Leamington Community Primary School

Together we make a Difference

Bereavement Policy

Completed by: Miss R. Golding
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Courage Determination Friendship Honesty Respect

Leamington Community Primary School: Bereavement Policy

1. Introduction

The main aim of this policy is to provide a framework for all Leamington Community Primary School staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

2. Aims

At Leamington Community Primary School we aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within our community. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both the child and family can rely on, and gain some much-needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

3. Procedures

Within school we work in partnership with parents/carers. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. We promote an open-door policy and encourage parents/carers to talk to us regularly and keep us informed of any important situations or incidents in our pupils' lives. Parents/carers are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies, etc.) If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs, etc.) should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family. All conversations will be recorded on CPOMs and the appropriate staff members tagged. Children dealing with bereavement will be discussed by the Inclusion Team to identify the support that will be put in place – this will be done in conjunction with the family's wishes and the class teacher/learning support officer will be involved.

a. Family Bereavement for a pupil:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support;
- The family should be asked how much/what the child already knows and how they have been involved;
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family;
- The importance of working together and liaison will be explained – both parties assessing any changes in behaviour (i.e. eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn);
- Involve school support or outside agencies as appropriate e.g. inclusion team support, school nurse, counselling, etc.

b. Family Bereavement for a member of staff:

- Absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate time off in line with the Absence Management Policy. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate;

- Support will be offered for the member of staff, as required. This could be in regards to counselling or support with workload, etc.

c. Death of a child or member of staff:

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school;
- Counselling should be made available, if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this, e.g. counselling);
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate and they wish to do so;
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support;
- Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers;
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.

d. Terminally Ill Pupils/Staff:

- In the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/carers/next-of-kin should always be respected;
- Should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child's condition;
- Occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach.

d. Return to School (see Appendix 1 for further guidance):

- For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic;
- Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teachers, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/carers of the bereaved pupil agree);
- Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief;
- Teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined;
- Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite;
- Staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement;
- Staff might keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate and the inclusion team will identify the appropriate support to put in place when needed.

e. Talking to the Bereaved Pupil:

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible, arrange a one-to-one session with the school mentor as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school;

- Be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions;
- If people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling;
- Beware of using platitudes, e.g. "I know how you feel" (young people may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

Do:	**Don't:**
• Let the child know that you genuinely care; • Make time to be available and listen; • Accept all that the child is saying; • Allow them to express their feelings their way; • Let them know their feelings are normal; • Let them know that it is OK to cry; • Talk honestly and share your feelings; • Be honest; • Have eye contact; • Have appropriate physical contact; • Let them know that it is not their fault; • Be aware of the home situation.	• Stop the child talking; • Tell them how they should or should not feel; • Avoid contact; • Change the subject; • Deny your pain and feelings; • Point out things for which they should be grateful; • Be frightened of sharing your own feelings.

4. Inclusion Team:

At Leamington Community Primary School, we have a dedicated Inclusion Team that provide a wide range of support for any child who needs it. Referrals to the Inclusion Team are provided by class teachers. Parents/carers can also request support by speaking to their child's class teacher or calling the school office and asking to speak to a member of the inclusion team. The team includes:

Deputy Headteacher and Deputy DSL: Mrs. Rachel Mellor
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Miss Rebecca Golding
SENCO: Miss. Natalie Boyd
Assistant SENCO: Mrs. Sally Tyson
Mentor: Mr. Mike Francis
Family Support Worker: Mrs. Liz Morrison
Attendance and Mentoring: Ms. Jackie Stocks
Children's Mental Health Lead: Miss Jennifer Evans
Inclusion Governor: Mrs. Alma Shaw

Appendix 1:
Support and Further Suggestions for Teachers

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement. It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's developmental and emotional needs (see Appendix 2).

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death will disrupt the family for many months; in fact, the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child, it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to acknowledge the child's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviours such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness.
- The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, becoming clingy, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused and unsafe.
- The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the dead person or child. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.
- Teachers should remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family; looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children.
- Teachers may require their own support structures. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining.

Appendix 2:
Development stages relating to an understanding of death

Age	Understanding of Death	Child's Needs	Phrases/Techniques
Infancy Birth – two years	Death as separation and /or abandonment Careful listening and watching Death is when the body stops working	Brief simple, honest explanations with familiar examples Reassurance of safety, parental support and attention	"We'll be here to take care of you.
Pre- school 2 – 6 Years Uses magical and intuitive thinking	Death as sleep, temporary, reversible, impersonal. Or as a person who comes to get you, can be catching Egocentric thinking causes feelings of responsibility or guilt	Clarification and expanded answers. Permission to attend funeral with assistance Acceptance of feelings without qualification, corrections or judgement.	Avoid euphemisms such as sleep, lost. Check and see if explanations are understood Expect repeat questions Acknowledge everyone's feelings of sadness and loss. Anticipate and counteract guilt Look out for unusual or subtle expressions of grief
School Years 6- 11 years Uses concrete thinking, begins rational thinking	Death is final, perhaps not inevitable Occurs to others Perhaps retaliatory	Reassurance that grief is OK, to feel bad is normal Open communication and opportunity to express feelings when ready. Encouragement to attend the funeral	Acknowledge adult feeling, including anger and guilt. It's OK to cry Accept fluctuating grief