



West Road Primary School

Title of Policy: ***Bereavement Policy***

Date Reviewed:	Person Responsible:
January 2016	HT/SLT

Frequency of Review: 3 Year

Bereavement Policy

Policy Aim:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that contingency plans are in place to reflect how the school could or should respond in a tragic situation.

Rationale

This school recognises that everyone will react to a bereavement in their own very unique way and the significant effects of this are dependent upon their levels of awareness, understanding, age, emotional maturity, security and not least, their relationship with the deceased. The policy will cover the whole school community, for example all staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors and partner agencies working with schools.

Aims

Schools should support pupils in understanding and expressing their feelings, and build their confidence and emotional resilience by:

1. Identifying vulnerable individuals and groups and set up strategies for providing support to them and their families
2. Providing clear, planned curriculum opportunities for pupils to understand and explore feelings
3. Developing a confidential pastoral system providing support and advice, especially at times of bereavement and other significant life changes.

Confidentiality

The school has an up to date confidentiality policy. It will work with external agencies to ensure a consistent approach. Our school works in partnership with parents/carers. Before children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents may be asked about any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving house etc, new additions to the family), in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

Common reactions in adults and children

Adults and children can respond in broadly similar ways to loss and bereavement. Reactions will depend on the nature of the incident, their degree of involvement with it and their own personality and coping skills. Reactions may be manifest behaviourally or physically by such symptoms as:

- Tiredness
- Sleep disturbance
- Tension
- Menstrual irregularity

- Difficulty concentrating
- Intolerance
- Shaking
- Tearfulness
- Becoming withdrawn
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Nausea
- Memory difficulties
- Increased sensitivity

The Overall Message in helping bereaved children

- Try to maintain feelings of security, of being cared for, of being loved
- Maintain all the necessary practical care, focussing on the child's need and routine
- Be honest and factually correct at the child's level of understanding, do not rush the conversation; pick up on non-verbal clues
- Continue to talk and communicate honestly and realistically, listen and hear what is being said
- Do not pretend to believe what you don't believe
- Remember there are others who can help
 - Don't be afraid to admit to colleagues, family and managers that you can't cope at any particular time.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff should be designated to the following roles:

- Obtaining accurate information
- Communicating with families directly involved
- Informing the whole school community

- Supporting children and parents
- Supporting staff
- Liaising with press if appropriate
- Organising feedback/training for all staff and the needs of pupils

When a pupil in school is bereaved

Death of a parent/carer or sibling or significant other.

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following actions should be considered:

- Alert senior management
- Alert class teacher and support staff
- The family should be contacted for appropriate support if needed/wanted by the appropriate person
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows how they have been involved
- Class teacher to observe child
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family
- Support staff to employ understanding loss and bereavement resources
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse/educational psychologist.

It is important to stress the importance of communication between school and home. Without it ultimately both parties could fail the child.

Death of a Pupil

There is no right way to respond to the death of a pupil. Each teacher will have his or her own ideas. However you might consider these possibilities:

1. Speak about the death in the school assembly, just telling children in a simple and straightforward manner that the pupil has died. Ask for a few moments of silence so that each can recall their own memories. Say a few words of prayer, expressing thanks for the life of the pupil and for the privilege of having known him or her. Ask that he or she may now be at peace.
2. Invite the children who know the child directly to make suggestions as to how they would like to mark the loss. They might wish to send a card to the pupil's parents. They might wish to make a collection for a charity in memory of the pupil. They might wish to have something permanent at the school as a memorial. This could be anything from a library book to a seat in the school grounds - remember that funds have to be raised to pay for it.

3. Foster positive responses to death. Encourage children to talk about what they remember of the person and especially what they liked about him or her. Perhaps they could create a Memories Book, with individuals writing their personal recollections. Be mindful of those children who didn't know or get on with the deceased, these children may have mixed emotions.

4. Close friends of the dead child may well need individual care and counselling. A sensitive teacher will be aware when a child wants to talk about the loss and will find a time and place to listen quietly and with respect. If there has been a tragic or horrific death, it may be that the help of trained bereavement counsellors is necessary.

5. You might consider inviting children to light a candle (perhaps a tea-light) and placing it in front of a photograph of the dead person. Some people find this a way of expressing grief when words are difficult or inadequate. The ritual can be consoling.

Death of a Staff Member

- If the death happens suddenly and unexpectedly, arrange for a meeting where colleagues can talk through what has happened.
- Try to establish continuity in the classroom as soon as possible. The supply teacher or member of staff should be informed properly on how pupils and other staff were affected and which ones were most distressed. This member of staff will require support.
- In the case of the class teacher, if appropriate let some of the children participate in the funeral, accompanied by trusted adults.

Significant Changes

There are significant changes which can have an effect on pupils. Many people tend to associate bereavement with a permanent deprivation of a loved one through their death. However, it is worthwhile remembering that for many children there are other losses which may be experienced as though it were bereavement. The emotional and behavioural outcomes can be similar to those in the bereavement process. Examples could include the following:

- Divorce • Death of a pet • Disabled or seriously ill parent • Parent in prison
- Changing school • Hospital stay • Children in care

These situations may not affect the whole of the class but it may, to a large extent, affect individual pupils. School will develop an action plan to support the individual child. The school should seek assistance from agencies such as educational psychologists, school nurses if a child is struggling to come to terms with a situation that has not been dealt with in school etc.

Traumatic Death

Children who have witnessed a dramatic death or been involved in a disaster or other trauma, may need specialised treatment. Parents and schools may also need help. These experiences are often too shocking and disruptive to be absorbed and worked through over time.

Procedures in Emergency

An immediate action plan should include:

- The development of routines which ensure that the Head Teacher is informed by parents or other authorities (e.g. police, hospital, social services).
- The Headteacher verifies information about the child's death before informing teachers and classmates. The Headteacher gathers as many facts as possible about the event from parents and others.
- The Head Teacher takes responsibility for informing: Teachers/staff, Class and other pupils (assisted by teachers)
- A plan for the rest of the day is activated to include support in the classroom.
- If Press approach they should be referred to the Council's Press Officer and affected family, classmates and staff should be shielded.
- A meeting should be held to discuss plans for the following day. All staff in classes affected by the death should attend.

Action Plan In each situation an individual action plan maybe needed.

Staff support and training Where possible, support and training will be available for all staff, governors and parents as necessary.

Created on: January 2016

Signed:

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