



Stag Lane Infant & Nursery School

Forever Learners: Achieving our dreams

Bereavement Policy

Policy written by:

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STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies :

Child Protection (Safeguarding)

Behaviour

Positive Handling

SEN Policy

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Bereavement Policy
2010

Introduction

The main aim of this policy is to provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances. Where children have to deal with loss and death, the support that they receive is crucial to their ability to cope and recover from their personal trauma. Grief is unique for each individual – its manifestation is very varied, and it is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some children and young people are able to cope and come to terms with the loss, there are some children that don't and these would be the ones that need support.

Aims

We aim to meet the needs of all of all our children and staff. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', 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.

Procedures

Within school we work in partnership with parents. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents should make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies' etc). If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs etc.) should be sought, in order that the school staff do not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support.
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows, how he/she has been involved.
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
- The importance of 'included care' will be explained – both parties assessing changes in behaviour. A key member of staff will be responsible for doing this. The Learning Mentor or our Home School Liaison Officer will provide guidance, (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child may become withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse, Harrow Bereavement Care, CAHMS,

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action should be considered;

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school.
- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Harrow Bereavement Care.)
- People will be released, where possible, to attend funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support. For example some children may require mentoring support or bereavement counselling (outside agencies may be approached). See also Borough Guidelines.

The age of the bereaved child

When staff are considering their response to bereaved pupils, it is necessary to recognise that the age of the pupils can affect their response to death. Young children process information differently from adults. Typically, depending on emotional development, children react to death in the following ways:-

3 – 7 years

Children of this age are typically very egocentric. They believe that they are to blame for the death. If this feeling is not explained, they may carry the guilt for the rest of their lives. Children of this age can react casually to the news of the death but may ask about it at a later stage. Some will believe that they might die as well.

And some children may begin to realise that death is permanent. They may also start to recognise that they will die one day. They may also feel resentful if there is less attention given to them at the time of the death or immediately afterwards.

Gender differences.

Boys generally show their emotions and talk things through much less than girls do and as a result may find it a lot harder to grieve. Culture and society have a part to play in this, as there can be pressure on boys to 'act like a man' and not show their feelings as 'big boys don't cry'. Very often, however, boys' unresolved grief can manifest itself in poor behaviour at a later date.

Girls, on the other hand, are considered to be the expressive sex, and are thus more able to talk about and show the way that they feel, which makes the grieving process slightly easier.

Whatever the reasons for these differences, it is important to be aware they exist.

At STAG LANE we place value on ~

B Bereavement support

Bereaved children are entitled to receive the support they need.

E Expressing feelings and thoughts

Bereaved children should feel comfortable expressing all feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety and to be helped to find appropriate ways to do this.

R Remembering the person who has died

Bereaved children have a right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives if they wish to do so. This may involve re-living memories (both the good and the difficult) so that the person becomes a comfortable part of the child's continuing life story.

E Education and information

Bereaved children are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will happen next.

A Appropriate and positive response from our school

Bereaved children can benefit from receiving help and understanding from their teachers and peers.

V Voicing important decisions

Bereaved children should be asked if they wish to be involved in important decisions that have an impact on their lives (such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries).

E Everyone being involved

Bereaved children should receive support which includes their parent(s) or carers and siblings and which respects each child's confidentiality.

M Meeting others

Bereaved children can benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.

E Established routines

Bereaved children should be able to choose to continue previously enjoyed activities and interests.

N No to blame

Bereaved children should be helped to understand they are not responsible and not to blame for the death.

T Telling their story

Bereaved children have a right to tell their story in a variety of ways and for those stories to be heard, read or seen by those important to them.

Resources

Websites

Useful Website for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Useful telephone numbers and addresses:

Winston's Wish Family Line ~ 0845 2030405 – national helpline offering guidance, information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including professionals and family members

Childhood Bereavement Network ~ 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services

CRUSE Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677 www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Books dealing with death and loss:-

Beyond the Rough Rock

Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

As Big As It Gets

Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

I Miss You ~ First Look at Death ~ Pat Thomson

Please refer to the following policies:

Child Protection (Safeguarding) Behaviour

**Positive Handling
SEN Policy**

**First Draft: July 2009 written by: Learning Mentor
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