

Bereavement Policy



Learning together in a changing world, creating success for all.

Trinity Fields is a Rights Respecting School, a Healthy School, Investors in Families School, an ECO School, a MOVE school and an Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Flagship School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our pupil friendly and adult version of our “**Shared Values and Aims**”.

School context

Trinity Fields is a **Rights Respecting School**; we are committed to the principles and values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all areas of our work. We are a school where pupils are at the heart of everything we do. We successfully achieved UNICEF’s “Rights Respecting School Award” in **January 2017** and we have a well-established record of developing pupil engagement at all levels.

Refer to pupil friendly “**Pupil Participation**” policy and our whole school “**Pupil Participation**” policy for further details.

We are a **Healthy School**; we take responsibility for maintaining and promoting the health and wellbeing of the Trinity Fields team (pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors etc.). This includes teaching pupils about how to lead healthy lives by enabling them and staff to take control over aspects of the school environment that influence their health and wellbeing. We achieved the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes National Quality Award in **March 2018, with re-accreditation in December 2020**.

Refer to “**Health and Well-being for Pupils**” policy and our whole school “**Health and Well-being**” policy for further details.

We are an **Investors in Families School**. We are committed to developing active and effective relationships with parents/carers and families and recognise the value of close partnership working to improve outcomes for our pupils. We were the first Special School in Wales to achieve the Investors in Families Quality Mark, and regularly share our excellent practices with other settings.

We demonstrate our commitment to the Rights to Action agenda and value and support the important role that families play in the education of their child. We strive to promote social inclusion and a sense of wellbeing for families through positive participation in their child’s education.

During the re-accreditation process (2019), the school’s work was judged to be of a very high quality. Family and Community Engagement are fully embedded and it was evident that the school works hard on its journey towards excellence. The assessor was very pleased to award the school the **Diamond Standard**.

We have demonstrated through a national annual assessment that we have the capacity to play a strong leadership role in developing inclusion best practice across a network of schools; as well as being committed to extending those networks and develop classroom-based research.

Refer to “**Inclusion**” policy and to **IQM assessment reports** for further details.

In **summer 2022** we gained our **Platinum ECO Schools Award**; the Eco-Schools programme is designed to be pupil-led and looks at the impact of our actions on the environment.

Our sustained journey towards attaining the Platinum Award showcases pupils' ideas and helps to inspire others to make the right environmental choices.

More recently (2019), the school started its journey towards becoming a **MOVE school**; successfully accredited at Silver level in **December 2021**. The MOVE Programme is an activity-based practice that enables children and young people with physical disabilities to sit, stand, walk, and transition as independently as possible.

Our overarching philosophy is summarised in the following statement:

“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning experiences. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.

Education in Wales: Our National Mission

Our work with pupils and their families will be developed building upon Wales' National Mission. This national mission is ambitious, innovative and confident ensuring that we all take responsibility for all of our pupils to have equal opportunities to reach the highest possible standards.

Trinity Fields will continue to develop as a learning organisation to ensure it has the capacity to adapt to and explore a range of new approaches which results in improved outcomes and well-being for all of our pupils.

In order to realise our shared vision and approaches in delivering Wales' transformational curriculum that will enable all of the pupils at Trinity Fields to make the progress commensurate with their individual needs we are committed to the 4 key enabling objectives, detailed in **“Education in Wales: Our national mission (2017)**. These are:

- **Developing a high-quality education profession.**
- **Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards.**
- **Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellent, equity and well-being.**
- **Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.**

The core purposes and values that are associated with these prestigious national awards are encapsulated in our vision and aims:

“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning opportunities. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.

Qualified for Life (2014) provides further endorsement of our commitment to being a Rights Respecting School by stating:

“learners are the heart of all that we do” and further “every child and young person benefits from personalised learning”.

