



The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust

Learning Communities, Inspired by Faith

Trust Bereavement Policy 2023

Responding to a death within the school community

Related guidance

CHILD DEATH REVIEW Statutory and Operational Guidance (England) October 2018 –
updated September 2019

WHEN A CHILD DIES NHS Guidance for Parents December 2018



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POLICY DOCUMENT	Trust Bereavement Policy
Legislation/Category: Academy Schools	Highly Recommended
Lead Member of Staff:	Trust Head of HR
Approved by:	Trust Board
Date Approved:	September 2023
Revision Date:	2025 or in the event of a death in the Trust community
Review Frequency:	Biennial

All policies are written in line with our Trust Mission statement:

With Jesus Christ at the centre of the life of the Trust, we seek to provide learning communities offering the highest possible standards of education. We are committed to working in partnership and trust for the common good. We strive to encourage and empower children and young people to recognise and realise their God-given potential and to discern their vocation in life. As learning communities inspired by faith, we celebrate achievement, offering each other challenge and support, as together we follow Christ in self-giving love and service.



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POLICY STATEMENT

Bereavement is a devastating loss that profoundly affects parents/carers, siblings, grandparents, extended family, friends and professionals. Families and colleagues experiencing such a tragedy should be met with empathy and compassion. The unpredictability of bereavement can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole academy community.

Should our Trust and academy 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.

We acknowledge that the communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider appropriate communication through the Trust and academy.

On being made aware of an incident, each Academy will establish a Trust Bereavement Team to be chaired if and when necessary by a Trust Bereavement Team Leader. Members of the Team will be and not limited to CEO, Headteacher, Chair of Governors (or their nominee), Pastoral Lead/ Learning Mentor, HR and Trust Business & Compliance Manager (should the press be involved) and the Parish Priest.

It is advantageous that each Academy form their own Bereavement Team as applicable to the situation, and a Bereavement Team Leader should be appointed depending on the level of the situation i.e. it will not always be appropriate for the CEO to be, or to appoint the Team Leader.

In planning for such an event, it may be fitting that it be linked to the Academy's emergency/contingency plan. Any such plans must be flexible and may change depending on the incident.

We acknowledge our 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 academy environment supported by Catholic Care, trained staff and when appropriate, through the use of age related structured programmes provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff through and with Catholic Care. Academy based trained staff who engage in support programmes will be provided with appropriate supervision.

The Trust Bereavement Team will ensure all staff, governors and trustees are aware of our policy and procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed annually or in the event of a death within the academy community.



PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH WITHIN THE TRUST COMMUNITY

We will ensure that academy office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

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

- 1) Confirm the information, check it, **record it** and check it again. (*It is essential to have the facts confirmed*).
- 2) Share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff and a member of the Trust Bereavement Team.

The senior member of staff and the members of the Trust Bereavement Team will:

- 1) Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance (Police, Local Authority, Social Services etc. if applicable) and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.
- 2) Inform the Catholic Care Crisis Team (0113 388 5400).
- 3) Inform the Diocesan Education Officer (Angela Cox 0113 261 8034).
- 4) Inform the Wakefield Local Authority Crisis Emergency Number (0345 8 503 503).
- 5) Inform the Chair of the BKCAT Board Charles Gillott – Admin Office 01924 802285.

THE SUDDEN DEATH / SUICIDE OF A PARENT OR CLOSE RELATIVE

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member break the news with the support of an appropriate member of staff, if required. If this is not possible the Trust Bereavement Team Leader will ensure someone suitable to break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

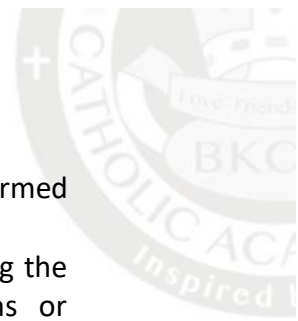
The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes,

We will use the guidance below:

- 1) Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- 2) Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within the academy; be that a full academy assembly, year groups, or a class/form group.



- 3) Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- 4) Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- 5) Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available such as the Catholic Care Support Crisis Team.
- 6) Inform parents/carers the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, email, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances.
- 7) Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.
- 8) An invitation will be made to the Parish Priest to liaise with the academy and provide support at a level he feels comfortable and confident with.

THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE PUPIL

Should we receive such news, members of the Trust Bereavement Team will be called together to be briefed with the salient facts and to decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident.

We will consider:

- 1) Who will contact parents/carers, if necessary?
- 2) Who will meet with parents/carers who arrive at the academy? Where?
- 3) Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- 4) Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. Members of the Trust Bereavement Team responsible for dealing with the media will prepare all necessary statements, advice will be taken from the Diocesan Education Officer and a statement will be released by either the academy or the Diocese. Such statements should deal only with facts in as sympathetic a way as possible.

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is 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 appropriate senior member of staff will call together colleagues from the Trust Bereavement Team.



We will use the guidance notes below:

- 1) Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- 2) Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff.
- 3) Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- 4) Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes.
- 5) Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- 6) Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full academy assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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.

IN THE EVENT OF A GLOBAL CRISIS OR PANDEMIC

The academy will adhere strictly to guidance from the DfE, the Local Authority and the Trust in managing such a situation on a day to day basis. In the event of a global crisis or pandemic, the academy will issue an emergency mobile phone number via the academy website and other forms of communication (including newsletters, email, text messaging and other forms of social media) so that parents/carers can access a senior member of staff at all times to report illness or death.

RETURN TO THE ACADEMY

We acknowledge our responsibility to keep a special watch on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to the academy. We will maintain this for as long as needed, and in particular at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns. Members of our Trust Bereavement Team will advise an appropriate response, depending on the individual's circumstances.



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.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will use the guidance below:

- 1) Ensure that appropriate permission have been ascertained by the parents/carers.
- 2) Confirm the facts concerning the pupil's sick relative or friend.
- 3) Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with Trust and academy procedures and the family's wishes).
- 4) Never give false hope to the child or young person.
- 5) Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness.
- 6) Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting.
- 7) Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling.
- 8) Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so.
- 9) Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so.

MANAGING ANTICIPATED DEATH THAT OCCURS DURING OUTSIDE OF TERM TIME

We recognise that we have a responsibility to support the family both inside and outside of term time. There could be occasions that anticipated death will occur outside of term time and we aim to provide the family with the appropriate support on request.

In order to support the family in this instance we will use the guidance below:

- 1) Ensure a communication link between an appropriate member of staff and the family is established prior to the academy holidays. In the first instance this would be the Headteacher, unless otherwise directed by the family.
- 2) First contact to ensure that information given is confirmed and taken from a member of the family.
- 3) Members of the team to be contacted and to determine the most appropriate way of disseminating the information to staff and pupils.
- 4) Determine how the news will be shared with the children on return to academy.
- 5) Have in place a plan to support the family member/staff/pupils on return to the academy.



MANAGING SUDDEN DEATH

In this instance the family will in all likely hood contact the Headteacher or Parish Priest first. The Headteacher will then contact the appropriate members of the team.

In order support the family in this instance we will use the guidance below:

- 1) Ensure that all information has been clarified and confirmed before any action is taken.
- 2) Ascertain permission from the family to disseminate information to staff/pupils and determine how this information will be communicated. In the instance that this is not possible, agree with the Trust Bereavement Team an appropriate response.
- 3) The team will determine how the news will be shared with the children on return to the academy.
- 4) Have a plan to support the staff/children/child on return to the academy.

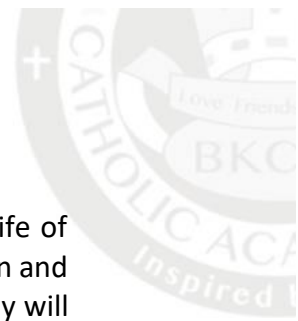
RESPONDING TO DEATH ANNOUNCED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We recognise the growing place of social media in the modern day world and that it is way in which people choose to spread information about themselves, members of their family and other people known to them. Where information relating to sudden death of a child/adult/member of staff is first communicated by social media, the Trust Bereavement Team will ensure that the information has been clarified before we respond publicly. In instances where this is not possible, the team will refer to the Trust and the Diocesan Education Officer for guidance. In the instance where the death is anticipated, the information should be clarified before a response is issued.

