

Date: August 2024

Review date: August 2025

Responsibility: KB, LB

# Bishop Challoner School



## Bereavement and Trauma Policy



**Bishop Challoner School**  
**Managing Bereavement and Trauma Policy**

**Bereavement**

At Bishop Challoner School we endeavour to support the individual child and sometimes this may mean that we need to support them through the most challenging aspects of life and ensure that these experiences do not inhibit their ability to learn and progress both academically and emotionally. We aim to offer outstanding Pastoral care, and this extends to staff, pupils and the families which we support.

This Policy and its' supporting procedure aims to equip and enable staff in the school in how best to manage bereavement of a pupil, family member or member of staff. Although we hope to never encounter these difficult times, the statistical evidence would suggest that this is a document which may need to be drawn upon to ensure best possible outcomes and to be outstanding in our support at such a difficult time.

Additional resources and information can be found at:

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

[www.livingon.org.uk](http://www.livingon.org.uk)

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

[www.annafreud.org](http://www.annafreud.org)

[www.traumaticstress.org.uk](http://www.traumaticstress.org.uk)

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

**Trauma**

There may be times in a child's life when they experience a frightening event – these events may be both expected or unexpected. Some of the examples of trauma may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Psychological, physical, sexual, financial, domestic or emotional abuse
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Bereavement
- Witnessing a violent act in the home or on the streets (stabbing, mugging, gang violence, sexual assault) – perhaps involving a loved one or themselves
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Road Traffic Accidents
- Bullying
- Life threatening health situations/ painful medical procedures
- Witnessing police activity or the incarceration of a loved one
- Life-threatening natural disasters
- Acts of threats of terrorism (viewed in person or on the television)
- Living in chaotic environments – housing, financial issues which lack consistency
- Special thought should be given to pupils whose parents are employed in services where trauma is common i.e. – medical personnel, first responders, police, military etc.

### **Manifestations in behaviour:**

- Nightmares
- “Flash backs” - invasive memories or images
- The feeling that the event is happening again
- Re-enacting the event or behaviour in play or creative outlets
- A desire not to share thoughts or talk about the event and avoidance
- Angry or emotional/ easy to upset
- Reduced concentration
- Insomnia
- “Hyper-vigilance”
- Separation anxiety from close adults or carers
- Physical manifestations – abdominal symptoms and headaches
- Regression – perhaps in toileting
- Problems with social peer group

### **Policy Aims:**

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during and after a bereavement / trauma
- To allow for effective communication and promote a clear pathway of support between the school, family and wider community (where appropriate)
- To identify key staff involved and their role in the process
- The Children Act 1989 highlighted the needs of the child as paramount. This policy aims to support that ideal and aim to limit the effects of bereavement and maintain a pupil’s well-being
- The policy is also in line with the Critical Incident Policy which includes any incident (s) that would cause significant disruption to the school. Arrangements are in place in the event of partial or total loss of site/facility/ evacuation and lockdown
- Arrangements are in place (see Critical Incident Policy) for any incident that the school would be involved in including bereavement, management of situations, responses, support for children, staff and parents as well as media.

### **Key Staff:**

1. The Headteacher and SLT
  - Will monitor progress and liaise with external agencies;
  - Respond to media enquiries;
  - Will keep the governing body/trustees fully informed;
  - Will allocate a member of staff to be the first point of contact with families/staff
2. The Pastoral Team
  - Will support children and their families and ensure they have access to counselling facilities where appropriate;
  - Will inform classes with appropriate information

### **Procedures**

#### **Death within a pupil’s family:**

Once school is notified:

- Headteacher or other member of SLT to email / write to family offering our condolences

- SLT to inform staff, first identifying any staff who may be personally affected by the news and offer support/counselling. Staff must always be informed before pupils and staff must understand that the sharing of this information must be carried out as specifically advised

- It is important to ensure the office team is made aware as they will be the first point of contact if the family calls the school

- Head of Section to inform pupils affected offering our condolences & explaining that a very simple message will be passed to their classmates explaining they have experienced a bereavement. Invite them to offer any actions they would or would not like classmates / teachers to take e.g. letting others know of who has died, passing on requests for support etc

- In the Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory schools, contact will be made in the same way as above by Head of Key Stage 1 & 2 and Head of EYFS. Head of Key Stage 1 and 2 will also inform other families in the year group with guidance of how to speak to their children and advice on family contact with the affected family as appropriate

- Head of Section or Form Teacher to inform the form that

“ x’s family has experienced a bereavement. Please be especially sensitive towards x at the current time. Remember to respect x’s wishes; he/she may or may not want to share details of their loss with his/her friends and classmates and we should all wait until we know from x as to how we can best support them.”

- Form teacher to collate messages of support

- Head of Section / Form Teacher to agree which of them is going to stay in touch with the pupil - email once per week reminding them that we are thinking of them and willing to do anything we can to help. This should ensure the individual is not bombarded with messages but knows people are concerned for them.

