



# Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust



To unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God

Respect – Forgiveness – Trust – Responsibility – Thankfulness – Justice – Humility

## Bereavement Policy

### 1. Purpose of This Policy

Our school is committed to providing a compassionate, stable, and supportive environment for any child who experiences bereavement. We recognise that grief affects children differently and that their emotional needs may change over time. This policy outlines how we will listen, respond, and support each child and their family with empathy and care.

### 2. Our Approach and Core Values

- All children experiencing bereavement will be treated with sensitivity, respect, and understanding.
- Grief is a personal journey; there is no 'right' way for a child to feel or behave.
- The school will work closely with parents, carers, and external professionals when appropriate.
- Children will always have choices about what support they want and how they wish to talk about their experiences.
- We aim to create a safe environment where children feel seen, heard, and supported.

### 3. Identifying Bereavement Needs

*When we learn that a child has experienced a bereavement, we will:*

- Reach out sensitively to parents/carers to gather an understanding of what the child knows and how they are coping.
- Discuss with the family any cultural, spiritual, or religious considerations that may shape the child's bereavement experience.
- Use gentle, age-appropriate approaches such as drawing, play, or emotion cards to help the child express their feelings if they wish.
- Avoid making assumptions—children may feel sadness, confusion, anger, guilt, or may appear unaffected at times.

### 4. Understanding the Child's Home Life

*To ensure consistent support, we will seek to understand:*

- Who lives at home and who plays key roles in the child's daily life.
- Any routines that may have changed due to bereavement.

- How grief and loss are talked about within the family.
- What has helped or distressed the child at home.

This information helps us respond in ways that feel familiar, safe, and supportive.

## **5. Building a Support Network**

Every bereaved child will have a network of trusted individuals, which may include: teachers, teaching assistants, pastoral staff, friends, family members, or external agencies.

We will:

- Identify who the child feels closest and safest with in school.
- Ensure parents know who their main point of contact is, to avoid repeating difficult information.
- Seek consent before engaging with external professionals who may already support the child or family.

## **6. What Helps the Child**

*We recognise that children may need different types of support on different days. With input from the child and family, we may offer:*

- A quiet, safe space when emotions feel overwhelming.
- Regular check-ins with a trusted adult.
- Gentle classroom adjustments (e.g., reduced workload, calm seating).
- Opportunities to express feelings creatively through drawing, play, or writing.
- Predictable routines to help the child feel secure.

## **7. What May Not Help**

*We will work sensitively to avoid:*

- Forcing conversations about the loss.
- Using euphemisms that may confuse young children (e.g., 'gone to sleep').
- Overwhelming the child with questions.
- Physical contact unless the child initiates or clearly welcomes it.
- Pressuring the child to participate in triggering activities.

## **8. Key Person (Safe Person) Support**

*Bereaved children will be offered a key adult they can go to at any time. This adult will:*

- Provide a consistent, calm presence.
- Help the child communicate their needs.
- Liaise closely with the family.

Parents/carers will also have a named contact to share updates or changes in the child's emotional wellbeing.

## **9. Sharing Information with Others**

*We will always follow the family's wishes regarding what to share and with whom. However, it may be helpful for certain staff members to be aware so they can respond sensitively.*

*For example:*

- Teachers may need to know so they can spot signs of distress.
- Lunchtime staff may need to be aware of changes in behaviour.
- Close classmates may benefit from simple, gentle guidance about how to support their friend.

## **10. Handling Significant Dates and Triggers**

*Children may find particular dates difficult (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, Father's/Mother's Day). We will:*

- Prepare in advance with the family.
- Offer options to participate or opt out of specific activities.
- Provide support if unexpected triggers arise.

Examples of triggers may include certain lessons, stories, songs, or events.

## **11. Attendance, Transitions, and Routine Support**

*Bereavement can affect concentration, behaviour, and attendance. We may offer:*

- Flexible start or finish times for a short period.
- Support during transitions (e.g., beginning or end of day).
- Regular communication with parents/carers to monitor wellbeing.

We celebrate the child's successes, however small, and support them during more difficult moments.

## **12. Support Plan and Review**

*A personalised plan will be created and reviewed regularly. It will move with the child as they transition to new classes or teachers.*

*The plan may include:*

- What the child knows.
- Their preferred ways of communicating.
- Strategies that help.
- Known triggers.

- Key adults supporting them.

### **13. Staff Wellbeing**

Supporting grieving children can be emotionally challenging. Staff will have access to support, debriefing opportunities, or internal wellbeing support. Additionally, they have access to counselling through our well-being package.

### **14. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if new bereavement guidance becomes available.

# SCHOOL BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT



Our school is here to support you and your child following a bereavement.

## **Sensitive Communication**

We will maintain open and compassionate communication with you about your child's experiences and needs.

## **Understanding and Support**

We will listen to your and your child's concerns and provide a patient, inclusive, and caring environment.

## **Adjustments and Flexibility**

We will offer additional support and flexibility to your child to help them feel safe, cope with their grief, and stay engaged.



