

ST VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Bereavement Policy

Mission Statement

"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn love and grow together"

Reviewed Autumn 2024
To be reviewed: Autumn 2025
Reviewed by: Safeguarding Committee

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chair of Governors

Date ratified: 3rd December 2024

St Vincent de Paul Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all. We believe all staff and visitors have an important and unique role to play in Safeguarding and Child Protection. The principles of this policy will be applied in accordance with the principles set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, recognising that the welfare of the child is always paramount.

We are committed to Inclusion and Equality for all. We aim to provide equal access to high quality educational opportunities and to ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of the school community. We welcome and support those seeking sanctuary. Our school endeavours to provide creative and immersive learning experiences for all our children; providing positive and unique personal encounters for all.

Aims:

Christ is at the centre of our Catholic faith. Our Mission Statement is: "We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together"

We seek to provide a safe and happy environment where all can flourish; where diversity is celebrated and the gift of life cherished.

We acknowledge that our children are likely to experience a significant life change like separation, bereavement, loss and sadness during their childhood. Each child will react differently to these experiences, they will feel a range of emotions and there is no right or wrong way to grieve or cope with sadness.

At St Vincent de Paul School we create a safe, caring and secure environment in which all children can express, and be supported in their feelings. Our children learn the importance of kindness, respect and healthy, supportive relationships. In addition to our Catholic Ethos, we also address the issues of bereavement and loss through our RE and PSHE curriculum at an age appropriate level.

Objectives

- To have clear expectations about how the school responds to a bereavement and how the school will provide a nurturing, safe and caring package of support.
- To have a consistent approach from all staff in dealing sensitively and compassionately with bereavement, separation, divorce and loss.
- To support our pupils and families before, during and after bereavement, separation, divorce and loss.
- To have a clear pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, families and the wider St Vincent de Paul community.

Supporting a pupil who has experienced bereavement, separation, divorce or loss

At St Vincent de Paul School, we create a safe, caring and secure environment in which all pupils can express, and be supported in their feelings. However, we acknowledge that there will be times where our pupils need additional support to cope with a sad event or traumatic experience. To support bereavement, we

use the structure provided through the 'Contact Me' scheme from the charity Stand By Me.

Below are some of the ways we can help our pupils work through these difficult periods of time. We will:

- Allocate a key person in school for the parent/carer to contact. This may be a member of the SLT, the class teacher or a member of staff who knows the family well.
- Allocate a key person in school for the pupil.
- Maintain regular contact with the parents or carers of the pupil to ensure that the school and home are working together with a consistent approach. Each family will differ in how they handle such events, in the details that they are willing to share with the school and in what level of support they want their child to receive.
- Create a welcoming environment and safe space for the parents/carers to contact or visit school whenever they need to.
- Encourage the pupil and family to use our resources relating to bereavement, separation, divorce and loss.
- Offer 1:1 support e.g. Protective Behaviours
- Offer support to explore self-esteem, confidence and emotions.
- Provide opportunities for pupils who are finding the lunch break a bit too long or would just prefer some quiet time away from peers.
- Access specialised support e.g. Stand By Me who offer 1:1 pupil and group counselling, family support and parenting advice and support; School Nursing Service; Step2; DSPL Nessie arts therapists
- Work through resources provided by charities and organisations who specialise in childhood bereavement e.g. Winston's Wish or separation/divorce e.g. Young Minds

The death of a pupil or member of staff

Upon hearing the news of the death of a pupil or member of staff, the school will:

- Verify the information via the deceased individual's family.
- Allocate a key person within the SLT to liaise with, and support the family.
- Ascertain what details the family would like to be communicated to the school community with regards to the death and the funeral arrangements. This decision lies with the family; the school will only communicate in line with the family's wishes.
- Write a statement for social media drafted by the Headteacher and agreed by the family.
- Arrange for all staff to gather together in person at the earliest opportunity to be told the news. In the event of being unable to meet in person e.g. during a holiday period, the SLT will contact all staff by phone or email as appropriate
- Encourage staff to consider their own support needs and provide details of support services available for staff at this time.
- Make a decision about the temporary closure of the school if required e.g. if staff feel unable to work due to the bereavement or the

Headteacher feels that a closure would be beneficial to the whole school community.

