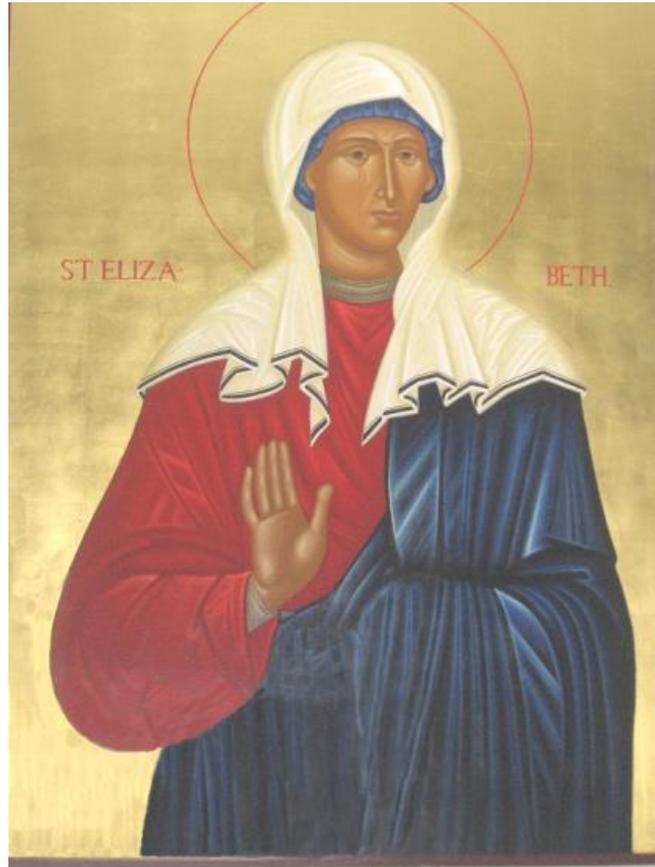


# St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School

## Bereavement Policy



### The Governing Body of St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School

<b>Date of Policy</b>	<b>June 2021</b>
<b>Review Date</b>	<b>June 2023</b>
<b>Chair/Committee Chair of Governor's signature</b>	
<b>Headteacher's signature</b>	

### **Mission Statement**

**Inspiring and achieving lifelong learning in a welcoming Catholic community.**

## **Safeguarding Statement**

At St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School, we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

## **Equality statement**

As a school we are committed to ensuring that equality principles are embedded within all school policies and procedures, as we endeavour to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Promote equality of access and opportunity within our school and within our wider community.
- Promote positive attitudes to difference and good relationships between people with different backgrounds, genders, cultures, faiths, abilities, sexual orientation, and ethnic origins.

## **School Values**

As a Catholic school with a strong Christian ethos we actively support and promote a value-based education. By living out our 4Rs – Relationships, Resilience, Responsibility and Respect, we encourage the whole school community to:

- Think about and reflect upon positive Christian, British and Universal values
- Experience how living out these values impacts on themselves and others, in school, in the wider community and in the world
- Instil a sense of belonging to the school, the local community, the country they live in and the wider global community
- Inspire individuals to choose their own positive personal social, moral and spiritual values
- Promote an inclusive school ethos and a learning climate that will raise aspirations and achievement
- Raise self-esteem and encourage children to take more responsibility for their own behaviour and learning

## **British Values**

At St Elizabeth, the school recognises and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Through this provision of SMSC, the school will:

- enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;
- enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England; further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- encourage respect for other people;
- and encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

## **Data Protection**

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ensures a balance between an individual's rights to privacy and the lawful processing of personal data undertaken by organisations in the course of their business. It aims to protect the rights of individuals about whom data is obtained, stored, processed or supplied and requires that organisations take appropriate security measures against unauthorised access, alteration, disclosure or destruction of personal data.

The School will protect and maintain a balance between data protection rights in accordance with the GDPR. This policy sets out how we handle the personal data of our pupils, parents, suppliers, employees, workers and other third parties.

Changes to data protection legislation will be monitored and further amendments may be required to this policy in order to remain compliant with legal obligations.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with its content and comply with the provisions contained in it. Breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary offence which may result in disciplinary action under the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure up to and including summary dismissal depending on the seriousness of the breach.

## **Catholic Ethos**

As a Christian community it is our belief that we should endeavour to support all children to realise their full spiritual, moral, social and academic potential.

## **Rights Respecting Schools**

The school community is committed to the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools award. We believe that all children have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness. Children's rights are at the forefront of our school policies, procedures and daily routines. The following articles from the UN convention on the rights of the child are of most significance to this behaviour statement.

### **Article 26**

The Government must provide extra money for the children of families in need.

### **Article 27**

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Government must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

### **Article 31**

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

## **Introduction**

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

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and sadly around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation and there have been times where the entire school community has been impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

While we would rather not have to experience these sad events, a Bereavement Policy means that we can be proactive rather than reactive when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require. In some cases, however, referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex.