Successful Futures (2015) also states that:

“Each child and young person in Wales should be able to benefit from curriculum and assessment arrangements that will best meet their present needs and equip them for their future lives. Our children and young people only have a relatively short time at school. We must use that time judiciously and productively to help each one of them to grow as a capable, healthy, well-rounded individual who can thrive in the face of unknown future challenges”.

‘Death neither obeys the school timetable, nor appears on it ... it enters the classroom without knocking.’

Introduction

Death is a subject that nobody ever wants to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point, the school community will be affected by a death. As Trinity Fields is a special school that caters for pupils with complex needs, including those with life limiting conditions it is inevitable that we will need to say “goodbye” at some point in time. This might include the death of a pupil, the death of a staff member, the death of a pupil’s family member, or the death of a key member in the school community such as a governor or popular visitor to the school.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can support pupils to deal with and emerge positively from sad experiences. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

Everyone will react to bereavement in their own unique way and the effects of this are dependent on their levels of awareness, understanding, emotional security and, not least, their relationship with the deceased.

Trinity Fields School is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff, pupils and wider school community. We are dedicated to the continual development of a ‘healthy school.’ We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that supports and prepares pupils for coping with the separation or loss of a loved one through death.

Aims

Our aim is to help pupils explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death as well as to support those personally affected by it.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents/carers, prospective parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances.

Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher will have overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

In addition, the designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is **Tracey McGuirk**, deputy headteacher.

Responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies, wherever possible.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Obtaining and sharing accurate information.
- Communicating with those directly involved.
- Supporting pupils, parents and staff.
- Establishing and coordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools, where appropriate.
- Accessing and coordinating training and support for staff

The person responsible will take into consideration the following short term support:

- Who should break the news.
- What exactly will the pupils be told
- How they will be told (e.g. whole school, class, individual).
- When they will be told.
- How the information will be communicated to parents and staff (**Appendix 1**)
- What questions might be asked by pupils, parents/carers, staff.

Staff support and training

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and each other. Support is available from:

www.tyhafan.org

www.winstonswish.org.uk,

www.cruse.org.uk/wales

www.stdavidshospicecare.org

Curriculum

Teaching should use a variety of approaches to meet the needs of pupils and show sensitivity to age and experience. Full details of our approaches will be found in the “**Teaching, Learning and Curriculum**” policy. Teaching methods may include:

- The use of photographs, mementoes, stories and music.
- Using clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to ‘soften the blow’ with ambiguous language.
- Using a range of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama (**Appendix 2**).

Saying “goodbye”

Many schools organise some sort of special assembly after a death. It can put back a sense of normality into what may be an unsettling time. A special assembly serves to normalise grief, give the message that it is okay to be sad, but equally okay not to be affected, and inform pupils and staff of support available.

Procedures

1. Contact with the deceased’s family should be established by the headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils if possible.
3. A letter to all affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
4. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
5. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
6. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the headteacher.
7. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

Immediate support for pupils

Not all pupils will need the support of specialist practitioners; they need familiar people who care and will listen:

- A routine, providing a sense of normality.
- Some space, away from an emotional intense atmosphere.
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space without the worry of upsetting a loved one).
- Access to appropriate resources via Healthy Schools, libraries, and support agencies.
- An individual person to hear and support the pupils when necessary.
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

If the pupil is known to Ty Hafan then additional support will be available from their specialist staff.

Long-term support for pupils

In the longer term it may be necessary to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example shock, anger, guilt, depression etc. The Head Teacher and designated person should compile and keep an updated a list of outside professionals and agencies who can come into the school to counsel pupils if necessary.

Support for parents/carers

Support for parents/carers should be handled sensitively dependent on individual circumstances but may include:

- Communicating with the family and offering support. Send a letter of condolence from the school if appropriate (**Appendix 3**).
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to the appropriate people.
- Offering regular correspondence with home, providing reassurance that the child is managing their grief.
- Sending a representative to the funeral if appropriate.
- Holding a collection /flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- Inviting the family to any commemorative events held by the school, at the time and in subsequent years.

