

Blakesley CE Primary School

Bereavement Policy



“We create the spark that lights the fire”. As a Church of England school at the heart of the community and in partnership with parents, Blakesley C of E Primary School is committed to enabling all pupils achieve their full potential. We will do this through developing a love of learning within a creative, dynamic and vibrant environment based on Christian values where everyone aspires to excellence.

Prepared by:

.....L A Burman

Approved on:

.....23rd January 2017

Signed (*Chair of Governors*)

Sarae Hyatt

Date of next Review:

.....January 2020.....

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Bereavement Policy

Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a 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 pupil.

A Policy within school will help us to support pupils and/or staff before, during and after bereavement in an effective way, identifying key staff and a clear pathway. It fits within our ethos of caring for staff and pupils and providing support where necessary to ensure that staff and pupils receive optimum attention to promote their wellbeing.

Aims

All staff and pupils faced with a bereavement will be provided with appropriate support. This will be by:

- offering opportunities to express feelings in a safe and supportive environment
- the development of an action plan to support staff and pupils.
- gaining access to specialist help if necessary

The Role of the Headteacher

To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned and subsequent communication.

To ensure that the school possesses the salient facts about the death. To inform staff/pupils/governing body.

To monitor execution of the policy.

To ensure that 'bereavement' is established on the curriculum at relevant points during the pupils' education.

The Role of Key Staff

To identify and train bereavement support staff and ensure that their learning is communicated to other staff.

Procedure

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed by 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. A letter proforma is included but this should be modified according to the circumstances.
5. The school should be aware that the timetable may need some flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for staff and pupils to attend the funeral will be decided and communicated.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.
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. (How this is achieved should be the particular consideration of individual schools).

Date of Policy:

Date of Review:

Policy to be reviewed by feedback from bereaved pupils, parents and staff.

With thanks to Child Bereavement UK who provided relevant paperwork to use as a base.

Sample letter on death of a staff member

Dear Parents,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved and respected member of our staff (Name) has died. The children were told today and many may have been distressed by the news. Children respond in different ways and may raise issues around 'death'. If you feel you need any advice/support please ring the school office and we will return your call. We have attached a list of organisations that provide very useful advice and resources that you may wish to use. The children will have the opportunity at school to discuss the death.

The school website will give details of the funeral and arrangements re staff/pupil attendance.

I regret being the bearer of sad news. Our priority is to respond sensitively and thoughtfully to any issues that arise.

Yours sincerely,

Sample letter to parents re the death of a pupil

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of (Name), a pupil in (year/Class...). We have the permission of the parent(s) to notify you and they have approved this letter.

(Name) died from cancer. Many children who have cancer get better but sadly (Name) had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class/school and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

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 need to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and someone will contact you. Please do inform us if you feel that your child is particularly distressed.

We will be arranging a special assembly to celebrate (Name's) life.

Yours sincerely,

Guidelines for informing staff and other personnel

- Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable. Ensure that absent staff are informed.
- Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
- Inform absent staff over the telephone of a personal visit is impractical.
- If relevant, identify a nominated spokesperson to provide a 'news statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion. Essential to liaise with family.
- If the death is traumatic, such as suicide or murder, consider requesting bereavement support services – Simon Says can advise/support.
- Arrange staff condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- Identify someone who can be available to talk things through with a parent, child or member of staff if they are finding the situation particularly hard.
- Nominate staff to prepare a letter to parents and carers (to be given after school) sharing the news.
- Arrange a staff meeting for the end of the day to give staff the opportunity to express their feelings about the day.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Simon Says help line should you want to check out ideas during the following days, weeks and months ahead.

Guidelines for informing children and young people

- Identify those children who had a long term or close relationship with the deceased to be told together as a separate group. Class or tutor groups are ideal.
- It is more beneficial if all pupils are informed. Teachers are not expected to die and children expect to live forever. It can be shocking.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children.
- For example:
- “I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. Mrs. Smith, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that Mrs. Smith died yesterday in hospital.”
- “Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday Stephen Smith, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died.
- Allow time for fears and feelings to be verbalised or for pupils to share their own experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and experiences and talk honestly about the relationship that you had with the person.
- Answer pupils’ questions factually, avoiding euphemisms like ‘passed away’.
- Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected. Adults may be upset by some responses or apparent lack of response but this does not mean that a child does not care.
- Perhaps end the discussion with a moment to remember the deceased and their family.

Support and advice services

CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE

www.cruse.org.uk

Day-by-Day Helpline:

0844 477 9400

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Barnardo's Parent's Advice Line

(028) 9064 5899

www.barnardos.org.uk/childbereavementservice

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Helpline: 0845 203 0405

Childhood Bereavement Network

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Sudden Death Information

www.royalhospitals.org/traumaticgrief

Parent's Support Helpline

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

0808 800 2222