

English Martyrs' Catholic School



Supporting Students Through Bereavement

*English Martyrs, as a community centred in Christ,
strives to develop the talents of each person.
May they all be one.'*

Approved/reviewed by Governors:	
June 2026	
Date of next review	June 2027

Rationale

Bereavement is loss suffered after the death or departure of a loved one which can be experienced as a result of death, divorce or separation. Whereas grief is the emotional and psychological response to loss, mourning denotes the actions and manner portraying such grief and traditions of mourning may vary. It is important that as a community centred in Christ we show respect for people coming from different countries and traditions and provide support and guidance to bereaved members of the school.

Purposes

Bereavement can affect attitude, performance and the ability to cope with life in school. In line with our mission as a Catholic school, our Healthy Schools Status and Every Child Matters we strive to have an environment where members have security and stability and are cared for, attend and enjoy school, develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.

Guidelines

The school curriculum and in particular Religious Education in Year 9 and Year 11 provides opportunities for students to explore experiences and feelings associated with loss and bereavement. Death is acknowledged in the Christian context of the resurrection. The month of November is kept in school as a special time of prayer for the happy repose of the Holy Souls. The Feast of All Souls is celebrated with a Requiem Mass for deceased members of the community and prior to this a Book of Remembrance is created from names given in.

Personalising learning will help those experiencing prolonged difficulties with concentration and lack of interest in school.

English Martyrs supports students in understanding and expressing their feelings and builds their confidence and emotional resilience through curriculum, pastoral care and support. The school is proactive in identifying vulnerable individuals and groups and sets up strategies for providing support to them.

Priests from the diocese work closely with the school and we have a proactive pastoral system which provides support and advice especially at times of bereavement and other significant life changes.

The school works with relevant agencies to deliver integrated services that are centred around the child and will suggest referral to specialist support services. The school has the service of Open Door Counselling, Chaplain and a Pastoral Support Worker.

Staff professional development addresses the likely impact of bereavement loss and supporting people going through this transition. This support is offered through the Heads of Year.

Procedure in cases of Death

Death of student's close friend or family member e.g. parent, sibling

If the school is notified of the death during the school day and the child needs to be informed then the school will request that a member of the family comes to school to collect the child and break the news. If this is not possible the student will be seen by appropriate senior staff in the Principal's office and appropriate help offered.

Where the student has been notified of the death and is not in school

The Principal and Head of Year will liaise with the form tutor and will contact the family to offer support and establish facts as appropriate. The student's permission will be sought prior to telling his/her peers.

Staff at the school will be informed and prayers will be offered for the departed and the student's RE teacher will be briefed.

The Form Tutor/Head of Year will find out the family's wishes about attending the funeral and support needed on return to school. If students are to attend the funeral then parental consent must be sought from their parents.

The Form Tutor/Head of Year will support the bereaved child on return to school which will include access to the Counsellor (if appropriate) and give the family a list of outside agencies which could offer support.

The Head of Year should arrange for the death to be noted on the child's file and SIMS records should be updated if appropriate.

The child will be offered the opportunity to attend Mass offered for the repose of the deceased soul and the family.

Death of a member of school

A meeting should be convened so all staff are informed.

The Principal and Head of Year will inform the student body (as appropriate).

The Principal will contact the family to offer support and find out the family's wishes about attending the funeral.

The Principal will make the decision about how best to support other children in the school, the school routine up to the burial and whether the school stays open during the funeral and who attends. The nature of the memorial or commemoration service in school will be decided by the Principal in consultation with the family.

In case of suicide

Information about the circumstances of death will be communicated on a need to know basis. Support, prayer and counseling will be offered according to individual need and professional judgment. The Church's pastoral position will be communicated in deed and word as necessary.

Multiple deaths

The Critical Incident policy should be activated in the case of multiple deaths. The Principal will be the spokesperson if there is media interest. The procedure for death of an individual should then be followed.

Helpful texts and prayers

The prayer 'Eternal Rest' is printed in all student diaries.

Lord God,
you are the glory of believers
and the life of the just.
Your Son redeemed us
by dying and rising to life again.
Since our departed brothers and sisters believed in the mystery of
our resurrection,
let them share the joys and blessings of the life to come.

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah:-

On this mountain,
the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples
a banquet of rich food.
On this mountain he will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping all nations,
he will destroy Death for ever.
The Lord will wipe away
The tears from every cheek;
he will take away his people's shame
everywhere on earth,
for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said: See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for salvation;
the Lord is the one in whom we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice
that he has saved us.

This is the word of the Lord.