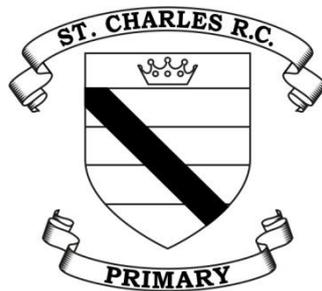


St Charles RC Primary School

COVID-19 Update for Bereavement Policy 2020



Our mission at St. Charles RC Primary School is to try and centre our life in Jesus Christ, the spiritual foundation of our community.

We aim to pass on the faith we share in partnership with you.

We want the children in our care to grow and develop to their full potential within a caring Catholic community which recognises fully their true worth and God given talents. We look forward to working with you in a spirit of mutual trust and support.

We take pride belonging to St. Charles RC Primary School.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a family of God, we love to learn and learn to love

Introduction

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible and for schools to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response – who absolutely need to attend. From June 1st 2020 some children will return to school.

Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact number	Email
Designated safeguarding lead	Clare Campbell Headteacher	0161 794 4536	clare.campbell@salford.gov.uk
Deputy safeguarding lead	Nicola Drake Assistant Head	0161 794 4536	nicola.drake@salford.gov.uk
Deputy safeguarding lead	Clare Brown Deputy Head	0161 794 4536	clare.brown@salford.gov.uk
Chair of governors	Stuart O'Brien	0161 794 4536	stuart.obrien2@ntlworld.com
LADO	Roisin Rafferty	0161 603 4350	roisin.rafferty@salford.gov.uk
The Bridge	Salford Council	0161 603 3500 8.30-4.30pm 0161 794 8888 Emergency duty team	https://www.salford.gov.uk/children-and-families/safeguarding-children/worried-about-a-child/

Context

From 1st June schools are being asked to reopen in a phased response. There are multiple pieces of government guidance that recognise that younger children struggle to socially distance however they also recognise the need for schools to reopen in a manner that reduces transmission and considers the health and safety implications for all.

Policy Aim

- To identify key staff within the school, resource and further support to help the whole school community work together
- To provide a framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to the death and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all
- To support pupils and staff and to be a place that both children and families can rely on and gain much needed support.
- For children to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by sensitive staff

Informing staff

The school will:

- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary **Vicky Smith our art therapist can support weekly** (requesting external bereavement support if needed – e.g.: Rainbows, Gaddum Centre, Winston's Wish, Cruse and Compassionate Friends)
- Where possible, discussion should take place with the bereaved family and their wishes taken into account before any decisions are made in relation to how and what to tell the staff and wider school community

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary
- All staff including support staff, lunch time supervisors, sports coaches etc., should be informed as soon as possible using your normal method of communication, e.g.: a whole staff meeting, ensuring that this includes part-time staff and measures are taken to inform absent staff over the telephone.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and if applicable the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death
- Ensure the senior leadership team are prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed
- Ensure a member of the senior leadership team is available to members of staff, parents or children if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Seek the advice of support services as appropriate
- Be prepared to arrange supply cover if necessary
- Establish one person as a point of contact for the family to ensure free flow of accurate information to and from school
- Arrange staff/pupil condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate
- Agree a set time for teachers to inform their class what has happened, how this is to be done and exactly what is going to be said. Identify any absent pupils
- Be prepared to follow this up with a special assembly, memorial service or memorial tree/garden
- Arrange for the senior leadership team to be on hand at the end of the working day for staff to de-brief and reflect upon the day's events and to agree upon any further action or support that may need to be put in place. Staff who will be alone that could be identified and arrangements made for colleagues to contact them by phone if necessary
- Where possible staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released

Informing children

The school will:

- Identify children who are most likely to be impacted by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased or are already bereaved to be told together as a separate group
- Where possible inform pupils in the smallest group, preferably class groups. This should be done by adults they know
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children, be honest, it is ok to say if you don't have the answers, but remember to revisit the question at a later date when you do have the answer

- Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that the child does not care
- Try to identify any key answers that we may need to prepare, e.g.; the facts about an illness, or dates which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing classes or schools
- End discussion on a positive note, not all people who are ill or have accidents die – any get better. Consider a prayer to remember the deceased and their family

In the days after death

The school will:

- Consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary,
- Ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so
- Provide staff cover for their normal activities
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children and staff can go if necessary
- Ensure minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and admin staff who are taking phone calls and dealing with parents
- Through the nominated staff member who has a responsibility for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the schools involvement in the funeral, if any

Bereavement flow chart



Supporting a bereaved child in returning to school

The school will:

- Identify a member of the team who will be the main contact point for them and their family
- Ensure regular contact, this may be daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family
- If they stay at home, remember them. Cards and messages sent to them from appropriate people (peer group and staff they have good relationships with)
- Before they return ensure all staff are aware of the bereavement and the possible effects on them, their behaviour and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be given throughout the setting
- Maintain normal rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important for the children within the setting and the child who has been bereaved. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure
- Consider 'time-out' strategies that suit the child and the setting. Time out cards, signals or signs can help them to exit the room quickly if they are feeling vulnerable or emotional, make sure they have a safe place to exit to
- Remember, there is no set pattern or time limit to grief – it is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one. At different ages and during new or transitional times, they will have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a revisit of what happened to develop a better understanding and acceptance
- Remember that it is not unusual for bereaved pupils to take time off school during the early stages of their bereavement. For some, the need to be with their families will be strong, and indeed they may suffer from separation anxiety when the time comes for a return to school. For others, the familiarity, stability and routines of school life may prompt an early return

How will staff and peers react?

The school will ensure that a member of staff meets with them to welcome them back, acknowledge the death and talk through their concerns. If possible offer them choices about how things should be handled and what support would be helpful. Let staff and classmates know how they want to be received and supported.

Fear of sudden emotional outbursts:

The school will support by normalising grief reactions and giving them choices about what strategies will help them to cope in the classroom, e.g.; able to leave lessons without fuss, 'exit card' system, where they can go, who they can talk to

Fear when they realise they may not remember what the deceased person looks like:

The school will, in discussion with the pupils family ensure a photo of the deceased may give comfort when the visual images begin to disappear. A special teddy or other memento will often give great comfort in times of distress and upset. They may also want to show this when talking about the person who died. Whatever helps the child within reason should be encouraged

Fear of being behind with work and unable to catch up

The school will support by clarifying with other staff what is essential to accomplish and what can be left and offering appropriate help to achieve what needs to be done

Inability to concentrate and feel motivated:

The school will reassure them that this lack of motivation and concentration is normal and will pass. Offer shorter more manageable tasks, write down the task, give encouragement for achievements and minimising difficulties can often help

Family grief impacting on normal family functioning:

The school will support by talking with families to ascertain where areas of difficulty lie and try to work out struggles with them and their family to help keep things on an even keel in school. Identify their strengths and help them build on them

Unable to meet homework/project deadlines because of altered responsibilities within the family and home:

The school will support by helping them work out and meet priorities. Being flexible where possible and offer additional support where needed

Forthcoming tests

The school will support by explaining the process and notifying the appropriate agencies

Ongoing support for bereaved children

The school will:

- If the child thinks it would be helpful and friends agree, establish a peer support network – ensuring that those helping are given appropriate support themselves or seek help outside, for example , by making a referral to Rainbows or Simon Says
- Make a note of significant dates which might affect the pupil, e.g., date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries. Make sure other members of staff are aware of these and the possible impact these may have. Not be afraid to acknowledge these potentially difficult times with them, e.g., “I know Christmas is coming up and it might feel very different and be a difficult time for you and your family with year without your Dad, so don’t forget, if it helps to talk, you can always come and talk to me.”
- Consider possible reactions to class/assembly topics. Discuss how these difficulties might best be managed with them, e.g., if making Mother’s Day cards ask them if they wish to be included in the activity too. Very often the answer is ‘yes’ as they still have a parent, they just can no longer see them, but still want to remember them.
- Look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground – bereaved children are often seen as vulnerable and can become a target
- Consider using books/activities to help explore feelings and ideas about death as part of the normal school curriculum
- Be alert to changes in behaviour – these may be an indication that they are more affected by their bereavement than they are able or willing to say. Reactions may present themselves

months, or years after the event, and it may be difficult for staff and others to relate to the behaviour to the bereavement

- Follow up absences – absences could indicate bereavement-associated problems at home or school
- At transition time make sure the new class teacher and or school are aware of the bereavement and support

Supporting children with Special educational Needs

All children benefit from being given simple, honest ‘bite-size’ pieces of information about difficult issues often repeated many times over. For further support visit www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx or contact Simon Says

The school will, when talking about death and bereavement with a child with learning difficulties, consider:

- WHO should be key worker working with the child and family – inform parents who this person will be and keep in contact, this should be someone they already have a good relationship with
- WHERE is the student most receptive to new ideas? Quiet room, outside, use this space for talking with them
- WHAT should be talked about? (as agreed with parents) ensure that you use the same language and ideas as the family to avoid confusion
- HOW is new information normally given? Signs, verbally, pictures. Use their normal communication methods to talk about illness and death
- HOW is new information normally backed up? repetition of information, use of social stores (www.speakingspace.co.uk) will assist with this
- PROCEED at a level, speed and language appropriate to them
- BUILD on information given – small bites of the whole, given gradually will be easier to absorb
- REPEAT information as often as needed
- WATCH for reactions to show the child understands, modify and repeat as needed
- FOLLOW the student’s lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate
- WATCH for changes in behaviour to indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed
- MAINTAIN normal daily routines as much as possible
- LIAISE with other agencies involved with the pupil to ensure accuracy and continuity of information

Appendix 1 – Guidelines for informing students

Remember it is ok to show your emotions. It is important we model to children healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear

- Be honest and factual
- Use clear language – use the person’s name, do not use euphemisms like ‘passed away’ or ‘lost’ use the words died, dead and death to avoid confusion

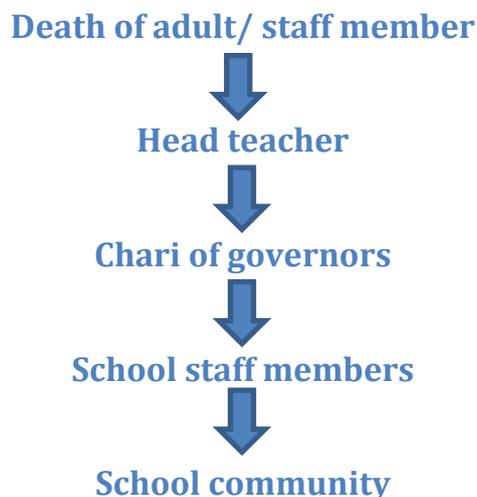
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand
- Allow the children to verbalise their feelings
- Allow the children to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death
- Ensure the children understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said and done. It is in no way their fault
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better
- Acknowledge some days will be better than others
- Do not expect to go straight into another lesson, allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical outlet
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity

Suggested scripts to use when someone dies

“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know that you will have heard of COVID-19, the Coronavirus and you know that sometimes people with COVID-19 get better, but other times people die from it. _____ has been ill with COVID-19 for a long time. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday.”

“Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school, or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____ was in an accident and they were so badly hurt that they died.”

Appendix 2 – information sharing pathways



Death of a pupil from the school



Family member



Headteacher



Class teacher



Child's best friend



Teachers and staff



Children



Other parents

Appendix 3 – Template letter

Dear parents,

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of _____ who has been a _____ at this school for a number of years.

Our thought are with their family at this time and in an effort to try and respond to his/her death in a positive way, all children have been informed. The children were told that _____ died from _____ on _____.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their question sat school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions at home as they arise. www.childbereavement.org.uk – supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement and www.winsotnsswish.org.uk – help grieving children and their families.

The funeral will take place at _____ on _____ at _____.

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 class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Dear parents,

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of _____ a pupil in _____.

Our thought are with their family at this time and in an effort to try and respond to his/her death in a positive way, all children have been informed. The children were told that _____ died from _____ on _____.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their question sat school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions at home as they arise. www.childbereavement.org.uk – supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement and www.winsotnsswish.org.uk – help grieving children and their families.

The funeral will take place at _____ on _____ at _____.

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 class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 4 – external agencies

www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx - advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death

www.childbereavement.org.uk – supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement

www.childline.org.uk – free national helpline for children

www.crusebereavement.org.uk – all aspects of bereavement

www.griefencounter.org.uk – helps bereaved children rebuild their lives

www.hopeagain.org.uk – helps bereaved children age 12-18

www.papyrus-uk.org – provides support for those dealing with suicide

www.seesaw.org.uk – grief support for children

www.sands.org.uk – providing support for parents and families whose baby is still born or dies soon after the birth

www.theredlipstickfoundation.org – support for families bereaved by suicide

www.uk-sobs.org.uk – those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss

www.widowedyoung.org.uk - peer to peer network for those who have been widowed before their 51st birthday

www.winsotnsswish.org.uk – help for grieving children and their families

Equal Opportunities

St Charles RC Primary School has universal ambitions for every child, whatever their background or circumstances. Children learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged. In order to engage all children, cultural diversity, home languages, gender and religious beliefs are all celebrated.

Our curriculum includes a wide range of texts and other resources which represent the diversity and backgrounds of all our children. We believe in ‘valuing what the child brings to school’ and recognise the importance of supporting a child’s first language, not only to foster self-esteem, but to assist in the learning of English.