



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL  
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## Bereavement Policy

**‘Blessed are those who mourn they shall be comforted’** (Matthew 5:4)

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School is dedicated to the well-being and care of all members of our community. Bereavement is a painful time for all involved. We hear that Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. As a Christian school family it is our duty to comfort and support one another during times of bereavement. When this policy refers to bereavement it is referring to someone who experiences a sudden significant change, loss or death; this could include the divorce of parents or carers, a move to a new area, the loss of contact with a close friend or family member etc. Bereavement will affect each person in a different way and this policy does not attempt to provide the perfect approach for all those affected by death. What this policy presents are guidelines to ensure that all those who experience a bereavement are treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity. This policy is to ensure that all children, families and staff have the opportunity to express their grief, as well as receiving all the necessary support and information they may need.

Bereavement is a normal part of life and should be treated in this way; it is not an illness or a part of life that can be avoided. We explore the processes of life cycles and the reality of death and loss within the Science, Religious Education (R.E.) and Personal, Social and Health Education curricula. Great sensitivity will be given in these lessons to those who are recently bereaved. As a Christian school our understanding of death is framed within the Christian context of the Church of England.

Resources that can aid those implementing this policy are to be found in the appendices of this document.

### Aims

This policy is intended to put into practice the vision and values of our school which can be seen in our daily life. The aim of the policy is to provide all members of our community who experience bereavement with adequate and appropriate support. Such support could include:

- a safe environment for them to express their feelings and respond as they wish to their individual circumstances
- opportunities for the life of deceased members of the community to be celebrated and remembered as appropriate
- space and time for the person to come to terms with their loss
- immediate and on-going pastoral support for the bereaved
- access to specialist advice and support

The policy includes procedures and practices that should be implemented for these aims to be carried out. Though this will be a painful and difficult time for all involved, it is hoped that this policy will enable our community to be a safe and caring environment for all affected.



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## Roles and Responsibilities

Governors are responsible for making sure this policy is implemented, reviewed and to support the school staff where necessary.

The Headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has overall responsibility for support and management in the event of a death or traumatic/significant loss. If they are not able to carry this out another member of the Senior Leadership Team will have this responsibility.

The Headteacher, or the person or persons appointed to manage the bereavement in place of the Headteacher, is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate procedure (as detailed under Procedures) is carried out correctly, particularly that:

- there is a first point of contact for the individual and/or the family, preferably he /she will be this person
- the necessary levels of support are in place for the individual within the school
- any external agencies and third parties involved are contacted as necessary
- all media enquiries are responded to appropriately
- that the on-going progress of those effected is monitored

It is important that all involved are kept informed of the care and support being given in addition to any changes that it is felt necessary to make.

## Procedures

The procedures that should be implemented for the management of bereavements that may have an impact on the school or member of the school community are set out below. Any death, loss or significant change is an individual tragedy and each person should be given the opportunity to grieve in whatever way feels natural to them; some may need help discovering this. These procedures are designed to be guides to guarantee that each case is managed professionally. When these procedures refer to the Headteacher it also refers to whoever is managing the bereavement in their place.

### The death of a pupil or former pupil:

- The Headteacher should be informed immediately by the person who has received the information together with details of the source of the information.
- Upon receiving this information, the Headteacher should verify that the information is correct and accurate before taking any further action. This may include contacting the source of the information or members of the school community, including the Parishes, who may have more information or any appropriate third party/external agency.
- When the information has been deemed accurate the Headteacher should contact the family to offer the school's condolences and offer support, particularly for any siblings in the school.
- The Headteacher should then inform the school staff as appropriate. Clergy within the parishes may also be informed so they can support staff and children if necessary.
- If the child is still on roll other children will be notified when considered appropriate to do so.
- Parents and carers of informed children will receive notification of the event via phone, text or written communication – the form of communication will depend on the circumstances of the case.
- If the child is not on roll but left the school quite recently the school will liaise with their Secondary School (if appropriate) and it may be appropriate to follow the procedure given above.
- If the circumstances of the death will draw the attention of local or national media, the Headteacher should arrange for a brief statement to be written outlining the school's response to the death and some



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details of their time at the school. If individual staff or governors are contacted by members of the media they should refer them to the School Office.

- If appropriate the Headteacher will contact the family which could include personally visiting the family to offer support.