### **Death of a pupil:**

- As soon as any member of staff is aware they should inform the Headteacher who will inform SLT. SLT will first identify any colleagues who could be personally affected by the news and then inform all colleagues and Chair of Trustees. Factual information is important, and the truth should always be advised upon, but sensitivity must be given to religious and cultural differences. Staff must always be informed before pupils and staff must understand that the sharing of this information must be carried out as specifically advised.

- It is important to ensure the office team is made aware as they will be the first point of contact if the family calls the school.

- Head and Chair of Trustees to write to family offering condolences.

- Head to write to all parents within relevant section(s) of the school informing them and offering advice on explaining the tragedy to their children and supporting them. The following bereavement charities support children who have lost a loved one:

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

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

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

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

You will also find out more about children and bereavement at

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

- Deputy Head/IT to remove individual from email groups/MIS as a matter of urgency.
- Form Tutors, Chaplain and School Counsellor to offer support to pupils. Pupils who are affected (i.e immediate class groups) should be informed in small groups and by someone known to them.
- The bereaved family should be consulted on funeral arrangements and their wishes adhered to. Arrangements may need to take place for full or partial closure of the school in some circumstances.
- Where necessary, a press statement may need to be prepared by the Headteacher.

#### **Death within a member of staff's family:**

- Whoever is first aware to notify the Headteacher who will in turn notify Chair of Trustees & SLT
- Headteacher to email/write to or phone staff member offering our condolences.
- Identify a member of staff (\*) to act as the key link between the individual and SLT. This person will most likely be a friend or close colleague who can stay in touch with the staff member offering friendship and any practical support possible. Also should ask what information the individual wants colleagues to know and act accordingly. Remind individual support available.
- It is important to ensure the office team is made aware as they will be the first point of contact if the family calls the school.
- Head of Department or other senior staff member to take over the setting of class work.
- Headteacher to inform parents that x has suffered a personal loss and to ask parents to direct any email questions or concerns regarding work to \*.

#### **Death of a member of staff:**

- Whoever is first aware to notify the Headteacher who will in turn notify Chair of Trustees & SLT.
- Headteacher and Chair of Trustees to email/write to or phone staff member's family offering our condolences.
- Identify a member of staff (\*) to act as the key link between the individual's family and SLT. This person will most likely be a friend or close colleague who can stay in touch with the family no more than once a week unless invited to do so by the family. They will offer our thoughts, prayers and reassurance of any support possible. Inform family of support available.

- Headteacher to inform SLT. Headteacher to inform all other staff and offer support. Staff must always be informed before pupils and staff must understand that the sharing of this information must be carried out as specifically advised.
- It is important to ensure the office team is made aware as they will be the first point of contact if the family calls the school.
- Deputy Head/IT to remove individual from email groups to facilitate this.
- Head of Department or other senior staff member to take over the setting of class work.
- Headteacher to inform parents
- Open a forum for colleagues to express their condolences
- Pupils who are affected (i.e immediate class groups) should be informed in small groups and by someone known to them. Factual information is important, and the truth should always be advised upon, but sensitivity must be given to religious and cultural differences.
- The bereaved family should be consulted on funeral arrangements and their wishes adhered to. Arrangements may need to take place for full or partial closure of the school in some circumstances.

**How to support a child through a traumatic event:**

1. Headteacher and pastoral team to be notified and a plan of action created. Staff who may find this event difficult to manage should be highlighted – eg. those with a history of traumatic stress, if possible.
2. Try to ensure the child's school life is as *normal as possible*. This does not mean that the event should not be mentioned, but try to facilitate safe, structured boundaries.
3. Help the child to understand what has happened to reduce fears and anger.
4. Correct misunderstandings if the child does want to talk – does the child wrongly believe they were to blame?
5. School counselling service will also be made available and our Chaplain
6. Help the child to understand these things do not happen frequently.
7. Make yourself available to talk if the child wants to. Allow them to write events down or draw if this is easier than speaking.
8. Encourage questions and try to answer truthfully.
9. Ensure behaviour policies are adhered to and understand there may be a cause for changes in behaviour.
10. Speak to a member of the pastoral team who will support you and ensure you talk to them if you are upset by what has happened.
11. See further referral if necessary.

## **Catholic Children's Society teams with Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme**

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

Rainbows gives children the opportunity to talk about their feelings with peers in a safe and nurturing environment. This helps them to feel less alone with their grief and to understand there are others who are going through similar experiences. As a result, pupils' self-esteem and confidence grows and they are in a far stronger position to engage with school life and achieve their full potential.

The Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme has been developed to cater for children and young people of all ages, with different resources developed for specific Key Stages.

Further information for schools on this programme is available here:

[Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme – Information Leaflet](#)

For more information please visit <http://www.rainbowsgb.org/>

Linked policy to the Critical Incident Policy

Review Date: August 2024

Reviewed by: KB/LB

Next Review: August 2025