



**St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School
and Nursery**

**Bereavement
Policy**

Date of Policy Issue: September 2025

Name of Responsible Person : Mr S Marshall

Role of Responsible Person : Headteacher

Signature of Responsible Person : S Marshall

Signature of Headteacher

Signature of Chair of Governors

Date agreed :

Date to be reviewed : August 2026

Our vision for St Ethelbert’s Catholic Primary School is to be ‘a school with High Expectations for All, in the Light of Christ’. All pupils will be given every opportunity to achieve their potential and encouraged to learn about and develop their hidden talents in order to reach high levels of achievement. All members of our school community will be fully equipped to meet all pupils’ needs through appropriate professional development. St Ethelbert’s will be an outstanding school.

‘Every child at St Ethelbert’s is to fulfil their academic, social, behavioural and emotional potential in the surroundings of a Catholic community, and in which each individual shares or respects the Catholic church and Christian way of Life.’

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” John 11: 26-27

1. Policy Statement:

- We acknowledge that death, while being the inevitable end of life, is often unexpected and traumatic. Its unpredictability can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole school community.
- Should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.
- The communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act quickly, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication.
- We have a responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by staff and when appropriate, through the use of age-related structured programmes. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

2. Catholic Context

As a Catholic school, the Gospel Values should be at the heart of any Catholic education, emphasising Christ as the foundation of all that we do as a school.

Compassion Kindness, service of neighbour	“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’” (Luke 7:13) - The Widow of Nain.
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<p>Hope Resilience, perseverance</p>	<p>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”. (Matthew 5:4) - The Beatitudes.</p>
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3. Rights Respecting Context

As a Rights Respecting school, we seek to promote and give due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<p>Article 12 Respect for the views of the child</p>	<p>Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.</p>
<p>Article 24 Health and health services</p>	<p>Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.</p>

4. Procedures to be followed in the event of a death within the school community

Should we receive the news of a death, in all cases the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (It is essential to have the facts confirmed)
- Share the news only with, and as soon as possible, with the Head Teacher and/or Deputy Head Teacher
- The senior member of staff will:
 - Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance and examples and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.
 - Inform the Parish Priest.

5. The sudden death of a parent, sibling or close relative

In the case of the death of a pupil’s parent, sibling or close relative, a family member will usually break the news to the pupil. The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible and the staff community will include the family in their prayers. Should we receive the news of a family member’s death, the Head Teacher and/or Deputy Head Teacher will meet with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes with the below:

1. Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school.
2. Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
3. Agree the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
4. Inform the school community in the most appropriate way, depending on the circumstances.

5. As a staff, remember the pupil and family in our staff prayers.

6. The death of a pupil

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, the Head Teacher and/or Deputy Head Teacher will meet with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes.

We will:

1. Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school. This could be through a whole school assembly, an assembly for a year group, or an assembly for a class/form group.
2. Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
3. Agree the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
4. Inform the school community in the most appropriate way, depending on the circumstances.
5. As a staff, remember the pupil and family in our staff prayers.
6. Inform the Director of Children's Services at the Local Authority.

7. The death of more than one pupil

Should we receive such news, the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher, once informed of the salient facts, will decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been sent from the incident.

Only nominated members of staff/governors have the authority to contact parents. Such persons, when answering or contacting parents will have a written list of known facts issued by the Head Teacher (or Head's delegated representative). The nominated person will only:

- Say what is known for a fact
- Say how parents will be updated as information becomes more complete

More information on dealing with incidents can be found in the [Critical Incidents Policy](#).

The Head Teacher is responsible for dealing with the media and will prepare all necessary statements. Such statements should deal only with facts in as sympathetic a way as possible. We will agree a format of response to telephone enquiries, including approaches from the media.

8. The death of a member of staff

If such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff; supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the Head Teacher and/or Deputy Head Teacher will respond by using the guidance notes below:-

- Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- Inform school community through a whole school, prayerful assembly.
- Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students.
- It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way. Be alert to the feelings of grief of staff members which may strike at any time over a long period of time.
- Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death.

9. Return to school

Pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and for at least a two-year period and at times of transition, will be tracked through the school's pupil records and the DSL. This also applies to staff and other pupils.

12. Managing anticipated death and the terminally ill

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death. When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil's sick relative or friend;
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family's wishes)
- Never give false hope to the child or young person
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so
- Help the pupil to use prayer as a support in dealing with the situation

13. Bereavement support

Bereaved pupils can access a range of age-related support programmes once parental consent has been sought, led by our Learning Mentor for Social Emotional and Mental Health.

14. The role of the Parish Priest

Depending on the needs and expressed wishes of the family, the Parish Priest is available to offer pastoral support in a number of ways e.g. to meet the family for a chat, a time of prayer, a house visit, or helping with the arrangements of the funeral service. The school will approach the bereaved family to find out whether they would like to avail of this form of support.

A Sympathy Card will be sent to the family by the Headteacher along with flowers or charitable donation, dependent upon the family wishes.