## **Aims**

At St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School, we aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within a 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.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers and appropriate outside agencies.

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in the event of a death or traumatic loss is: **Ms Angelina John**

Her responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice
- To be the first point of contact for family/child/adult concerned
- Coordinating the planned action to manage school related incidents in and beyond the school
- Accessing and coordinating training and support for staff
- To keep the governing body fully informed

## **Bereavement trained specialists**

**Ms Anna Hair:** Learning mentor and counsellor,

**Rainbows Bereavement training** - Mrs Tracy Jennings, Ms Angelina John, Ms Ceri Walker & Mrs Fiona Faulkner

## Procedures

### **Family Bereavement**

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support. (See Appendix A for the Bereavement flowchart of steps to be taken)
- 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, Winston's Wish, Child Bereavement UK, Barnardos).

For a **member of staff experiencing close family bereavement**, absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate time off in line with the Sickness Absence Policy. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate.

### **2. 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 deceased's family 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 should be informed through clear, open and honest communication before speaking to pupils.
- A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom and how it should be distributed.
- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher.
- The school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Diocese, CAMHS).
- 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 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 proactively supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of distress should be offered appropriate support. (See Appendix B for the wellbeing specialist table)

- 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.
- Class prayer books can be created and a memory table set up in the school entrance with a book of condolences.
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings through classroom activities or 1-1 conversations. These shared experiences can give a sense of comfort and peace.

### **3. 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. \*

*\*this will only be done after consulting with parents of the terminally ill child's classmates*

### **4. Return to School**

- For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be very emotional.
- 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 structured.
- Family life at this traumatic time can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, and 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. This information should always be included at times of transition
- Inclusion team and class teachers must keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate.

### **Talking to the Bereaved Pupil**

- The most helpful thing you can do for grieving children is to acknowledge what has happened. This should be done by the class teacher on the child's return and they can also check how the child wants to be supported.
- Where necessary a one-to-one session can be arranged the learning mentor as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school
- Be calm keeping language simple and age appropriate. Show the child that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions.
- Adults are role models for children and if they can express their emotions, a child will know it's ok to do the same.

- Beware of using platitudes eg “I know how you feel”, (young people may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

## **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
- Try to answer their questions honestly
- Use appropriate body language to connect with the child
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation
- Take care of yourself. If you are feeling vulnerable, let a colleague know.

