Kirkheaton Primary School

play learn achieve

Loss and Bereavement Policy

Reviewed: October 24
Approved by LAB: October 2024
Review due October 26
Reviewer- Principal

Introduction

This policy reflects the values and ethos of Kirkheaton Primary School. It provides a framework within which all staff can work sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances. Many of the pupils in our care are likely to encounter the death of a much-loved pet, relative or family friend during their time at Kirkheaton Primary School. For a few the loss will be more immediate and traumatic, involving the loss of a parent, sibling or personal friend. In many cases this is likely to have a significant impact on the child's emotional well-being, learning and educational performance.

Kirkheaton Primary School aims to meet the needs of all of its children. When circumstances are changed because of a death in the family, we will work to be a place where a child can gain appropriate support.

Rights of the Child, with specific reference to the following articles from UNICEF Rights Respecting Charter:

Article 2: All children have these rights…..whether they have a disability…. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3: All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions affect you.

Article 6: Your family has the responsibility to help you to exercise your rights.

Article 12: You have the right to an opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 16: You have the right to privacy.

Article 23: You have the right to special care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in the CRC, so that you can live a full life.

Article 24: You have the right to the best health care possible.

Article 28: You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to study to the highest level you can.

Article 29: Your education should help you to develop your talents and abilities.

Article 42: You have the right to know your rights.

Initial response when school is informed of bereavement:

1. The family will be contacted by a member of staff- or spoken with during initial call from family
2. Facts surrounding the death and what the child has been told will be checked.
3. Discussions with family about how school can provide support.
4. Beaumont will ask for permission from the bereaved family to inform the school community of the death if appropriate, due to the speed of social media.
5. A whole school assembly may be required or classes spoken to individually by member of staff or their class teacher.
6. Identify members of staff, usually the Principal, class teacher and staff who work with the child, who may want to attend the funeral to represent Beaumont.

Before creating a support plan it is important to remember that the plan needs:

1. To foster a caring attitude for those suffering a loss/bereavement.
2. To encourage a consistent, flexible approach to meet the situation.
3. To discuss with family or carers how school can provide support.
4. To consider the religious beliefs/views of the family.

When producing a support plan bear in mind the following points:

1. Pupils may need time to grieve.
2. Staff should find the time to listen and talk and do their best to comfort when necessary.
3. Pupils should be aware that staff will try to help them to come to terms with their feelings.
4. It may be helpful to allow a distressed child time and access to materials in order that he/she may express their feelings in their own way.
5. Within school a resource bank containing reference materials has been developed and will be maintained.
6. All staff involved in the care of a bereaved child should be aware of the situation.
7. The possible fears, insecurities and emotions of other children which may arise from the situation should be recognised and addressed sympathetically.
8. Religious, cultural and social backgrounds, as well as parental wishes, should be taken into account when considering appropriate responses.
9. Identify and allocate a quiet place where pupils and staff can go to talk.
10. To help raise difficult concepts with pupils through stories, suitable books are available in school. We need to remember in dealing with this type of situation that a bereaved child, especially if the death concerned is that of a close relative, parent, sibling or friend, is likely to be feeling confused, anxious, shocked and insecure. At school we should aim to provide a stable and supportive environment in which he/she is able to come to terms with the loss. It is possible that this process could be lengthy and support may be required long term. Before the child comes back to school – the Principal or class teacher will discuss with parents what support the school can provide and how the return will be dealt with.

Guidance for supporting a bereaved pupil returning to school:

- The amount of authorised absence for bereavement will be at the Principal's discretion. When the child re-enters class – reassure them you know what has happened.
- Acknowledge what has happened and do not be afraid to use the word "death", adult terminology such as 'passed away / lost' can be confusing for a child and create a false impression.
- Provide a special place for time alone in case they need it.
- Be prepared to listen, again and again and again.
- Be aware of what the child has been told by their own family rather than using ways to comfort that you feel are most appropriate eg telling a child a dead relative is 'watching over them' could be comforting for one child but very disturbing for another depending on the relationships before death, or what they have been told by their own family.

- When they want to talk – find time to listen.
- Do talk about the dead person and share any memories.
- Be honest – Although it is sometimes difficult, it is better to try and answer awkward questions truthfully. Don't be afraid of saying "I don't know".
- Allow them to express emotion and feelings and do not be afraid to share your own feelings of sadness.
- Recognise the full tragedy – do not try to comfort with comments such as "you'll feel better soon" or changing the subject.
- Don't assume lack of reaction means they do not care, initially the full reality may not have sunk in.
- Try not to judge, grief is a very personal experience and every child will do it in their own way.

The death of a pupil or member of staff:

Be clear about

- Roles and responsibilities
- Procedures
- The first few days
- The funeral
- Support for pupils
- Support for staff
- Remembering

Long-term considerations:

- A bereaved child will find school very tiring
- They may have difficulty concentrating, think more slowly, lack initiative and need more help.
- Some subjects may be distressing for the child. Staff should be aware that Christmas, birthdays, Mother's day or Father's day and other special events can be especially difficult.
- It will be important to watch for changes in behaviour which may be many months after. Aggression may be a way of letting out feelings of anxiety or anger. Be alert for the child who is presenting these behaviours.
- Keep contact with family and let them know if you have any concerns or if you suspect the child is having difficulties.
- Inform new teachers/ supply teachers of the circumstances.

Further sources of information, guidance, training and support within Kirklees:

Educational Psychology Service: Tel 01924 483744 dewsbury.psychology@kirklees.gov.uk

Head teacher Support Kirklees: Carol Martin Tel 07531081299 Graham Altoft 07794217069

Kirkwood Hospice: Tel 01924 557900 info@kirkwoodhospice.co.uk

Employee Health Care, Kirklees: Tel. 01484 221000 employee. healthcare@kirklees.gov.uk

Michael Yarwood, Senior Communications Officer, Kirklees: Tel 01484 22100 michael.yarwood@kirklees.gov.uk

Useful UK Websites

Help is at Hand (Dept of Health 2008)- anyone affected by suicide
www.gov.uk/government/news/you-are-not-alone-help-is-at-hand-for-anyone-bereaved-bysuicide

Winston's Wish- bereavement support including downloadable resources for schools www.winstonswish.org.uk

CRUSE Bereavemnt Care- Resources, books, dvds, local support groups www.cruse.org.uk
0844 800 3309
01484 546318

Hope Again- Youth website of CRUSE www.hopeagain.org.uk

Simon Says- child bereavement support including telephone helpline www.simonsays.org.uk
Support line 02380647550

Childhood Bereavement UK - 0800 02 888 40
Downloadable resources for schools, support and information helpline www.childbereavement.org

Papyrus- 0800 068 41 41
www.papyrus-uk.org

Samaritans- 01484 53388
www.samaritans.org