



## **Grange Primary School**

### **Bereavement Policy**

Every year 20,000 children under the age of 16 years will be bereaved of a parent and many more will experience the death of someone else special in their life.

In addition to these individual pupils, schools may also experience the death of a child at the school or a staff member.

It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time all schools will have to deal with a death that affects the school community.

As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children will see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and will look to trusted staff members for help.

Death is something that most people choose not to think about so when faced with it we often find ourselves ill prepared.

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

## **In the event of bereavement:**

This policy should be copied, distributed and made available to all staff.

This policy sets out guidelines for:

- How to deal with a call about bereavement. (this is displayed in the office)
- A plan of action following the death of:
  - A pupil
  - A staff member
  - A parent
- Templates for letters informing parents of the death of:
  - A staff member
  - A pupil
- Guidelines for breaking news of a death to staff & governors.
- Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the children.
- Things to consider in the days following the news of a death.

## **How to respond to a phone call about a death.**

- Make sure you write down as many details as possible. (Who? When? Why? If possible)
- Ask the caller (if it's a parent/child death) if it would be OK for someone from school to call them in a few days to discuss returning to school/siblings. Etc.
- Check that we have the correct number to call them back on.
- Ensure you notify the Head (or senior staff) as soon as possible.

### **Plan of Action Following the Death of a Pupil**

- Whoever takes the call needs to try and get as much information as possible about the events surrounding the death. (In a sensitive manner)
- The Head and Chair of Governors need to be informed.
- The Educational Psychologist needs to be informed (critical incident).
- Primarily, the class teacher and TA need to be informed.
- All other staff need to be informed at the earliest convenience. A staff meeting needs to take place as soon as possible to discuss the best plan of action. (The nature of the death may have implications, I.e safeguarding Etc.)
- Decide whether to contact EWHMS
- Class teacher to tell children about the death, allow time for questions and reflection. (Answer as accurately as possible)
- Identify absent staff and pupils that will need to be informed, including lunch staff, etc.
- Send letter home to inform parents.
- Staff to attend funeral, where appropriate.

### **Plan of Action Following the Death of a Staff Member**

- Whoever takes the call needs to try and get as much information as possible about the events surrounding the death. (In a sensitive manner)
- The Head (senior staff in the event of it being the Head) and Chair of Governors need to be informed.
- The Educational Psychologist needs to be informed (critical incident).
- All staff need to be informed at the earliest convenience. A staff meeting needs to take place as soon as possible. A discussion needs to take place about who will need to be informed and by whom, see bullet point 6 below.
- Identify absent staff and pupils that will need to be informed, including lunch staff, etc
- Contact EWHMS for advice and support.
- Speak to children who had/have worked closely with the staff member, in a small group.
- Class teacher to tell children about the death, allow time for questions and reflection. (Answer as accurately as possible)
- Send letter home to inform parents.

### **Plan of Action Following the Death of a Parent**

- Whoever takes the call needs to try and get as much information as possible about the events surrounding the death. (In a sensitive manner)
- Primarily, the class teacher and TA need to be informed.
- All other staff need to be informed at the earliest convenience. Identify absent staff and pupils that may need to be informed, including lunch staff, etc.
- Teacher to speak with child (where possible in their home) discuss how they want to deal with returning to school. Do they want to tell their friends or for the teacher to do it.
- Speak with child's carer, what is the 'family story?' (Eg, heaven, in the stars, with the angels)
- Remind the child that all boundaries at school still apply.
- However if they need a time out or time to reflect, offer it.
- Staff to attend funeral, where appropriate.

**Template of a letter informing parents  
of the death of a member of staff**

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/head of year had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name .....>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

**Template of a letter informing parents  
of the death of a pupil**

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.*

*The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.*

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..'s> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

**Guidelines for breaking news about a death  
to staff and Governors**

- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible.
- Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways.
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or e-mail etc.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
  - a) support members of staff
  - b) support groups of children

The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.

- Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary).
- Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take 'phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a "protected" telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information.
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day.
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation.

Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.

Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.

- Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement.
- EWHMS
- Child bereavement UK 01494 568900
- Samaritans in school 0845 7909090

## Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the children/young people

- Inform the children/young people as soon as possible about the death.
- Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class or tutor groups.
- Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.
- If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died. Share a prayer.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person. (It is Ok to show emotion)
- Avoid using euphemisms.
- Those children/young people who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or on a one-to-one situation.
- Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in **no** way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.

- Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family.
- Be available for any child/young person who needs additional help and support.

**Things to consider in the days  
following the news of the death**

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.
- It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary.
- It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and secretaries/administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.

Consider practical issues like:-

- Who will attend the funeral, making a collection etc.
- Cover for any staff who may be going to the funeral.
- Transport to and from the funeral.
- Possible closure of the school. If this is the case remember to tell lunchtime supervisors, caretaker etc in advance.