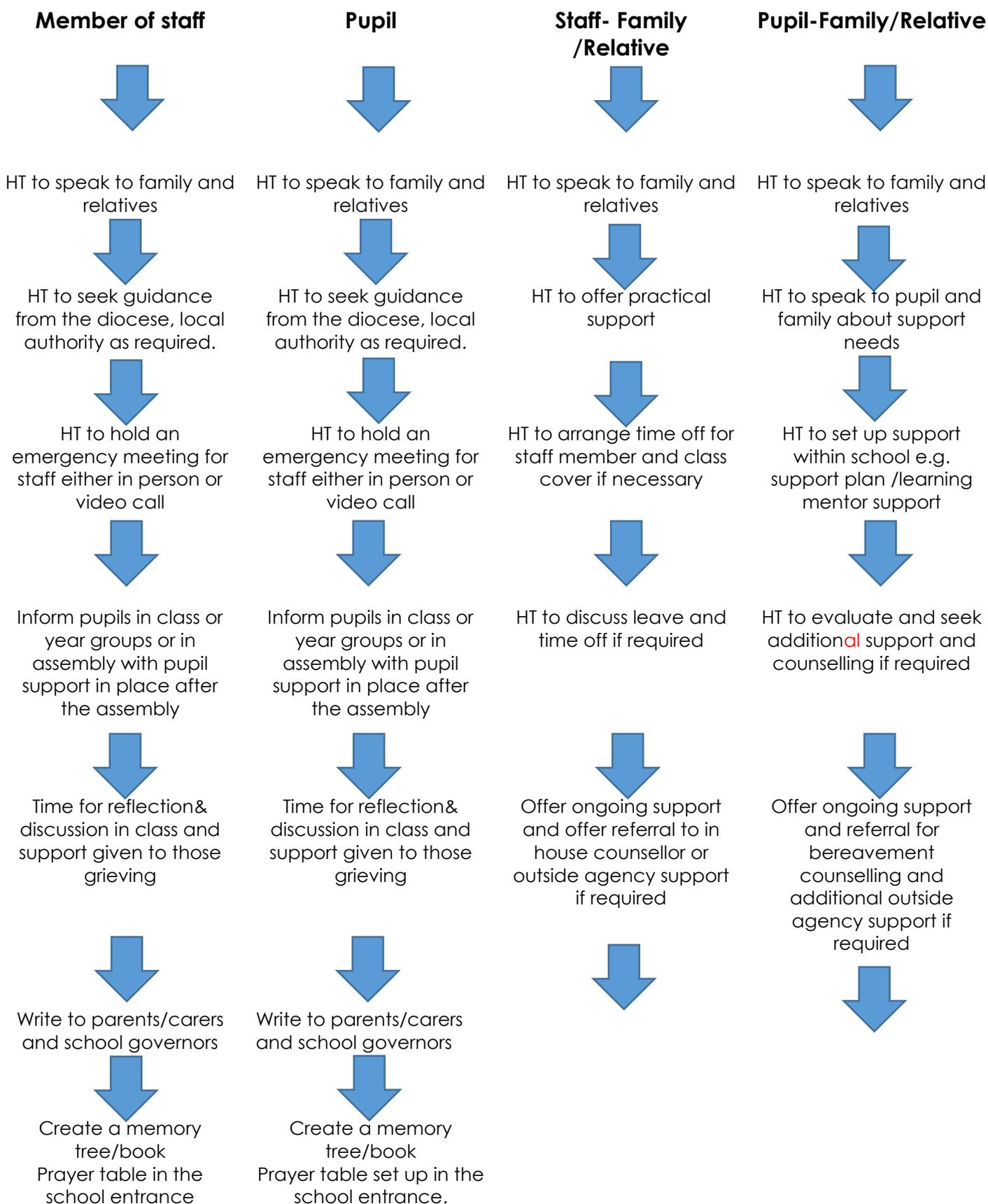
## **Don't**

- 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

## Appendices

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## Appendix A: Bereavement Procedures



## **Appendix A: Bereavement Procedures Continued**

### **Member of staff (cont.)**



HT to consider if the school will be open/closed during the funeral



Whole school Assembly (planned with the family)



Memorial Events

### **Pupil (cont.)**



HT to liaise with family regarding funeral wishes



Consider holding an assembly around the time of the funeral



Memorial Events

## Appendix B: School Wellbeing Support Team

Name	Wellbeing Specialism
<b>Anna Hair</b>	Counselling for children and adults Bereavement counselling Learning Mentor Strengthening Families
<b>John Peppard</b>	Learning Mentor Youth Mental Health First Aider
<b>Naomi Sutherland</b>	Youth Mental Health First Aider Prevention of Youth Suicide-Identifying and talking about suicide
<b>Tracy Jennings</b>	<b>Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Lead</b> Mental Health First Aider (Adult) Bereavement training
<b>Angelina John</b>	Mental Health First Aider (Adult) Prevention of Youth & Adult Suicide - Identifying and talking about suicide ASSIST Therapist ASK trained – Assessing for Suicide in Kids Bereavement training
<b>Francesca Camozzi</b>	Yoga teacher Mindfulness through art and creativity
<b>Ceri Walker</b>	Bereavement training

## **Appendix C: Useful websites**

Supporting bereaved children during the coronavirus pandemic:

[www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/](http://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/)

Talking to children about the death of someone close

[www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus](http://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus)

Support for parents

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-grief-and-loss/?>

Additional information and resources can be accessed at

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

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

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

**Appendix D:** Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of (Name) a pupil in (Year).

(Name) died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware many children who have cancer get better but sadly (Name) had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating (Name's) life.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

## **Appendix E: Sample letter to bereaved parents:**

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of \_\_INSERT NAME\_\_ death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly as a school community we will miss him very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his friends and classmates. He was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan \_\_INSERT NAME\_\_ funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time we will also ensure that anything of \_\_INSERT NAME\_\_ that remains in school is returned to you including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Headteacher

## Appendix F: Sample letter on death of a staff member

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement.

I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness and questions whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so although it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will of course wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community.

I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that together we will be able to guide and support the children through what may be for many a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

## **Appendix G: Covid-19 Addendum**

Support from teachers and school staff is crucial for bereaved children and young people, especially during the coronavirus pandemic at a time when pupils are isolated from their usual support networks, school friends, teachers and staff. Although staff probably won't see them face-to-face, there are plenty of ways that staff can continue to support pupils during this difficult time.

### **1. Keeping in touch with pupils during coronavirus**

Where possible, the provision of some contact and support from teaching staff can be hugely helpful to children and young people who may be feeling anxious and uncertain, or who may be experiencing the illness or death of a loved one.

Keep in touch, perhaps offering scheduled points of contact with class teacher at least every two weeks. For pupils who are known to be vulnerable, offer additional opportunities to check in with a key member of staff and keep in touch with parents and carers especially if you are concerned about their child.

### **2. Trying to maintain a routine**

Try and bring an element of 'normality' to their days by encouraging pupils and parents to continue the school routine from home, and to create some structure to their days, including during school holidays. Offer support and guidance in activities and work they can complete from home, keeping them engaged in fun projects or learning challenges.

### **3. Listen and reassure**

Acknowledge how strange and difficult this situation is, rather than trying to make it better. Listen to their worries and fears: these are real and we can't take them away, but it will help children if someone they know and trust hears them. Reassure them when you are able to do so honestly.

Be as clear as possible what help is available, both from school pastoral staff and externally within the wider community.

Please see website below for addition information re support during coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>