



Rothwell Primary School

Bereavement Policy

Written: July 2017 by Andrea Brooks

Approved by the:

Pupil Support Committee
July 2017

To be reviewed:

July 2019

Working together to



our potential.

The policy will cover the whole school community, for example all staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors and partner agencies working with school.

Rational:

Within our school community there will almost always some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by a death. We would hope not to encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place, when responding to these sensitive issues.

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. This policy reflects the values and philosophy of Rothwell Primary in relation to the caring and sensitive approach embodied in this school. This provides a framework within which all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, gain guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately to a bereaved child or young person. At Rothwell Primary we understand the importance of supporting the emotional needs of pupils experiencing the difficulties that are associated with bereavement and any other significant life changing events. We are also aware that consideration must be given to other faiths, cultures and religions when dealing with such sensitive issues. Although adults and children can respond in broadly similar ways to loss and bereavement, this school recognises that everyone will react to a bereavement or life changing event in their own very unique way. The effects of this are dependent upon their own personality, levels of awareness, understanding, age, emotional maturity, security and not least, the relationship they have had with the individual involved. We are aware that reactions may be both behavioural and physical. An empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children or staff require. However, sometimes pupils and staff may need extra support. This school provides a designated safe, nurturing environment and a Pastoral Team to support and advise pupils. Help can be given in understanding emotions and finding appropriate ways to express their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt. This support may be short or long term, the outcome would be to develop and build confidence, emotional resilience, and coping skills. We believe all bereaved children should have the time to grieve and the right to remember the person who has died. Our school will give them that opportunity. Consideration should be given to refer on to more specialist support where the impact of grief is more complex.

The overall message in helping bereaved children

- Try to maintain feelings of security, of being cared for.
- 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

Roles and Responsibilities:

Head to take overall responsibility, however staff should be designated to the following roles.

- Obtaining accurate information • Communicating with families directly involved
- Informing the whole school community if necessary.
- Supporting children and parents
- Supporting staff
- Liaising with press if appropriate
- Organising feedback/training for all staff

For practical support and information, call Winstons Wish 08452 030405, Child Bereavement 0800 028 8840, Sad Events Team 0113 395 1042/0113 395 1100. Resources can also be found on www.childbereavement.org.uk

When a pupil in school is bereaved

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

When our school is informed of bereavement or loss the following actions are taken or designated by the Head.

- Alert Pastoral Lead and Senior Leadership Team.
- Alert class teacher
- The family should be contacted for appropriate support if needed or wanted by the appropriate person
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and 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
- Relevant staff to use understanding loss and bereavement resources
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse/educational psychologist.

We also recognise the importance of communication between school and home.

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 we might want to consider these possibilities:

- 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.
- 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.

- 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. Be mindful of those children who didn't know or get on with the deceased, these children may have mixed emotions.
- Close friends of the dead child may well need individual care and counselling. Staff should be aware when a child wants to talk about the loss and should find a time and place to listen quietly and with respect, or refer to Pastoral Lead. If there has been a tragic or horrific death, it may be that the help of trained bereavement counsellors is necessary.

Death of a Staff Member

- If the death happens suddenly and unexpectedly, Head to arrange 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.
- 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, our school knows the importance of recognising and remembering that for many of our children there are other losses which may be experienced in a similar way to bereavement. The emotional and behavioural outcomes can be similar to those in the bereavement process. Examples could include the following: Divorce, death of pet, parent in prison, disabled or seriously ill parent or sibling, children in care or change of school. These situations may not affect the whole of the class but it may, to a large extent, affect individual pupils. This school will develop an action plan to support the individual child, and if felt appropriate, seek assistance from agencies such as educational psychologists, School Cluster.

Traumatic Death

Children, who have witnessed a dramatic death or been involved in a disaster or other trauma, may need specialised treatment. Parents and we as a school, may also need help. These experiences are often too shocking and disruptive to be absorbed and worked through over time and we as a school are dedicated to support and advice on a long term basis when deemed wanted and necessary. 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 Head Teacher verifies information about the child's death before informing teachers and classmates. The Head Teacher gathers as many facts as possible about the event from parents and others.
- The Head Teacher takes responsibility for informing: Teachers/staff, the 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 support plan may be needed.

Staff support and training Bereavement Awareness Training Programmes can be made available for all staff/designated members of staff.