As a Trust and academy we recognise and respect the fact that staff choose to use social media themselves. We also recognise that commenting directly on social media sites on matters relating to the death of a child/parent or member of staff could place them in a position where comments could be misinterpreted by other contributors. Therefore, we would respectfully encourage staff to avoid commenting on any event where a death has occurred. It is also a requirement that all staff read the Trust and academy policy on internet safety.

THE PLACE OF DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. At suitable times throughout the year, November to mark Remembrance and Easter to celebrate the Resurrection, we will hold a series of special assembly/liturgy/act of remembrance, as appropriate, to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died.



We will explore and establish a memorial space to remember and celebrate the life of those in our community who have died. This will be undertaken so that both children and staff have a long lasting way to remember and the approval of the deceased’s family will be sought.

We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement within the curriculum. This will take place within the RE/PSHCE area of the curriculum in Years 2 – 6.

LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through our trained staff provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB (0161 624 2269 rainbows.gb.dc@btconnect.com) and access to Catholic Care support for one to one or family counselling sessions.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF WHO SUPPORT BEREAVED PUPILS AND COLLEAGUES

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The Trust shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Change Control

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Changes</i>
1.2			
1.1	04/08/2023	HR Manager	TBC – removal of Catholic Care pandemic guidance?
1.0	08/07/2020	Head of HR	

The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust is an exempt charity regulated by the Secretary of State for Education. It is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, company number 08253770, whose registered office is at St Wilfrid’s Catholic Secondary School & 6th Form College, Cutsyke Road, Featherstone, Wakefield, WF7 6BD.



Appendix 1: Template letter to parents and carers

Dear.....

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of <Name's> death. There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

As a school community, we will miss <Name> very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends, classmates and teachers. <Name> was a <valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan <Name's> funeral, please let us know.

We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With sympathy



Appendix 2: Template letter to parents and carers - death of a pupil

Dear parents and carers

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/headteacher/head of year had the sad task of informing the pupils of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term.

He/She was a <valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of the class/school community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

With sympathy



Appendix 3: Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff

Dear parents/carers

I am sorry to inform you that a <well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/ well-known> member of our staff, <Name>, died <suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness>.

The pupils were told today by their <class teacher/tutor/head of year/in assembly> and many will be reacting to this news. When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

With sympathy



APPENDIX 4: BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Bereaved Parents Support Organisations Network (BPSON)

Umbrella body for organisations supporting bereaved parents

www.bpson.org.uk

enquiries@bpson.org.uk

Bereaved Parent Support, Care for the Family

Peer support for bereaved parents including a telephone befriending service

www.careforthefamily.org.uk/bps

How can you help bereaved parents? BPS Handout resource

029 2081 0800

Bliss

Information and support for families of babies born premature or sick

www.bliss.org.uk

0808 801 0322

hello@bliss.org.uk

Care for the Family

Peer support for any parent whose son or daughter has died at any age, in any circumstance and at any stage in their journey of grieving

www.cff.org.uk/bps

029 2081 0800

bps@cff.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK

Training for professionals, support for families and a directory of local support services

www.childbereavementuk.org

0800 02 888 40

Child Death Helpline

For anyone affected by the death of a child of any age from any cause.

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019

The Compassionate Friends

Peer support for bereaved parents and their families

www.tcf.org.uk

0845 123 2304



The Lullaby Trust

Support for anyone affected by the sudden death of a baby or young child

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

support@lullabytrust.org.uk

Bereavement support line: 0808 802 6868

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Support for people over 18 who have been bereaved by suicide.

<https://uksobs.org/>

0300 111 5065

UK Trauma Council

Creates evidence-based resources to improve professionals and carers' understanding of the nature and impact of trauma. Aims to better equip all those supporting children and young people exposed to trauma.

<https://uktraumacouncil.org>

020 7794 2313

Winston's Wish

Supporting children and their families after the death of a parent or sibling

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Tel: 08088 020 021

There are also a number of useful organisations who hold information about the many smaller, specialised and local organisations available for bereaved families. One may be able to find an organisation that focusses on a situation more specifically through one of these organisations:

The Childhood Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

A Child of Mine

www.achildofmine.org.uk

At A Loss.org

www.ataloss.org

The Good Grief Trust

www.thegoodgrieftrust.org