



Bereavement Policy

Supporting bereavement

Bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times, and when the loss is of a member of our school community, such as a child or staff member, it can be particularly difficult. Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements or other significant losses while they are at school. However, children experience loss in other ways that need school to understand their emotional needs – e.g. family separation and divorce, family members in prison or family members being in hospital.

Every death / loss and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy provides guidelines to support a bereavement, or loss in a wider sense. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement/loss happens.

Newlands Junior School is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death, divorce, illness or other circumstances.

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- be given space and time to grieve
- be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise that:

- grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- differing religions / cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with this

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Head Teacher** has overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation, working with the Governors, parents/carers, and appropriate support organisations outside the school.

The **designated person** with responsibility for support and liaison in the event of a death or traumatic loss is Sarah Haywood. The responsibilities of the designated person are :

- Policy review and development working with staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils
- Reflecting on the effectiveness of the policy
- Co-ordinate the planned action to manage school related incidents in and beyond school, decide who will communicate with a family directly, who will give information to a school community
- Establish and co-ordinate links with external agencies
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary/secondary schools
- Access and co-ordinate training for staff / governors

The nominated **Governor** with a responsibility for bereavement/loss issues is the Chair of Governors, their responsibilities are:

- To contribute to the development and review of the policy
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the support of bereavement /loss within school
- To support the Head Teacher in overseeing the approach to bereavement / loss within the curriculum
- To review practice

Staff support and training

Training can be accessed through a number of providers/agencies e.g. CAMHS, Education Psychology, Mansfield Area Partnership.

Related Policies and Guidance

Equal Opportunities policy, PHSE policy, Safeguarding Policy, Confidentiality policy, Pastoral policy, Anti-Bullying policy, Behaviour policy, Offsite Visits policy, Medicines policy. This policy also links to the guidance issued by Nottinghamshire Education Psychology Services: Dealing with a Critical Incident within school issued to all schools

Curriculum

Children and young people will explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the wider curriculum. E.g. death may be discussed when learning about body changes or life cycles, it may be explored through art, English or RE. Assemblies may be used to address specific themes around death and loss e.g. Remembrance Day, or when national events make this appropriate.

Any questions relating to death or loss will be answered in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Language used will be clear and factual to avoid confusion for children e.g. use of the word 'died' rather than phrases like 'passed away'.

Children and young people will be given opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death / loss, as well as being encouraged to express their own feelings and responses.

Procedures when a member of the school dies

When there is a death of a pupil or a member of staff grief can make it harder to react with clear thought processes. **Appendix A** shows guidelines for situations that may occur within the school community.

Supporting children through bereavement

Not all children need the support of specialist practitioners, they need familiar people who care.

School will offer:

- a routine and sense of normality
- space if needed, away from emotional intensity
- a neutral environment where children can share feelings without fear of upsetting a loved one
- time to be themselves without guilt (be with friends, play, laugh)
- regular correspondence with home, monitoring behaviour and emotional well-being
- time for children to discuss how they want a death to be shared in school and how they want school to respond
- a named person identified by the child / young person who acts as their support
- a suitable place in school for pupils to go if they need space and time whilst feeling overwhelmed
- a co-ordinated response from all school staff that ensures all staff respond with understanding and awareness at the time of the bereavement and in the future
- a planned response to transition to ensure that information is passed on across a school and upon transition to a new school
- access to external agencies who may offer specialist advice and support
- a bereavement narrative document that will prevent children and families from repeating events to different staff over time.

Support for staff

Supporting bereaved pupils can be stressful for staff who may also be dealing with their own emotions. School will offer informal mutual support for staff to share feelings and reactions e.g. in the staffroom at the end of the day. If needed more formal arrangements will be put in place e.g. additional support and supervision sessions with line managers. The Head Teacher will make staff aware of external agencies that can support staff dealing with bereavement.

Confidentiality

Sensitive information around a death should only be shared with the rights and needs of individuals carefully considered. Discuss with the family what information they want to share, who with and how. All disclosures should follow procedures in line with the school Safeguarding Policy.

Inclusion and Equality

The 'Missing You: Helping children and young people see beyond Bereavement' publication (produced by Spiral and available to all Nottinghamshire schools) has information for schools about religious considerations and beliefs.

Responding to the media

Some deaths attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to media, including social media, and to pass on all enquiries to the Head Teacher who will make a considered response after seeking advice from the Local Authority.

Appendix A – death of a pupil or member of staff

Death of a pupil – suggested procedure

Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- The person receiving the news will inform the Head Teacher who will then be responsible for leading the response to the family and within school
- **Speak to the family** if possible, offer condolences and support before ascertaining what the family wish to happen. Give them the name, email and direct contact number of the member of staff who will be the point of contact
- **Obtain factual information**. Direct contact with parents/carers may not be possible but the family may identify a wider family member/friend to act as a point of contact for school
- If the death is sudden or traumatic the Education Psychology Service can offer support in dealing with a critical incident within a school community
- It is important to **agree actions** with the parent/family member, before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'.
- The following people should be considered:
 - Current school staff not in school that day
 - Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
 - External agencies
 - medical team – the school nurse for example
 - Chair of Governors
 - After school club staff
 - Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children.
 - Specific parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer, but who may not have been informed by the family – this should be agreed with the family first
- The process for **telling the other pupils** will be decided by the Head Teacher following consultation with the teaching staff. This is best done **in familiar groups by someone the children know**. A whole school assembly is not ideal. **Prepare a prompt so that staff feel supported and there is consistency of message across the school.**
- It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals.
- Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow.

- Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge using clear language.
- A letter home to parents the same day as the children can be helpful and act as a **script for parents**. Include guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children.
- **Map out the first few days** – avoid disruption to the timetable where possible but be flexible if needed
- **Plan** for what will happen if individual members of staff or pupils become distressed and are not able to be in a lesson
- **The funeral** - It is essential to ascertain the family's wishes. The Head Teacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff / pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Headteacher will also make decisions, in consultation with staff / pupils, about if it is appropriate to close, if flowers are to be sent and/or a collection made. Cultural and religious implications may need consideration.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will need to be agreed.
- Following the funeral give parents/family the opportunity to collect personal belongings. Ask when the best time would be. Are there school photos, pieces of work that the family might like to have?
- **Memory Assemblies** - It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.
- Invite the family to any commemorative events held by the school at the time and in subsequent years.
- Note the date of the death in the school calendar and in next year's calendar – a message from school on the first anniversary of a death may be comforting
- If memorial work is completed e.g. remembrance photo book, remembrance wall, this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time and the pupils informed where it has gone.
- The school will notify the LA if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be routed through the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors and Local Authority.

Death of a member of staff – suggested procedure

All of the principles and procedures listed for death of a child apply to the death of a staff member. Head Teachers should **consider emailing Head Teachers within the family of schools to request practical support** if needed

Appendix B

List of supporting organizations

www.familycare-nottingham.org.uk *Spiral bereavement supports children and young people in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire following the death of someone important in their lives. Spiral bereavement offers:*

- emotional support for children and young people following the death of someone important in their lives. This could be through individual work, group work or social activities
- family support following a death, for example coffee mornings, adult counselling
- early intervention with families where there has been a sudden traumatic death, with some time exploring the story for children and young people
- consultations for local professionals who are working with bereaved families who may like some additional advice and support
- opportunities to meet with families who have had similar bereavement through activities and events
- creative activities and workshops, some work can be seen on our Spiral gallery
- training opportunities for professionals
- our 'Missing You' bereavement pack for schools, with policy offering support for children and young people in education
- collaborative working with local agencies including Healthy Schools in the City and County, Palliative Care Team, Child Bereavement Facilitator at the QMC

www.childsbereavementcentre.co.uk Children's Bereavement Centre in Newark has provided bereavement support for school staff members. There are Outreach Centres in Mansfield, Rainworth, Bilsthorpe and Sutton. The organisation offer bereavement support workshops for teachers to enable them to better support pupils following the loss of someone close. They also provide advice guidance and practical support to schools following the death of a pupil or school staff member.

www.winstonswish.org.uk A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community.

www.childbereavement.org.uk A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature British Heart Foundation site to help children come to terms with loss using cartoon creatures.

www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml Information on the way bereavement affects children

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk> An organisation offering local bereavement support to both adults and children

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> Federation of organizations

www.grief-encounter.org.uk

www.rd4u.org.uk internet support project for young people aged 12-15 who have experienced bereavement

hopeagain.org.uk youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care

www.rip.rap.org.uk website for teenagers who have a parent with cancer

www.penhaligonsfriends.org Cornish organization with useful links and resources

Resources to support bereavement

Each family of schools has a Bereavement and Loss resources box with resources for schools to borrow when supporting children following a death or a loss. Some of these resources can be found on the staff drive in the pastoral folder. Sherwood Area Partnership can also be contacted for further resources.

The 'Missing You' publication has a list of resources schools may find useful. It is available to all Nottinghamshire schools – contact Spiral: 0115 9603010

Available books include –

GRANDPA John Burningham (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3)

Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

WHEN DINOSAURS DIE L & M Brown (Little, Brown, 1996, hb, ISBN 0-316-10197-7)

Charming busy anthropomorphic pictures of dinosaurs illustrate topics and questions and a range of answers about death: Saying Goodbye; Customs and beliefs about death; Why do people die? What does "dead" mean?. It is also quite acute psychologically, acknowledging that disbelief, anger, fear, and sadness are common feelings when someone dies. Expensive, but attractive and appealing to children.

REMEMBERING GRANDAD Sheila and Kate Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)

A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.

FRED Posy Simmons (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)

When Fred the cat dies, his owners Nick and Sophie attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

GRANDAD, I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU De Bode and Broere (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8) A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

LIFETIMES Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between – a beautiful way to explain life and death to children Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9). Places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants; for people; and for birds".

BADGER'S PARTING GIFTS Susan Varley (Collins Picture Lions, pb, 1992)

An old favourite, a charming illustrated book in which a very old and much loved badger dies. The forest animals gather and reminisce about the important part Badger played in their lives, and as time passes memories of Badger make them smile. These memories were different for each of them, including very recognisable things like a favourite recipe or showing someone how to knot a tie - Badger's "parting gifts"

WE LOVE THEM Martin Waddell (Walker Books, 1990, ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)

Death is seen very much as part of life in this nicely illustrated story of life in the country, which conveys the idea that life goes on and that old creatures give way to young ones. But it is a bit too matter of fact about loss - barely is the old dog dead than the children have found a new one, is there an implicit message that dead pets (and people?) are easily replaced.

GRANDMA'S BILL Martin Waddell (Macdonald Young Books, pb, ISBN 0- 7500-0307-3)

Bill's grandma is a widow, and he learns about her "other Bill" by looking through her photo album with her. A bit too stereotypically suburban and middle class for general appeal perhaps. Some like its ordinariness, gentleness and factual accuracy, and couldn't fault what it had to say about death and living on in memories and in the family.

I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU H Wilhelm (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985)

A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated.

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR DANIEL Juliet Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)

This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly".

Other resources which address death / loss include –

The day the sea went out

A monster calls (film or book for Y6 addressing terminal cancer in a parent)

Inside out (film)