



Loss and Bereavement Policy

Date of policy: January 2016
Date last review adopted by governing body: 09/03/2017
Frequency of review: 3 years

1. School background

Writtle Infant School is openly inclusive; a special place where everyone feels included, valued and achieves their best.

2. 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. Also one in two children will go through the separation of their parents and as a school we need to be ready to deal with those feelings of loss.

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 Loss and 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 Loss and 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. and Kids Inspire. The Loss and Bereavement Policy is referenced on our Critical Incidents Plan.

3. Our school values

Following input from all stakeholders, the school has decided on these five core values which underpin everything we do as a school.

- Honesty
- Independence
- Politeness
- Inclusivity
- Perseverance

4. Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement and loss

- 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 (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim, as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

5. The role of the governing body

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

6. 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.

7. The role of the LEA

- To advise and support staff.
- Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

8. Procedures - Bereavement

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher 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. Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher to follow Critical Incidents Procedures. Essex County Council will advise on a plan of action, if needed, for example support from the Educational Psychologist Service.
3. 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.
4. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
5. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity if applicable for bereavement and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
6. 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 a situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
7. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
8. 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.

9. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher, after consultation with the press office.
10. 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.
11. The Chair of Governors should be kept informed throughout of the bereavement and any special arrangements in school.

9. Therapeutic Interventions

There are many suggestions to support children who have experienced loss and bereavement. These include:

- Making a memory box/book
- Family Record
- Telling the story
- Dealing with sleeping difficulties with help such as worry dolls and dream catchers
- Handprints
- It needs to be agreed with parents how to explain the situation to children – avoid statements that give hope that the person may return
- Storytelling
- There are a number of books to help children with loss and bereavement – a list is available in school

10. Role of Governors

Governors determine, support, monitor and review the school policies. They support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively. They ensure that the building and equipment are safe. They monitor pupil attainment across the school and ensure that staff development and performance management promote good quality teaching.

11. Equality statement

“The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all pupils regardless of gender, disability, and ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background. All pupils have access to the curriculum and the right to a learning environment which dispels ignorance, prejudice or stereotyping.”

This policy will be reviewed in Spring 2020, with an earlier review if required.