

Grove Street Primary School Bereavement Policy

Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each 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 a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

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

As a Rights Respecting School we also take into account children's rights in all our decision making in particular paying attention to Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

The role of the governing body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.

The role of the head teacher

- 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.

Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for 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.
5. The school should be aware that 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.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher
8. 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.