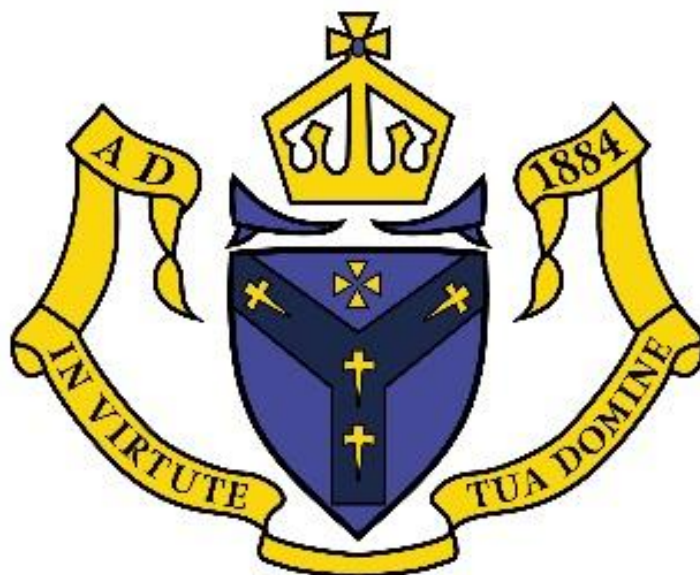




Sissinghurst VA Church of England Primary School

Enjoy, Achieve and Celebrate Together in Faith



The Governors and Staff of Sissinghurst (VA) Church of England Primary School believe the policies and procedures we write help us to continuously improve the school and develop our pupils to become life-long learners and valuable citizens of the future. We are dedicated to providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice.

Our Christian values of:

Endurance · Koinonia · Friendship · Wisdom

underpin all our policies. We actively reject any form of discrimination.

Policy Title:	Bereavement Policy
Date:	September 2020
Review Date:	September 2022
Reviewed By:	FGB
Approved By:	FGB

Introduction

This policy provides a framework within which all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, can work and gives guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

Aims of the Policy

Sissinghurst Primary School aims to meet the needs of all children and staff. 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.

Who is involved and the roles adopted?

Intervention is essential in managing and minimising any disruption. The intervention team will be ready and willing to work collaboratively in any situation that threatens to disrupt Sissinghurst's normal working environment. The key member of this team is the Headteacher (this may be delegated to the Deputy Headteacher as necessary) who will be the first point of contact and is responsible for liaising with all parties concerned. They will also allocate a named adult for the bereaved as necessary. The Deputy Headteacher will deputise for the Headteacher in the running of her routine day-to-day tasks. The Inclusion Manager, a nominated member of the teaching staff, the School Business Manager and a non-teaching member of staff will make up the rest of the intervention team.

Because any bereavement can be distressing for all of those involved, including the intervention team, the key member can always contact the following people for additional support and guidance:

- Chair of Governors
- Vice Chair of Governors
- Rector of Sissinghurst Church (*ex officio* Governor)
- Diocese
- Area Education Officer

The key member should always contact at least one of the above for additional support and guidance if the circumstances are in any way different from those envisaged in this policy, for example because the school needs to inform a child's family / next of kin about a death.

Action Plan

Managing the first day

Upon hearing of a death, members of staff should in the first instance contact the key member. If a parent, relative or close friend of a child has died, the key member will decide (after speaking to the child's next of kin) who should approach the child.

If a parent or relative comes into school to break the news a member of staff will support them. If the school is requested to break the news, the key member will decide who is best suited to deal with the situation.

The key member will gather details surrounding any death; if the death/s have been particularly traumatic, the media may be involved, it is therefore essential that correct information be disseminated to all staff. The Headteacher will be responsible for dealing with the media (see Crisis Communications Plan- appendix to Emergency Management and Business Continuity Plan). The key member will decide whether to assemble the whole team or not, depending on individual circumstances.

If the death is of a member of staff, this is particularly traumatic for members of staff who will be dealing with their own grief as well as comforting the children. In this situation points to consider include:

- keeping classes informed of changes in daily routine
- deciding how long will be needed for a settling down period
- having support available for staff and children
- being aware of children who overreact

Multiple deaths, death in school

The whole team will be assembled and the key member will gather together facts and details, and then determine the likely impact upon the whole school. In the case of multiple deaths, additional support and resources may be required, even additional teaching staff.

On the death of a child, whether at home or at school, the key member, after first consulting with the deceased's family or relatives, will inform close friends and acquaintances. A general staff meeting will then be called to allow private grief before announcing the news to the rest of the school. Confidentiality will be of the utmost importance. To avoid rumours, staff at Sissinghurst will be open and honest, and not make any assumptions about the cause of death.

The classes most involved will be informed as quickly as possible. Then in a special assembly, an announcement that is clear, to the point and cannot be misinterpreted will be made to the whole school.

