

Foresters Bereavement Policy

Introduction

This document outlines the basic principles and procedures that underpin the schools approach to supporting members of the school community affected by bereavement.

Bereavement affects everybody at some time, and as a close community, our school aims to provide the best support for those experiencing bereavement. We recognise that every bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved.

The way in which children and young people are treated when someone important in their lives dies has a profound effect on their future ability to manage their own lives. The caring and supportive school environment has a key role to play and we recognise that every situation is unique and demands careful handling, with the wishes of the pupil or family being a paramount importance.

This policy should be viewed as a framework rather than anything prescriptive acknowledging that different strategies and procedures may be necessary in the various parts of the school appropriate to the age of the pupils concerned.

Much of the information and guidance in this policy follows the advice given by the child bereavement charity. Further advice can be found on their website www.childbereavement.org.uk

Procedures

Once the school has been made aware of the news of the death of a close member of a child's family, or the death of a pupil or member of staff a member of the SLT will be allocated as the link person with the family. This member of staff will liaise directly with the family and agree what information should be passed on to staff and pupils. They will be clear with parents beforehand about how the school will respect confidentiality and share information sensitively, only where it is in the interests and the bereaved child and the school community.

Staff will be informed straight away ideally before the pupils. Discussions must take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before any information is given to the pupils. Pupils should however be told as soon as possible to avoid rumour and uncertainty. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know, either their class teacher or a member of staff who works closely with the class. A large assembly is not usually ideal to let children know. There should be an opportunity for pupils to ask questions and respond to the news. Staff will endeavour to answer sensitively, factually and using unambiguous language to help all children understand what has happened. Where there are religious considerations the school will also seek the views of the family and endeavour to respect those beliefs. The bereaved child may or may not wish to be present when the news is broken.

It may be appropriate for a letter to go home to all parents on the same day, in line with the wishes of the family. If necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head.

Support for pupils and staff

In supporting both the bereaved child and the other pupils staff will act sensitively at all times seeking advice when necessary. The class teacher will be the first line of support for the child but should the child need extra support away from the classroom another member of staff that the child has a good relationship with may be identified eg the Elsa or family support worker

If for example a child finds it difficult to stay in the classroom when they are upset it may be necessary to identify with them a suitable place where they can go for some quiet time with an adult they trust. Grief is a normal and natural response to loss. Both school and families need to work together to recognise changes in behaviour and if necessary counselling from outside agencies may be sought. It should be noted that not everybody needs outside Counselling. This should be discussed with the family as appropriate.

Where a member of the school community has died, the school will endeavor to provide additional space and time for those staff or pupils most likely to be particularly affected. Staff will be expected to be particularly vigilant regarding the emotional wellbeing of pupils close to the deceased. A special assembly or remembrance service may be held as a way of saying goodbye and as a celebration of their life this may take many forms but always be in accordance with the wishes of the family. In consultation with the family arrangements for funeral attendance should be clarified.

Supporting a bereaved child is emotionally demanding for staff. All staff should be aware of colleagues and offer support on an individual basis where necessary and alert a member of the SLT if they can become concerned about a colleague's well-being. SLT should provide support in the first instance and signpost towards counselling if appropriate.

Talking to the Bereaved Pupil

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible, arrange a one-to-one session with the Family Community Mentor as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school ☒
- Be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions. ☒
- If people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling. ☒
- Beware of using platitudes eg “I know how you feel”, (young people may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

DO

- Let the child know that you genuinely care
- Make time to be available and listen
- Accept all that the child is saying
- Allow them to express their feelings their way
- Let them know their feelings are normal
- Let them know that it is OK to cry
- Talk honestly and share your feelings
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Have appropriate physical contact
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation

DON'T

- Stop the child talking
- Tell them how they should or should not feel
- Avoid contact
- Change the subject
- Deny your pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful
- Be frightened of sharing your own feelings

Appendix 1

Useful Websites for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

Useful telephone numbers and addresses:

- Winston's Wish Family Line - 0845 2030405 – national helpline offering guidance, information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including professionals and family members
- Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services
- CRUSE Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
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Appendix 2

Books dealing with death and loss

Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide

- Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill -

Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley I Miss You -

First Look at Death - Pat Thomson

Grandpa- John Burningham Always and Forever –

Alan Durant The Huge Bag of Worries –

Virginia Ironside What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies? –
Trevor Romain Badger's Parting Gifts-
Susan Varley Saying Goodbye to Daddy –
Judith Vigna Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children