



**Ivington C of E
Primary and
Pre-school**

*Reaching together with the Fruit of the
Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)*

Bereavement Policy

Approval of the Governing Body

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for:

Bereavement Policy

at

Ivington CE (VA) Primary and Pre-school

It was revised during the:

Summer 2023

It has been agreed and is supported by the teaching staff and the governing body.

We aim to review this policy during the:

Summer 2025

Or sooner if necessary



Linking with our Vision – Reaching together with Love, Joy and Peace (Galatians 5:22-23)

To provide a caring, Christian ethos for the school, which inspires and excites a shared enthusiasm for life and learning.

At Ivington CE Primary and Pre-school, through our strong Christian ethos and focus on nine important Christian values, we are committed to providing a deeply nourishing, spiritual, ambitious, and broad curriculum.

Our motto, 'Reaching together' underpins our belief in equality of opportunity for all, where we actively endeavour to promote understanding and appreciation of our diverse society and give each child a special place in the world where they feel valued, essential to our community and equipped with the necessary skills to make a positive contribution.

We perceive our role to be opening a 'Window on the World', through which our pupils are actively encouraged to develop respect for the beliefs and cultures which enrich their everyday lives and encourage others to do likewise.

We strive to eliminate inequality through our deep Christian ethos of respect and understanding of all groups in society, which ensures that everyone at Ivington will be treated fairly despite his or her creed, colour, disability, or gender.

More details are available in our Inclusion, Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities policies.

The health, safety, and welfare of all the people who work or learn at our school are therefore of fundamental importance. We aim to provide a safe, secure, and pleasant working environment for everyone. The governing body, along with the LA, takes responsibility for protecting the health, safety and welfare of all children and members of staff.

Introduction

The main aim of this policy is to provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

Aims

At Ivington CE Primary and Pre-school we aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within a deeply Christian context. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

Procedures

As a Church of England school, Ivington CE Primary and Pre-school has a close relationship with Ivington Church and Rev Mathew Burns. At all stages of offering support, advice will be sought from both Rev Mathew Burns and the Church of England.

Within school we work in close partnership with parents. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies etc). If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs etc.) should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

- **Family Bereavement** - when school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:
 - the family should be contacted and offered appropriate support (see Appendix 1 for addresses and relevant telephone help lines)
 - the family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and how they have been involved
 - it should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family
 - the importance of working together and liaison will be explained – both parties assessing any changes in behaviour (eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn)
 - involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse, Barnardos

For a member of staff experiencing close family bereavement, absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate compassionate leave.

- **Death of a child or member of staff** - when the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action should be considered:
 - discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school
 - counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this)
 - the school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate and they wish to do so
 - staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support
 - pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers
 - the class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family to assist in the planning of the service
 - after the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process

- **Terminally ill pupils/staff**
 - in the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/guardians/next-of-kin should always be respected
 - should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child's condition
 - occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach. Sometimes there is just no other way.

- **Return to School** (see Appendix 3)
 - for the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic
 - where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teaching, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/guardians of the bereaved pupil agree)
 - staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief
 - teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined
 - family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite
 - staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement
 - staff might keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate

- **Compassionate leave for staff members**
 - The school recognizes that the bereavement of a family member or close friend is a traumatic time for a staff member
 - The school will offer support and will touch-base with the staff member after a few days, as appropriate (not immediately), suggesting "we would like to do whatever is helpful to support you at this time"

- The school is aware of the Local Authority Special Leave Guidance policy – the headteacher will reference this policy when acting with discretion to determine appropriate compassionate leave
- **Talking to the Bereaved Pupil**
 - try to be available to listen and support if possible
 - be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions
 - if people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling

Do

- Let the child know that you genuinely care
- Make time to be available and listen
- Accept all that the child is saying
- Allow them to express their feelings their way
- Let them know their feelings are normal
- Let them know that it is OK to cry
- Talk honestly and share your feelings
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Have appropriate physical contact
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation

Don't

- Stop the child talking
- Tell them how they should or should not feel
- Avoid contact
- Change the subject
- Deny your pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful
- Be frightened of sharing your own feel

Useful Websites for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community: www.winstonswish.org.uk
www.childbereavement.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk
[Elizabeth's smile](#)

Useful telephone numbers and addresses:

Winston's Wish Family Line - 0845 2030405 – national helpline offering guidance, information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including professionals and family members

Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services CRUSE

Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677 www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Books dealing with death and loss

Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley I Miss

You - First Look at Death - Pat Thomson

Storybooks available

Grandpa- John Burningham Always and Forever – Alan Durant

The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies? – Trevor Romain Badger's

Parting Gifts- Susan Varley

Saying Goodbye to Daddy – Judith Vigna

Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children Bereavement Policy, January 2017
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Support and Further Suggestions for Teachers

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement.

It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events.

Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's development and emotional needs.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death will disrupt the family for many months; in fact the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to acknowledge the child's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviors such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness.
- The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, becoming clingy, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused and unsafe.
- The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the dead person or child. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.
- Teachers should remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family, looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children.
- Teachers may require their own support structures. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining.