After assembly, in their own classrooms, preferably in small groups, teachers will allow pupils to express their emotions, allowing them to show their feelings and thoughts in a safe environment, with a member of staff with whom they feel at ease. At Sissinghurst we accept that not all staff will feel confident in these circumstances; the key member will discuss with staff how they feel and they will not be pressurised.

Pupils will be allowed to articulate their thoughts and feelings; we will support them and not let them feel in any way inhibited. Sharing grief in a supportive environment can help facilitate the grieving process. Staff should be prepared for children to react to such news in very different ways; some may not want to share their feelings straight away. Sensitivity must always be shown, respecting the children's choice as to when they are ready to explore their feelings about what has happened. For students or staff particularly affected, depending on circumstances the help of an appropriate outside agency may need enlisting. The team will also need to identify any other situations and circumstances involved with individual cases and allocate a member of the team to assume responsibility and deal with them.

In the event of multiple deaths, it is likely that there will be considerable media interest. The Headteacher will follow the Crisis Communications Plan; any information that might upset, confuse or exacerbate the situation will clearly be withheld. Only one individual briefed by the team will act as a spokesperson, relaying consistent information.

It may be necessary to retrieve the personal belongings of the deceased for return to the next-of-kin. Information on the school's database, including references and addresses will also be amended and updated.

Depending on the situation the school may decide to write to parents to allow them to explain to their children the meaning and implications of an event. Any letters will also help parents maintain a consistency in account and to deal with the effects of the situation similarly to school.

Funerals, memorial services / pupil participation

Pupils and staff wishing to attend, or take part in a funeral service, should only do so with the agreement of the deceased's family or relatives' prior agreement. The key member, who should be the only person representing the school and in contact with the family/relatives, will discuss funeral arrangements with the family.

If the family wish pupils and staff to attend, the team will be available to offer support before and after the service. If they do not wish the school to attend, their wishes will be respected and the school may consider arranging an alternative service. During this period family and close friends try to come to terms with the situation, they may feel helpless yet wish in some way to express their sorrow. Planning a memorial service, readings, lessons, poems, or choosing hymns can all assist in the grieving process.

Grief, mourning and cultural differences (a brief explanation)

Grief is the emotional and psychological response to loss and is experienced by people of all cultures.

Mourning is the actions and manner of portraying grief and its expression varies between cultures and religions. Mourning allows bereaved persons to assign meaning to their loss, realign their role within society and to gain support from the family and community. Mourning is considered essential in enabling the bereaved to accept and come to terms with the loss – emotionally, cognitively and physically.

At Sissinghurst we aim to allow children and staff to express their grief in the way that is acceptable to their culture, guarding against prejudice and intolerance.

Managing the First Week and Beyond

At this stage the pro-active work carried out by the team becomes mainly re-active, sympathetic and supportive to the needs, feelings and emotions both of pupils and staff. The team will meet to assess progress and developments. Before returning to school, the key member or person appointed by the key member will make a home visit preparing the bereaved for their return to school.

Return to School

For a bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic. At Sissinghurst we aim to pave the way for this return, lessening the trauma. With the agreement of the bereaved pupil's parents/carers, everyone in school will be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns. This will allay any fears the bereaved person has about telling people and wondering how they will react. It will also enable everyone to be aware so they can appreciate and make allowances for uncharacteristic behaviour. Consideration must be made when including bereaved staff and children in school life. There may be some activities that are difficult for the bereaved such as assembly times and church services.

School as a safe haven

For the bereaved, family life at this traumatic time can be particularly distressing, with routines upset, relationships strained and the future uncertain. Therefore, staff at Sissinghurst should endeavour to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet well disciplined. Getting the balance right may be difficult, but at this time school, with its routines and rituals, can provide a respite and may be the only safe haven available.

On-going Remembrance

Family and close friends will remember the deceased pupil's birthday and anniversary of the death, causing bereaved in school to be particularly vulnerable at these difficult times. Staff will be made aware of such dates in order that they may react with the necessary sensitivity and respect.

Key Points for Counselling the Bereaved

- offer to support, but don't be obtrusive
- share grief
- allow discussion
- allow expression
- talk openly but honestly about the person who has died
- be aware of other peoples' beliefs and values
- reassure those who feel that they are in some ways to blame
- be honest with explanations
- be compassionate but firm
- be prepared to ask for additional help if needed
- expect regression
- never avoid the bereaved
- never pretend life won't be the same
- never put a time limit on how long you expect the grieving period to last
- be honest at all times

Training

KCC provide training for staff in managing grief and loss via the Kent Trust Web

Evaluation review and publication of the policy

Sissinghurst will seek feedback from the bereaved pupils, staff and parents. The Policy will be reviewed every two years.