



A School Partnership In Rural England

Motto : ‘ **We Aspire to Inspire**’

Our Values – using the initials of the names of the schools.

K – Kindness

U – Understanding

P – Patience

H – Honesty

L – Love

B – Boldness

Bereavement Policy

Document History

Document written October 2015, Approved by CSC 24 November 2015

Reviewed and re-approved by EHT November 2018, noted by Fed GB 20 November 2018

Reviewed and approved for ASPIRE-wide use by EHT Nov 2019, noted by Fed GB 19 Nov 2019

Reviewed and approved by EHT Nov 2021, noted by Fed GB 30 Nov 2021

Review every three years

Next Review – November 2024

The term ‘school’ refers to the schools in the ASPIRE Federation: Kingswood Primary, Ulcombe CE Primary, Platts Heath Primary and Leeds and Broomfield CE Primary. The term may refer to them jointly or individually.

Rationale

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of ASPIRE Federation staff aim to understand children's needs and be sensitive to these. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family or in a child's close community, our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together, with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

This policy document, having been presented to and agreed by the whole staff and the Federation Governing Body, is placed in every teaching area. All members of the teaching staff and all support staff are given time to read and discuss it. A copy of the document is kept in the school office and is placed on the school web site. When appropriate visiting staff and parents are given copies of this document and offered the opportunity to discuss its contents.

Objective

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and LEA, and clarify the pathway of support.

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of this

policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

The role of the Federation Governing Body is to:

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.

The role of the head teacher

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.
- To advise and support staff.
- Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.
- To designate staff to have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.

Procedures

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
5. The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher

9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

Supporting the Bereaved Child

- The designated lead for bereavement will be made known to the family
- The bereaved family will be informed at the earliest possible time if the school is planning to cover any special events which could be considered sensitive e.g. Father's Day, Mother's Day etc.
- The school, in consultation with the family, may choose to provide a buddy to support the child. This may or may not be another child who has had suffered a bereavement as appropriate.
- When alerted by the family of sensitive important dates, the school will be supportive and extra vigilant around the well-being of the child
- The school may consider adjustments to the school routine and the curriculum, for example choice of literature or family trees etc, to support the child if needed, the school will be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the child when teaching material that may affect the emotional wellbeing of the child.
- The school will be sensitive to special objects the child may feel the need to share or carry with them.
- In line with the school behaviour policy the school will address any bullying or taunting related to the bereavement immediately.

Appendix 1 Suggested Templates for Letter to Parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school

Sample Letter on Death of a Pupil

Dear Parents

I have the sad task of informing the children of the death of ---, a pupil in --- died from cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her. When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating life.

Yours faithfully

Headteacher

Appendix 2
Sample Letter to Bereaved Parents

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of Toby's death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through. Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his friends and classmates. He was a much loved member of our school family. If we can do anything to help as you plan Toby's funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that Toby's belongings in school be returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy

Headteacher

Appendix 3
Sample Letter on Death of a Staff Member

Dear Parents

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours faithfully

Headteacher

Appendix 4
Suggested book list for younger pupils

Water Bugs and Dragonflies – Doris Stickney

Questions Children Ask – Miriam Stoppard

A Child's Parent Dies – Edna Furman

Helping Children Cope with Grief – Rosemary Wells

Badger's Parting Gift – Susan Varley

I'll Always Love You - Hans Wilhelm

The Huge Bag of Worries - Virginia Ironside