### **The death of a member of staff or former member of staff:**

- The Headteacher should be informed immediately by the person who has received the information together with details of the source of the information.
- Upon receiving this information the Headteacher should verify that the information is correct and accurate before taking any further action. This may include contacting the source of the information or members of the school community, including the Parishes, who may have more information or any appropriate third party/external agency.
- When the information has been deemed accurate the Headteacher should contact the family to offer the school's condolences and offer support, particularly for any children of the deceased in the school.
- The Headteacher will then inform members of staff as appropriate. Clergy within the parishes may also be informed so they can support staff if necessary.
- If the deceased was still employed by the school, the children will be told when considered appropriate to do so.
- Parents and carers of informed children will receive notification of the event via phone, text or written communication – the form of communication will depend on the circumstances of the case.
- If the deceased was not employed by the school but had left quite recently it may be appropriate to follow the procedure given above.
- If the circumstances of the member of staff or former member of staff's death will draw the attention of local or national media, the Headteacher should arrange for a brief statement to be written outlining the school's response to the death and some details of their time at the school. If individual staff or governors are contact by members of the media they should refer them to School Office.
- If appropriate the Headteacher should contact the family which could include personally visiting the family to offer support.

### **The Death of a Governor or former Governor:**

- The Headteacher should be informed immediately by the person who has received the information together with details of the source of the information.
- Upon receiving this information the Headteacher should verify that the information is correct and accurate before taking any further action. This may include contacting the source of the information or members of the school community, including the Parishes, who may have more information or any appropriate third party/external agency.
- When the information has been deemed accurate the Headteacher should contact the family to offer the school's condolences and offer support, particularly for any children of the deceased in the school.
- The Headteacher should then inform other Governors and members of staff who worked closely with the deceased. Clergy within the parishes may also be informed so they can support governors and staff if necessary.
- If the Headteacher deems it necessary the children should be informed as appropriate.
- Parents and carers of informed children will receive notification of the event via phone, text or written communication – the form of communication will depend of the circumstances of the case.
- If the circumstances of the deceased's death will draw the attention of local or national media, the Headteacher should arrange for a brief statement to be written outlining the school's response to the



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death and some details of their involvement with the school. If individual staff or governors are contacted by members of the media they should refer them to the School Office.

- If deemed appropriate the Headteacher should contact the family which could include personally visiting the family to offer support.

### Supporting a Bereaved Student (Death):

- The member of staff receiving the information of a student losing a loved one should pass the information to the Headteacher, if not already aware of the situation, who will then communicate this news as appropriate, following the wishes of the family, respecting any requests for confidentiality and privacy. The school team will ensure that there is appropriate support and consideration for the child.
- The Headteacher should contact the family and pass on the school's condolences. They should inform the family of what support is available.
- When the child returns to school, particularly if they are returning very soon after the death, they should be met by the Headteacher and classteacher to talk about how the school community is going to support them. This may be done through a home visit if appropriate / requested by the family.
- The progress of the child should be monitored over the coming months, this will include academic, social and general attitude. A bereavement will effect children in different ways, some will be able to work through at first but then be hit by the reality of the loss later on; others may have a sudden yet short traumatic response, while with others this could be sustained. When supporting a number of children it might be appropriate to create a group that can meet regularly to discuss their feelings and develop strategies to express grief while carrying on with life. If any member of staff has a concern for a child's mental or physical well-being they must contact the Headteacher who will speak to the child's family.

### Supporting a Bereaved Staff Member (Death)

- The person receiving the information of a member of staff losing a loved one should pass the information to the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher should contact the member of staff to pass on the school's condolences. The Headteacher will sensitively confirm what they would like their colleagues to be told. They should also inform them of what support is available.
- Requests for compassionate leave of absence, including requests to attend the funeral, should be made on the completion of a leave of absence form where it is practical/possible to do so.
- The school, if welcomed by the individual, will send representatives to the funeral. Staff who wish to attend should complete a leave of absence form following the usual procedure.

### On-going Care and Support

The Classteacher will have daily contact with the child and will together with the Headteacher be a source of support and link to the child's family. As and when they feel it is appropriate, they should keep the family informed of how the child is coping with the loss in school and can be informed by the family of the child's home life as well.

During periods of bereavement it may be necessary to adapt and alter some of the curriculum content to respond to particular sensitivities or address and support immediate pastoral issues. Classteachers will adapt and innovate in such a way that topics/themes covered do not cause undue or unnecessary stress and anxiety to the individual, family, class or school community.



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Appropriate books will be offered to the family – parents will be encouraged to read the books prior to sharing them with their child so that they are prepared themselves. These books are kept in a separate box within the school library (please speak to the School Librarian for more details).

The Parish Priest as well as offering pastoral support such as a listening ear, can offer spiritual support too. This can involve offering a quiet place for prayer and reflection, praying with the child / family, answering questions.

The Headteacher will be the first point of contact for a bereaved staff member. They will ensure that appropriate support structures are in place for allowing the member of staff to take a break from, return to or carrying on with their work.

