



Bereavement Policy

September 2017



Woolgrove School Bereavement Policy September 2014-2016

Rationale:

Woolgrove understand that bereavement is an experience which could be faced by members of our school community and that it may be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community – such as a child or staff member. We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and, consequently, guiding principles need to be outlined and developed in an objective manner.

This policy will deal with bereavement following the death of a school pupil or staff member. It will also address the procedures which should be followed if a child become terminally ill or dies whilst at school.

The policy is based on practice that has grown over time as the school has previously experienced bereavements. This is practice that has been seen to have been supportive and helpful by those affected.

Following a Bereavement:

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 the far-reaching contacts.

The Management of Bereavement in School:

The purpose of this policy is to give all staff a confidence in recognising and adopting a particular procedure. It should be noted that a universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. One of our main concerns must inevitably be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family as may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

The school may be notified in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- Past experience has shown that if death occurs parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.

- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can – they may have the phone number of a member of staff who cares for the child at home for example.
- In that instance, the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

Dissemination:

It is important to agree, with the parent that the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties. Evidence from many special schools has shows that parents are often happy to have this burden taken away from them, as they have many people unconnected with the school to contact. 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'. Bereavement is very difficult and the school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

If school is in session, the Headteacher will inform the SLT and admin staff as they are likely to be the people most involved in the next part of the process. The Headteacher – or Deputy Headteacher - will then immediately inform the child's class staff. Where necessary, a member of the SLT will support the class in order to allow the staff to come out and be told together. Class staff may need to be given time to process the news and start to grieve. A space will be made available to support this.

Where necessary, SLT will arrange cover for the class and the Headteacher will begin the process of informing other classes. However, as it is possible that these two functions may overlap, this is not a hard and fast rule. Additionally, it may be more appropriate to call a teacher out of a class and ask her to let the other class staff know – for example, where the child is less known to the class.

The next step will be informing people not at school. Again, there can be no definitive list but these could include:

- Current school staff not in school that day – including therapy staff
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Social Work team if applicable
- SEN team
- Medical team – the school nurse for example
- Taxi driver and escort
- Chair of Governors
- Respite centres if applicable
- Other professionals who work with the child – Ed Psych
- Parents – if children have been informed it is appropriate to put out a note to parents informing them of the loss they may need to support or comfort their children.

Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but may not have been informed by the family.

The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss may be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. 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 that may help - 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. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. 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.

The Funeral:

If invited, the Headteacher – and/or the Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral – either by attending themselves, or by enabling another member of staff to attend. It is likely that the school could not run safely if every member of staff known to the child were granted leave of absence to attend the funeral. Consequently, difficult decisions will have to be made concerning attendance. If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed. Past experience has shown that this can help the parents in their grieving.

Reflection:

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of a calm environment in which to meet with other colleagues and spend some time in reflective mode. One such means of accomplishing this would be to allocate a specific room - e.g. the Meeting Room - for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.

Memory Assemblies:

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. However, although staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend - and that tears cannot be helped - they must endeavour to not break down in front of the children.

If A Child Dies In School:

If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they will contact the school trained First Aider and SLT. In most cases of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the First Aider or a member of the SLT.

In all cases, a member of staff must immediately inform the Headteacher or, in his/her absence, most senior member of staff on site. The Head Teacher will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital. If the child stops breathing a trained school staff will administer CPR. In some cases, the parents may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incidence. In rare cases, this may include a request that mechanical resuscitation is not administered. However, whilst the school respects the parents' preference in this matter, due to the statutory responsibility imposed on the school regarding "duty of care", we insist that the need for school staff to administer manual CPR overrides such preference. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered. Where the parents have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring - e.g. no resuscitation - this protocol will be handed to the paramedics. Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. However, staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone. Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher. 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 Headteacher, Chair of Governors and LA Media Team.

If a Child Dies on a School Trip:

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher. The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions. The off sites visits protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed. The school will notify the LA, at the earliest opportunity, if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply.

On-Going Support For staff:

The Educational Psychology team offer counselling support and staff will be reminded about this service.

For Pupils:

Experience in many special schools has shown that most pupils can be supported by the school staff. In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach. The PSHE co-ordinator will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss. Social Stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss. The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

For The Family:

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on going links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

The Death of a Member of Staff:

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member.

In addition to the above, the school will notify the LA as employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Headteacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors, to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.

Appendix A - List of Online Resources and Information

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

www.keech.org.uk – the website of Keech Hospice Care, our local Children's Hospice. Gives details of its facilities and the support it offers.

www.chums.info – a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

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

www.juliesplace.com – a support resource for bereaved siblings

www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using carton creatures. An animated film and we have a printed pack to go with it.

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

<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/> An organisation offering bereavement support

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> federation of organisations

Appendix B - Books on Bereavement

GRANPA

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.

LIPLAP'S WISH

Jonathan London and Sylvia Long (Chronicle Books, 1994, ISBN 0-8118-0505-0)

Liplap the rabbit's grandma has died, and his mother tells him of the rabbit legend that "long ago, when the first rabbits died, they became stars in the sky. And to this day, they come out at night and watch over us. And they remind us that our loved ones shine forever in our hearts... When Liplap asks if a star might be his grandma, his mother replies, "I think you could wish it were."

Could be considered "twee" and lacking honest engagement with the subject.

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.

GRANDDAD, 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.

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).

LIFETIMES 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",