Catherine Jones.

Curriculum

Teaching will use a variety of approaches to meet the needs of pupils and show sensitivity to age and experience.

Teaching methods may include:

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

- The use of photographs, mementoes, stories and music;
- Using clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to 'soften the blow' with ambiguous language or
- Using a range of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama (Appendix 2).

Saying Goodbye

School will arrange an opportunity to 'say goodbye' in an age appropriate way; for example saying goodbye in small groups, as a whole class or through a special assembly. In some circumstances a whole school assembly might not always be appropriate and could exacerbate the grief or shock for some children.

Procedures:

- Contact with the deceased's family will be established by the Head Teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations;
- Staff will be informed before pupils if possible;
- When/if it is considered appropriate, a short assembly will be held to pray for and remember the deceased. The Parish Priest will be invited to attend and support. This assembly may be phase specific or whole school based depending on the connection with the deceased and any school community member who has had close links with the pupil, staff or school community member will be invited.
- A letter or email to all affected will be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed;
- Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate;
- In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance will be clarified (with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances);
- Where necessary a press statement will be prepared by the Head Teacher with support from MCC Communications Team where appropriate;
- Our school is aware of the potential on-going impact for children particularly around the anniversary of the death or the birthday of the deceased and we will share this information with relevant colleagues, particularly during school transition points.

Immediate support for children

Not all children and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners, although any particularly vulnerable pupils will be identified. Children and young people need familiar people who care, will listen and can provide:

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

- A routine, providing a sense of normality;
- Some space, away from an emotional intense atmosphere;
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space without the worry of upsetting a loved one);
- Access to appropriate resources via Educational Psychology Services, Face 2 Face Counselling and other support agencies;
- An individual person who has been identified with the child / young person to listen and support when necessary and
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

Long-term support for pupils

The school will continue to monitor and support pupils as they move through the stages of grief. This may be through ELSA provision, class wellbeing discussions or liaison with external agencies.

Support for Parents

Support for parents will be handled sensitively dependent on individual circumstances but may include:

- Communicating with the family and offering support;
- School will send a letter of condolence if appropriate (Appendix 3);
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to the appropriate people;
- Offering regular correspondence with home, providing reassurance that the child / young person is managing their grief;
- Sending a representative to the funeral if appropriate;
- Holding a collection /flowers to be sent as appropriate or
- Inviting the family to any commemorative events held by the school, at the time and in subsequent years.

Support for Staff

It is important to acknowledge that staff may be struggling to manage their own emotions and reactions when supporting pupils dependent on experience or involvement. It may be appropriate to:

- Openly acknowledge their grief;
- Pastoral support from Parish Priest;

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

- Give time to attend the funeral if appropriate or
- Offer specific training and/or support including Counselling or Occupational Health

Confidentiality

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout, pupils must be made aware that complete confidentiality in some circumstances cannot be guaranteed. This will help to retain the trust of pupils and parents/carers and will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information should only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals.

Inclusion and Equality

It is important to recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures surrounding death and that the child and family may have different expectations. It is important to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Children should be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

Resources

There are a number of books available to help cope with bereavement. More information can be found at: www.cruse.org.uk/publications/recommended , http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/ and SEAL https://sealcommunity.org/

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

Appendix 1

Suggested letter to parents following the death of a member of staff

<Date>

Dear Parents

Today we have had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for .number> of years. Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – all of which are normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer any questions that they may have but I have made available some information which may help to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from the school office.

The funeral will take place at <Named church or crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church.

Yours sincerely,

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

Suggested letter to parents following the death of a child at your school

<Date>

Dear Parents

Today we have had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>. They were told that <Name> died from <Name of illness>. Sometimes people who have <Illness> can get better but other times people are so poorly that they die from it. <Name> had been ill with <Illness> for a long time and died on <Day and Date>.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – all of which are normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer any questions that they may have but I have made available some information which may help to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from the school office. If you feel your child needs extra support then please contact the school and I will try to organise this.

The funeral will take place at <Named church or crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's teacher if this is the case.

Yours sincerely,

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

Appendix 2

Ideas for supporting individual pupils

Time out Cards

The pupil is given permission to leave the class for a short time when beginning to feel out of control or just to get some personal space when upset. A card is carried in their pocket and the pupil may leave the room without having to ask. It is important that staff are made aware to avoid embarrassing scenes for either the pupil or the teacher. It is essential that the pupil does not wander about the school but goes to a designated place and person.

Diary

This is a good way to communicate with a bereaved child who finds it difficult to verbalise feelings. The pupil leaves the diary somewhere mutually agreed having written or drawn whatever they wish. The teacher responds in the diary and either leaves it to be picked up or returns it to the child.

Happy/Sad Faces

The bereaved child has a sheet of paper/paper plate with two drawings of faces on either side; one happy, one sad. The pupil shows the side that reflects how they are feeling on a particular day. This gives the teacher an idea of how they are and therefore what approach to use.

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.

Appendix 3

Suggestions to include in a letter of condolence to a child's family

Try to keep the letter brief as bereaved people are often too distraught to deal with a long narrative.

You may wish to use the following if they fit:

- 'We were so sorry to hear that _____ has died.'
- 'We will miss _____ very much; she touched all our lives.'
- 'We are so saddened by the news, we hardly know what to say to you.'
- 'He/ She was such a (sweet/thoughtful/funny/creative) person and we will miss him/ her very much.'

It may be appropriate to add a few sentences about how you treasured your relationship with them and the contribution they made to the school. You may want to share a short story about the deceased that their loved ones might not even know. This will become a treasured memory for them and promote the healing process.

You may wish to end the letter:

- 'With much love and sympathy for your great loss.'
- 'I will ring you next week to see if there is any way the school can help.'
- 'I will keep you in my prayers.' (only if sincere)

Acknowledgments: contribution by Cantref Primary School.