### Significant change or loss

We need to be aware that a significant change in a person’s life such as divorce, separation or movement, evoke a form of bereavement in a child or adult and must be handled as so. The affected person can demonstrate all of the distressing signs of bereavement.

At this time of significant change or loss it is important to offer a supportive and genuine listening ear. No two people will react in the same way to change or loss so each occurrence must be dealt with sensitively and in a timely fashion. Depending on the type and nature of loss experienced it may be appropriate to liaise with other professional support agencies with an expertise in counselling or therapy. Further details, advice and guidance can be obtained from the Headteacher and/or SENCo.

### Prayer

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School by its very nature and ethos is a prayerful and worshipping Christian community. When bereavement is experienced as a school community it is very important that opportunities to pray, both individually and collectively, are offered and accessed to provide pastoral and spiritual support. This time of prayer is important for children and adults alike. As well as appropriate times of prayer being led by the Headteacher and other senior leaders, we are also very fortunate to be supported by our Parish Priest and the wider Diocese of Chelmsford.

### Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

The Governors along with the Headteacher are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

One year after the Policy’s approval it should be reviewed and assessed with any amendments made. After this initial year it should be reviewed and renewed every three years; unless serious circumstances dictate an immediate review.

April 2020

Review April 2021



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## Appendix 1: Passages of Scripture for Bereavement

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Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

**John 14:1-4**

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

**Romans 8:16-17**

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-18**

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9-11**

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

**John 11:23-26**

"Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:54- 57**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

**Revelation 21:1-4**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

**Psalms 23:4**



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For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:38-39**

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

**Romans 14:8**



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## Appendix 2: Bereavement Resources - Books

Always and Forever – Debi Gliori and Alan Durant

Are You Sad, Little Bear? A book about learning to say goodbye – Rachel Rivett

A Taste of Blackberries – Doris Buchanan Smith

Badger's Parting Gifts – Susan Varley

Children and Bereavement – Wendy Duffy

Dear Grandpa – Chris Lawson

Emma says goodbye – Carolyn Nystrom

Exploring the journey of life and death – Joyce Mackley (ed)

Josh: coming to terms with the death of a friend – Stephanie Jeffs and Jacqui Thomas

Journeying through Bereavement in Schools – Ian Terry

The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools – Ian Gilbert

Michael Rosen's Sad Book – Michael Rosen

Missing Mummy: a book about bereavement – Rebecca Cobb

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: your activity book to help when someone has died – Diana Crossley

Rabbityness – Jo Empson

Remembering – Dianne Leutner

Rosie: coming to terms with the death of a sibling – Stephanie Jeffs and Jacqui Thomas

Talking with Children and Young People about Death and Dying – Mary Turner

Thinking of Heaven: prayers for the sad goodbye – Sophie Piper

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: explaining death to young children – Doris Stickney

When Someone Very Special Dies: children can learn to cope with grief – Marge Heegaard

Where did Grandad go? – Catherine House & Honor Ayers

Where's my Mum now? Children's perspectives on helps and hindrances to their grief – Brian Cranwell

Will I Live Forever? – Carolyn Nystrom



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### Appendix 3: Prayers for those who have died

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Eternal rest grant unto (Insert name), O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.  
Amen.

Lord Jesus,  
I am very sad at the death of my friend/brother/sister/dad/mum, I feel very separated from them. I know that they are with you and you are looking after them. I also believe that you are everywhere, so where ever I go both you and my friend/brother/sister/dad/mum will be watching over me. Amen.

God,  
I want to thank you for the life of (insert name), for all the happy times we had together. When I am sad an missing them help me to remember all these happy memories and that now they are happy with you in heaven.  
Amen.

Dear Jesus,  
We ask you to look after (Insert name) and bring them into your Kingdom of Heaven. We also pray for all their family and friends who are very upset.  
Amen.

Loving Father and God,  
You sent your Son to us so that death would not be the end, you have given us eternal life so that life is now changed not ended. We pray for (Insert name) who has died, welcome him in paradise where there is no more pain, no more suffering and no more tears. Help all of us who miss them and are now very sad with their passing; give us strength to live our lives knowing that we will meet them again in heaven.  
Amen.

Merciful and gracious God,  
We thank you for the life of ....  
For the love, happiness and joy  
That he/she was able to share with....  
Your son, Jesus, comforted his disciples when he was going to die:  
Today we ask that you comfort.... In his/her distress.  
Protect and give strength to .... And his/her family,  
And in the darkness of their grief,  
Show them the light of your love.  
At this time we also pray for each other;  
That you may give us hope in our confusion  
And the strength to support ....  
And one another at this difficult time.  
Kind and loving God, we ask these things in Jesus' name,  
Amen



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## Appendix 4: Poems to help at times of Bereavement

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### Look for me in Rainbows

Time for me to go now, I won't say goodbye;  
Look for me in rainbows, way up in the sky.  
In the morning sunrise when all the world is new,  
Just look for me and love me, as you know I loved you.

