



## Bereavement Policy

*'Serve one another in love'*  
*Galatians 5v13*

"St. Martin's School isn't just a school, it's a family. Firmly rooted in the Christian faith, the St. Martin's family will share the love of Christ with our diverse school community – all unique and special, made in God's image, with everyone welcomed and included."

## St. Martin's Church of England (Aided) Primary School

This document outlines the basic principles and procedures that underpin the schools approach to supporting members of the school community effected by bereavement.

Bereavement affects everybody at some time, and as a close community, our school aims to provide the best support for those experiencing bereavement.

We recognise that every bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved.

We aim to have suitably trained staff in school who understand the complexities surrounding bereavement, and can help support families at times of bereavement to ensure that the school does what it can to best meet the needs of the bereaved.

It is important that children are helped to understand bereavement in clear and unambiguous ways, and given opportunities to experience the full range of emotions that may accompany bereavement within a safe and supportive atmosphere.

The school recognises the importance of long term support for those who are bereaved, and will endeavour to provide opportunities for memorials and remembrance where appropriate.

### **Procedures**

To best support staff and pupils during times of bereavement it will be necessary to ascertain sensitive and potentially distressing information regarding the nature of an illness or cause of death.

We will always ensure that any meetings with families are conducted in a comfortable, private space, in an unhurried manner. If this information must be shared we will always be clear with parents beforehand about how we will respect confidentiality and share information sensitively, only where it is in the interests of the bereaved and the school community.

In the case of terminal illness the school will liaise with the family to arrange for a member of staff to be the main point of contact throughout the illness. This member of staff will support the family regarding school procedures to support them during the illness and will help keep the pupil informed about events at school during any prolonged periods of absence. A member of staff will support the pupil during their time in school, and be available to the family before, during, and after the death. Staff members will also co-ordinate

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attendance at the funeral, and any memorials the family may wish the school to facilitate. Where possible this may be a staff member who has an existing relationship with the family. In turn, this staff member will be given close support by the Headteacher, and will be supported in developing their professional practice in this regard.

At times of bereavement it is important that rumour and speculation are avoided. We will take time to talk to the affected family or staff member about the circumstances surrounding the bereavement. Knowing the background will help us provide the best support for those affected by bereavement. We will discuss with the family the extent to which the circumstances should be shared with other staff members and pupils, in order to provide the best support for the grieving child.

To help pupils understand bereavement we will typically aim to inform groups of children of the death of a pupil or staff member in small groups, supported by staff with whom they are familiar. We will allow children to ask questions, and will endeavour to answer sensitively, factually and using unambiguous language to help all children understand what has happened. We will seek to involve the bereaved family in these decisions, and will offer to draft a letter to parents explaining the situation.

In the event of the pupil being bereaved of a loved one or close friend we will discuss what the pupil has already been told in order to provide clarity and consistency for the pupils. Where there are religious considerations we will also seek the views of family, and endeavour to respect those beliefs. We will allocate a member of staff to whom the pupil relates well to be a mentor in school and encourage the pupil to feel free to express themselves when and how they choose, by providing time-out space and a range of activities and channels through which the pupil may wish to express their feelings.

Subject to the wishes of the family, in the event where a pupil or staff member has died, the school may be closed if necessary in order to allow staff and pupils to attend the funeral. Where a member of the school community has died, the school will endeavour to provide additional space and time for those staff or pupils most likely to be particularly affected. Staff will be expected to be particularly vigilant regarding the emotional wellbeing of pupils close to the deceased.

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We will ensure long term support for the pupil by keeping a diary of significant days and ensuring that this information is communicated (with consent) to the pupils next school. We will endeavour to include the child in commemorative days such as mother's/father's day, by sensitively providing time for reflection and remembrance where appropriate.

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Where there is media interest no member of staff should engage with the media. All comment should be made through the Headteacher or chair of governors if the Headteacher is unavailable.