- Decide how the news will be communicated to the pupils and develop a 'script' about what has happened so that consistent information is given to all, at an age appropriate level.
- Prepare a letter to send to parents and carers to notify them of the death. The family will have the opportunity to contribute to this letter if they wish.
- Decide any necessary changes to the curriculum and timetable for the weeks following to ensure that pupils are educated on bereavement and given additional time to grieve in a supportive environment.
- Provide a 'safe space' in school where children can go if they feel overwhelmed by the classroom or playground environment.
- Remind the pupils of the support available in school.
- Hold a special assembly/remembrance service/Mass to celebrate the life of the pupil or staff member at a time deemed appropriate following the family's wishes.
- Ensure the deceased individual's family, the staff, the pupils and the wider community of the school are supported in their grief.
- Work closely with the Diocese of Westminster and Local Authority (including the Educational Psychology Service) to ensure an appropriate action plan is developed to support all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Access all suitable support services available to the school. See below.

CPD

School staff can access CPD from Stand By Me via regular schools' forums, the EP Service and the Diocese of Westminster.

Support services

There is a wealth of information and support available to those affected by bereavement, separation and loss. Some of the services that the school uses are detailed below:

Bereavement:

Child Bereavement UK: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

OWLS – Overcoming Bereavement, Worry and Loss:
<https://www.janetomlinsonappeal.com/our-work/owls-bereavement/>

Winston's Wish: <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Catholic Children's Society: <https://www.cathchild.org.uk/rainbows-bereavment-support-programme/>

Stand By Me: <http://www.stand-by-me.org.uk/>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/bereavement-and-young-people/>

Citizen's Advice Bureau: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/claiming-bereavement-support-payment/>

Separation and Divorce

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/separation-and-divorce/>

Family Lives: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/divorce-and-separation/>

Gingerbread: <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/>

Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parentsguide-to-support-divorce-or-separation/>

Books for children to support bereavement, grief, loss, separation or divorce

The Invisible String - Patrice Karst and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff
The Memory Tree - Britta Teckentrup
Always and Forever - Debi Gliori and Alan Durant
Badger's Parting Gifts - Susan Varley
The Rabbit Listened - Cori Doerrfeld
Letting Go - Sharie Coombes and Ellie O'Shea
Grandad - Sarah Hewitt
Michael Rosen's Sad Book – Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake
When Sadness Comes to Call – Eva Eland
Goodbye Mouse – Robie Harris and Jan Ormerod
I Miss You: A First Look at Death – Pat Thomas and Lesley Harker
Dear Grandma Bunny – Dick Bruna
Heaven – Nicholas Allan
Rafi's Red Racing Car: Explaining Suicide and Grief to Young Children – Louise Moir
A Birthday Present for Daniel: A Child's Story of Loss – Juliet Rothman and Louise Gish
Flamingo Dream – Donna Jo Napoli and Cathie Felstead
Saying Goodbye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle – Ifeoma Onyefulu
Saying Goodbye to Daddy – Judith Vigna
Death: What's Happening? – Karen Bryant-Mole
Milly's Bug Nut – Jill Janey Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Doris Skickney Mum's Jumper – Jayde Perkin
The Building Boy - Ross Montgomery and David Litchfield
Seal Surfer - Michael Foreman
The Cat Mummy - Jacqueline Wilson and Nick Sharratt
The Heart and the Bottle - Oliver Jeffers
Vicky Angel - Jacqueline Wilson and Nick Sharratt
Milo and the Restart Button – Alan Silberberg
Rabbityness – Jo Empson
Grandad's Island – Benji Davies
I, Cosmo – Carlie Sorosiak
Where Did You Go Today – Jenny Duke
The Suitcase Kid – Jacqueline Wilson and Nick Sharratt
My Family's Changing – Pat Thomas and Lesley Harker

All staff at St Vincent de Paul are here to support your child and your family through any bereavement or life change so please inform us if your child has suffered any loss or sadness.