Time for me to leave you, I won't say goodbye;  
Look for me in rainbows, high up in the sky.  
In the evening sunset, when all the world is through,  
Just look for me and love me, and I'll be close to you.

It won't be forever, the day will come and then  
My loving arms will hold you, when we meet again.  
Time for us to part now, we won't say goodbye;  
Look for me in rainbows, shining in the sky.

Every waking moment, and all your whole life through  
Just look for me and love me, as you know I loved you.

Just wish me to be near you, and I'll be there with you.

Vicki Brown

### Do not stand at my grave and weep.

Do not stand at my grave and weep,  
I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glint on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in the morning hush, I am the swift, uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circling flight.  
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there, I do not sleep.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry.  
I am not there, I did not die!

Mary Frye



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**Turn Again To Life**

If I should die and leave you here a while,  
be not like others sore undone,  
who keep long vigil by the silent dust.

For my sake turn again to life and smile,  
nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do something to comfort other hearts than thine. Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine and I perchance may therein comfort you.

Mary Lee Hall

**Epitaph on a Friend**

An honest man here lies at rest,  
The friend of man, the friend of truth,  
The friend of age, and guide of youth:  
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,  
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd;  
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

Robert Burns



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## Appendix 5: Beliefs of different faith traditions regarding death and the afterlife

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What is presented here is not meant to be an in-depth exploration of the beliefs of all major religions. Rather it is a short overview of some religious beliefs.

### **Buddhism:**

Buddhists do not believe in a God, so remembrances would not mention a deity. They believe in the concept of rebirth, after the person dies the Karma (the accumulated effects of a person's actions) will direct their next standard of life. Buddhist funerals are dignified but not sad events, and the body is usually cremated

### **Christianity:**

Christianity is focused on the promise of eternal life that is entered into after death, thanks to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cremation or burial of the body is permitted. Most funerals will take place in a Church. Depending on the denomination these funerals can be celebrations of life or solemn and reflective; flexible in content or a set liturgy.

### **Hinduism:**

Hindus believe in reincarnation; they believe this is because it is the soul's desire to return to the Supreme Spirit (creator). To do this it must be clean and the purification takes a number of life times. Post mortems are prohibited and adults must be cremated; though infants and young children may be buried. This should be done as soon as possible preferably the same day. White clothing is a sign of mourning.

### **Islam:**

The Islamic Faith has very particularly funeral rituals. They believe the soul leaves the body at the moment of death and the body then belongs to God. Cremation is not allowed as it believes it will prohibit the soul from returning to God. Muslims prefer to bury the body with 24 hours, women do not attend funeral services and men wear white clothing as a sign of respect.

### **Judaism:**

The Jewish scriptures do not make many references to the afterlife and there are divided thoughts upon it. Cremation is not permitted and it is disrespectful to delay the burial it should take place within 24 hours. There are four stages of mourning for Jews: the first is between the death and the funeral when the mourners should be released from all other obligations; the second is the week after the funeral when the mourners stay at home and receive fellow Jews to pray with them; the third is the first month which allows for gradual return to normal life; the final period last eleven months when male mourners are required to recite the Kaddish prayer every morning.

### **Sikhism:**

Hold similar burial rites and beliefs as Hindus; bodies are cremated not buried. White is the colour for mourning.



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## Appendix 6: Charities and support networks / available resources

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- Childhood Bereavement Network- a directory of support services  
02078 436309  
[www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk)
- The Compassionate Friend- Nationwide network for bereaved parents and families  
08451 232304  
[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)
- Cruse Bereavement Care  
0115 9244404  
[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)
- Winston’s Wish Family Line  
08452 030405  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)
- Care for the Family- support for bereaved parents; organised and ran by those who have experienced a loss  
[www.cff.org.uk](http://www.cff.org.uk)
- Samaritans  
08457 909090  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)
- The Laura Centre- support for those who have lost a child; or school aged children who have lost a parent  
[www.thelauracentre.org](http://www.thelauracentre.org)
- Rainbows  
<http://www.rainbowtrust.org.uk>
- Cruse  
[www.cruse.org.uk/](http://www.cruse.org.uk/)
- Havering & Brentwood Bereavement Service (HBBS)  
01708 476912 or 01277 283199  
[www.hbbscounselling.org](http://www.hbbscounselling.org)
- Kids Inspire  
01245 348707  
[www.kidsinspire.org.uk](http://www.kidsinspire.org.uk)