

Stanton Community Primary School

Nurture, Enjoy, Aspire, Achieve



Bereavement Policy

Aims and Ethos

This document outlines the basic principles and procedures that underpin our school's approach to supporting members of the school community affected by bereavement. We understand that empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support that some pupils, or members of staff, require. Where the impact of the grief is more complex, referral to more specialist support may need to be considered. Additional information and resources can be found at: childbereavementuk.org

Rationale

1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen years old have been bereaved of a parent or sibling – that is one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person. Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to provide a framework for all staff:

- To give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement.
- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- To identify key staff within school and the governing body or Local Authority
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

Roles and Responsibilities

In the first instance the Head teacher will take charge or the Deputy head in their absence.

In the case of sudden or traumatic death of a pupil, the school may be called upon to be a part of a multi-agency review and the Head teachers (or Deputy head in their absence) would be the school representative.

The best person to liaise with the family will depend on the specific situation, relationship with the pupil/family and experience of the member of staff.

Depending on the circumstances this could be Head teacher/Deputy/Class Teacher/SENCO/ school Emotional Support Worker or teaching assistant.

The indiscriminate spread of news via social media may mean that some members of the school community hear the news before others. The Head teacher will let members of staff know about the death via the staff 'telephone tree' (out of hours), or staff meeting.

When delivering news to pupils, this will be done in separate in classes at the same time (to avoid some children not knowing) with a familiar adult. Depending on the need of the children some may need the support of an even smaller groups.

The school will provide a safe place and time for all member of the school community to grieve. The school Thrive Practitioners will be available for support and can also guide other adults in how to support the grieving.

Appendix 1 has details of external bereavement support organisations.

Support and information can be found on the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org

If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools. They can be contacted on: 0808 168 2528

Procedures

Some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family consulted. The school can help to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community.

It helps to feel prepared when delivering sad news, so a script will be particularly useful. Do not be afraid or surprised to show emotion, this is a human reaction.

The script that we use will:

- Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.
- Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.
- If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred.
- If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct, if known. Where appropriate, remind pupils of their responsibilities and the impact when posting on social media.
- Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them.
- Mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support.

- Acknowledge that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is OK.
- Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.
- A template letter to parents/carers is provided (in the appendices).

The Child Bereavement UK website provides information for parents to help them discuss a death with their children. They may also be directed to guided support from Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or Live Chat on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

The First Few Days

Although school can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, some flexibility may be necessary. Bereaved young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to leave a classroom and take time out in a safe space can be very welcome. The location for a temporary tribute/book of condolence needs to be safe, accessible and ideally where pupils can be supervised. We will offer the family the opportunity to visit, if they wish to, or we can take photographs to share with them later. We will consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.

The Funeral

Rather than making assumptions, we will consult the family to find out whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend.

Pupils can be involved in choosing flowers or organising a collection if appropriate.

We will identify the practicalities of issues such as staff cover to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so. (For some circumstances, it may be appropriate to close the school, for others, it may not).

We will consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral with their parents who can supervise and support.

Support for Pupils

This will be provided by:

Thrive Practitioners

Other staff under direction of Thrive Practitioners

Please also see appendix 1

Children Books to Support Children

- Muddles Puddles and Sunshine - Diana Crossley
- The Scar - Charlotte Moundlic
- The Sad Book - Michael Rosen
- The Heart and the Bottle - Oliver Jeffers
- What Does Dead Mean?: A Book for Young Children to Help Explain Death and Dying - Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas

- Gentle Willow: A Story for Children about Dying - Joyce C. Mills
- Badger's parting gifts - Susan Varley
- The coat I wear - Mel Maxwell and Michelle Stewart
- The memory tree - Britta Teckentrup
- Water bugs and dragonflies: explaining death to young children - Doris Stickney
- When dinosaurs die: a guide to understanding death - Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown
- Where are you Lydie? - Emma Poore,

Support for Staff

Supporting bereaved pupils can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Further information about training can be found at childbereavementuk.org or contact Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or Live Chat on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Staff can also access the school Well-being Support

Remembering

We will consult the family of the person who died about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute. A more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork, a bench) may be appropriate, but in future the removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed sensitively.

Returning to School After a Bereavement

Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert', they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person. It can be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school. This could be a familiar adult, such as the class teacher, SENCO, a teaching assistant or the school Emotional Support Worker, Deputy or Headteacher.

The purpose of this meeting should be to:

- Acknowledge the death.
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out' and work out how they will inform staff of this for example, a 'time-out' card, a non-verbal signal or message. This will then be communicated to all staff.
- 'Time-out' activities - journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc. could be provided if required
- Set guidelines for communication - with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school.

- Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend. A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website: childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-afterbeing-bereaved.

Longer Term Support

The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support. Significant dates or anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day, etc. may be particularly difficult. Regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping.

The grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. There may be changes in their behaviour, which will need to be understood and supported in school.

Bereaved young people can find change difficult, so preparing them in advance (where possible) may help them to voice their worries and ease the process. Vulnerable pupils may need additional support, particularly on transition.

Death, Grief and Bereavement in The Curriculum

Teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. Informing parents and carers in advance will help to gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson. Recently bereaved pupils may find it helpful if they are given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.

See Elephant's Tea Party resource on Child Bereavement UK's website

Support for Staff

Being alongside anyone experiencing a loss can be emotionally draining, and supporting a bereaved pupil particularly so. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. The school will support these members of staff and see whether there is capacity to utilise other staff members to help share the load.

- Further information about training can be found at childbereavementuk.org Or contact Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or Live Chat on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

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Review: Every two years