Support for staff

It is important to acknowledge that staff may be struggling to manage their own emotions and reactions when supporting pupils dependent on experience or involvement. It may be appropriate to:

- Openly acknowledge their grief.
- Give time to attend the funeral if appropriate.
- Offer specific training and/or support.

Confidentiality

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout, pupils must be made aware that complete confidentiality in some circumstances cannot be guaranteed. This will help to retain the trust of pupils and parents/carers and will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information should only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals.

Inclusion and equality

It is important to recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures surrounding death and that the child and family may have different expectations. It is important to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Pupils should be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

Resources

There are a number of books available to help cope with bereavement. More information can be found at: www.cruse.org.uk/publications/recommended

Policy review

In light of the ongoing and rapid curriculum and assessment developments as part of “Successful Futures” this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it reflects the progress towards the full implementation of the 2021 curriculum.

Signed		Headteacher
Signed		Chair of Governors
Th policy will be reviewed in line with the school’s policy review cycle.		

As a Rights Respecting School we are committed to embedding the principles and values of the United Nation Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This policy enables our pupils to access and enjoy the following articles of the convention:

Article 12: Every child has the right to be heard.

Article 28: Every child has the right to an education.

Article 29: Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Article 42: Every child has the right to know their rights.

Appendix 1: suggested letter to parents following the death of a member of staff

<Date>

Dear Parents/Carers

Today we have had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for .number> of years. Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – all of which are normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer any questions that they may have but I have made available some information which may help to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from the school office.

The funeral will take place at <Named church or crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 2: suggested letter to parents following the death of a child at your school

<Date>

Dear Parents/Carers

Today we have had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>. They were told that <Name> died from <Name of illness>. Sometimes people who have <Illness> can get better but other times people are so poorly that they die from it. <Name> had been ill with <Illness> for a long time and died on <Day and Date>.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings – sadness, anger and confusion – all of which are normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer any questions that they may have but I have made available some information which may help to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from the school office. If you feel your child needs extra support then please contact the school and I will try to organise this.

The funeral will take place at <Named church or crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's teacher if this is the case.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 3: Ideas for supporting individual pupils

Time out Cards

The pupil is given permission to leave the class for a short time when beginning to feel out of control or just to get some personal space when upset. A card is carried in their pocket and the pupil may leave the room without having to ask. It is important that staff are made aware to avoid embarrassing scenes for either the pupil or the teacher. It is essential that the pupil does not wander about the school but goes to a designated place and person.

Secret Diary

This is a good way to communicate with a bereaved child who finds it difficult to verbalise feelings. The pupil leaves the diary somewhere mutually agreed having written or drawn whatever they wish. The teacher responds in the diary and either leaves it to be picked up or returns it to the child.

Happy/Sad Faces

The bereaved child has a sheet of paper/paper plate with two drawings of faces on either side; one happy, one sad. The pupil shows the side that reflects how they are feeling on a particular day. This gives the teacher an idea of how they are and therefore what approach to use.

Appendix 4: Suggestions to include in a letter of condolence to a child's family

Try to keep the letter brief as bereaved people are often too distraught to deal with a long narrative.

You may wish to use the following if they fit:

- 'We were so sorry to hear that ____ has died.'
- 'We will miss ____ very much; she touched all our lives.'
- 'We are so saddened by the news, we hardly know what to say to you.'
- 'He was such a (sweet/thoughtful/funny/creative) person and we will miss him very much.'

It may be appropriate to add a few sentences about how you treasured your relationship with them and the contribution they made to the school. You may want to share a short story about the deceased that their loved ones might not even know. This will become a treasured memory for them and promote the healing process.

You may wish to end the letter:

- 'With much love and sympathy for your great loss.'
- 'I will ring you next week to see if there is any way the school can help.'
- 'I will keep you in my prayers.' (only if sincere)