



Inspiring All to Excellence



Anker Moor Primary Academy

Bereavement Policy

Document Control

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Rationale

At Ankermoor, we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. We provide opportunities within our setting for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. Through carefully tailored programmes, both curriculum led (1decision and Discovery RE) and through pastoral initiatives (HOPE, Ankermoor Angels and Mindfulness) our pupils receive the opportunity to explore their own social, emotional and personal wellbeing.

Our aim is to help our pupils be secure, happy, ambitious and successful members of our community. We believe that the ethos of the school based on openness and mutual support - through our school values, provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in a supportive manner.

Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs. By adopting a planned and considered approach, the school can support the emotional wellbeing of the child, family and staff.

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of our school community – a child or staff member.

We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and individual needs should be outlined and dealt with in a sensitive manner. This policy will deal with bereavement following the death of a school pupil, staff member or parent/carer and will also address the procedures which will be followed should a child become terminally ill or die whilst at school.

Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils, family 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 wider agencies 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.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/1>)

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

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes clear that local authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to disabled children and young people and those with SEND needs, must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents;
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions;

-the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible education and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/part/3/enacted>

The Management of Bereavement in School

The purpose of this policy is to give all staff the confidence in recognising and adopting a procedure. We understand that a typical set approach will not always be used, and that adaptability is needed for each individual case. To hope to enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement, we believe therefore a policy is viewed a necessity.

One of our main concerns must inevitably be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we offer our commitment to all their needs - be it practical or emotional - and we offer ongoing support.

Dissemination

It is important to agree, if possible, with the parent that the school will take on the role of informing concerned parties. This will hopefully alleviate some stress to have this burden taken away from them as they have many people unconnected with the school to contact.

There can be no exact list of people to contact. 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 a death takes place during the school day, the headteacher will inform the SLT and admin staff as they need to help in the next part of the process. They will then immediately inform the child's class teacher. Where possible, the SLT will move into the class to allow the staff to come out and be told together.

These staff will be given as much time as they need to process the news and start to grieve. Should a member of staff be so distressed, then they may be sent home. An appropriate private space (either the community room or the staff room) will be dedicated to these people and to anyone else in the school who had a close relationship with the child.

SLT will arrange cover for the class and the headteacher will begin the process of informing other classes – those with staff closest to the child first. This is never easy in a busy school. It is easy to see where these two functions will overlap as staff may need to be taken from one class to manage the 'bereaved class'.

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

- Chair of governors
- Trust members- CEO to disseminate information to the trust board
- Current school staff not in school that day
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Social Work team (if required)
- Other professionals who work with the child e.g. Ed Psych
- Parents – if children have been informed it is appropriate to send out a letter to parents informing them of the loss as 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.

Telling the other pupils will be a decision for the headteacher. With different aged pupils, there will be different decisions made. The class teacher of the class with the loss may be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. Support from the Mental Health lead where needed should be used.

Where it is felt that the children will understand, staff will visit the classes, usually with a photo of the child, and let the pupils know what has happened. The finality of death cannot be diminished, however, 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. Staff would try to avoid adding worry – if the child died in hospital, we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals for example. 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. This is not a time to use one's own religious beliefs, but it has been seen as acceptable to tell the children that their friend is now in heaven. If you know the family's beliefs, then these should be followed. This is acceptable across cultures and whilst not a concept that can be fully grasped by all pupils, but the idea that the child has moved on to a new and happy place can only be helpful to a child trying to understand what has happened.

Following some simple step by step procedures will enable us to effectively deal with the situation sensitively and promptly. Covering all areas of needs and effective communications are key.

Procedures:

1. Contact should be established by the headteacher with the deceased's family and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual Information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to a grieving family's requirements.
2. Cultural and religious considerations should be taken into account
3. A clear process of communication should be followed, giving consideration to the multi-agency involvement families may have.
4. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in ways appropriate to the students' understanding, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
5. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups (or individually when necessary), by someone known to them.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Staff affected by the death will be offered on-going support as appropriate.
9. 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.
10. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the headteacher.
11. Appropriate memorialisation activities should be discussed with families and students, bearing in mind that any future deaths will require the same response.
12. 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the headteacher;

- 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 liaise with Mental Health lead regarding Mental Health and Wellbeing action plans for children and staff.

The Mental health lead role, (including possible referrals i.e. WAVES team, emotion coaches, bereavement counsellors, mentors, HOPE Project);

- To have bereavement support training and understanding of wider issues.
- To offer 1:1 support.
- To offer sessions for the child, family and staff members.
- To arrange counselling sessions for staff.

The role of the governing body;

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, supporting the headteacher.

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.

That differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in our school environment.

That 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 all wider school contacts.

Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

The school may be notified in many ways. Experience has shown that if death occurs during school hours parents usually let the school know directly either face to face or by telephone and the person answering the phone will put them through to the headteacher. From this point, a conversation with the most prevalent member of staff will be had and decision will be made regarding time and place to inform wider staff and if deemed necessary the wider community.

Where a death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can – they may use the school email address and ask for a member of staff to contact them directly.

In that instance the member of staff, who picks up the email takes will immediately contact the headteacher or the most senior member of the school team available and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

Appendix 1: Useful resources

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
bhf.org.uk/smallcreature	British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using cartoon creatures.

Books and Workbooks for Children

- Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your activity book to help when someone has died (EY)
- The Memory Tree (EY)
- Badgers Parting Gifts (EY)
- Always and Forever (EY)
- Grandad's Island (EY)
- When Dinosaurs Die: A guide to Understanding Death (KS1)
- Luna's Red Hat: A Storybook to Help Children Cope with Loss and Suicide (KS1)
- The Invisible String (KS1)
- The Invisible String Workbook (KS1)
- Michael Rosen's Sad Book (KS1)
- The Dragonfly Story (KS1)
- Vicky Angel (KS2)
- Bridge to Terabithia (KS2)
- When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness (KS2)
- When Someone Very Special Dies (KS2)
- When Dinosaurs Die (KS1-KS2)
- The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back (EY-KS2)
- The Huge Bag of Worries (EY -KS2)
- The Fox and the Star (All ages)
- The Invisible Leash (KS1/KS2)

Appendix 2: Letter to families - template

Dear Parents and Carers,

Unfortunately, we need to inform you of the sad and sudden death of (a pupil / staff member) at our school.

(Child/Adult) has been a pupil /staff member at Ankermoor Primary Academy for (number) years. She/he was a very popular member of the school community and will be missed by everyone that knew her/him.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different emotions like sadness, anger and confusion. The staff will be able to help any questions any pupils may have and we have a resource pack available to support pupils' understanding. If there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will support in any way we can.

Our thoughts are with (child/staff member) family at this time. We will be arranging a special assembly in the next few months to celebrate their life and contribution to our school community.

Appendix 3: Guide for how to inform pupils

- o Be honest
- o Use clear language
- o Expect questions
- o Recognise every death and reaction to it is unique
- o Don't assume
- o Allow time
- o Acknowledge that some days will be better than others

Suggested script: "I've got some really sad news to tell you today that might make you sad. (Name) died yesterday. This means that we won't see (Name) again. We have lots of memories of (Name) that we can think about and we can celebrate those together"

Staff will be able to utilise the resources in the ELSA Bereavement Support Pack where appropriate.