



Bereavement Policy



Approved by ... June 2020
Date to be Reviewed: June 2021

Introduction

A framework for supporting children, families and staff in school when a death in the school community has occurred.

Background

Hove Junior School is an inclusive school which strives to ensure that all children feel safe when with us. Our values focus on openness, honesty and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

There are times in a child's life, when things do not go according to plan and the death of a loved one is one of these times which requires sensitivity and understanding to ensure that a child's needs are acknowledged at this difficult time.

This policy will provide guidance as to how Hove Junior School can support and respond to each of the main bereavements listed below:

- Pupil
- Parent/carer
- Sibling
- Staff member
- Member of the school community
- Following a tragedy affecting a section of the school community.

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

www.winstonswish.org.uk

<https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/information/bereavement/>

This policy has been adapted to reflect the suggested policy endorsed by the Child Bereavement Organisation. This is a recognised national charity that takes the lead in providing support to bereaved children and families.

Policy Links

- **Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy**
- **PSHE Curriculum policy**
- **Coping with a school emergency / critical incident policy**
- **PSHE education policy**
- **Confidentiality policy**
- **Equality policy**
- **Health and safety policy**
- **Leave of absence policy (staff)**

Objectives

The core intentions of this policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable and appropriate), pre bereavement and following a death.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To be guided by the family affected in terms of the pathway of support they would like school to follow. Partnership working is essential alongside communication which is open and honest at all times.
- To follow the safeguarding procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout and that all children are protected from harm. (S1 Children Act 1989)
- To identify key staff within school and LEA (when appropriate), and clarify their pathways of support available. Acknowledgment also needs to be given around respecting individual values and beliefs around death and dying).
- To provide a supportive structure for which members of the school community can refer to.

The Role of the Governing Body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation. Policy to be reviewed in three years or when national or local policy directs a change.
- To ensure that, as a governing body, there is clarity regarding roles and responsibilities when needing to respond to a death within the school community.
- To ensure that appropriate attention is given to how loss and change/death and dying is addressed within the school curriculum and pays attention to differing cultural values and beliefs.

- To ensure that the staff team are given appropriate opportunities to reflect and access therapeutic support if needed.

Staff Responsibilities

In the first instance contact will be made with the head teacher to ensure that correct procedures are followed immediately.

Our Inclusion team has experience and knowledge around meeting the needs of children and families facing loss and change. Discussion with a member of the team around individual needs may be useful in partnership with following procedure.

The head teacher will then co-ordinate any contact than needs to be made with any relevant persons to ensure that the child and family are offered support in line with the school's roles and responsibilities.

The Role Of The Head Teacher

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies. If appropriate, liaison can be designated to the Inclusion team or a member of the senior leadership team in the absence of the head teacher.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To formally be the first point of contact for family/child concerned. If a member of staff has heard of a death within the school community. The head teacher needs to be notified at the earliest possibility.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.

The Role Of The LEA

- To advise and support staff.
- Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.
- To offer specific support when there has been an incident affecting a section of the school community/critical incident which has resulted in a death of an adult or child.
- To ensure that any staff significantly affected by the death are made aware of support available to them.

The Role Of All Staff

All staff will have read and be aware of the Bereavement Policy in line with school training and induction .

- To access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
- To know where to access support if advice/information is required.
- To know how to report a concern if the bereavement has placed a child at significant risk of harm.
- To know how to offer the child reassurance when distressed.

- To have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change.
- To provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher/inclusion team.

The following can be used as a guide for all adults to reference when responding to a child who is facing loss and change or has experienced a bereavement:

To provide the best support we will seek to:

- Check out and be clear about the facts
- Acknowledge what has happened
- Be honest
- Be prepared to listen
- Allow children to express emotion
- Acknowledge the dead person and not be afraid to share any memories
- Recognise the full tragedy
- Reassure them that they are not in any way responsible
- Give bereaved and grieving pupils time
- Not assume that a lack of reaction means they do not care
- Try not to judge – grief is very personal as is an individual's response to it as well.
- Allow ourselves appropriate time for reflection and support

Procedures: Pre-Bereavement

In some situations, it is known that a death is going to occur, usually as a result of a long standing illness. If this is the case, the following information provides a guide as to how school and family can work together to ensure that the child is appropriately supported.

In the case of this being an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

- Family invited in to school to explore sources of support that could be provided and to confirm factual information.
- To clarify who the key point of contact will be in terms of information exchange and when things change
- To ensure that all are clear about what information has been shared with the children.
- To keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion.
- To explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations e.g local hospice, Winston's Wish, Child Bereavement Organisation, Chestnut Tree House Children's Hospice.
- To explore what support for the children might look like in practice

- To arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the child/ren.
- If appropriate, to begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death.
- Once the death has occurred, bereavement procedures will be followed.

Procedures Following A Bereavement

In some situations an unplanned death can occur. This could be as a result of an accident; suicide; or an acute illness. In these instances, key members of staff will be identified to co-ordinate what needs to be actioned so that the situation is managed in a calm and efficient manner and reflects all relevant policies and procedures. The Head Teacher with the Chair of Governors supporting (if appropriate), will be the key point of contact for all information exchange.

If appropriate, contact will be made with the LEA to discuss external sources of support and whether other procedures need to be considered. Contact may also be made with relevant bereavement organisations such as Winston's Wish, to obtain specific advice on how best to proceed in terms of supporting those people affected.

The following procedures can relate to a child or an adult member of the school community. Thought will need to be given in each individual situation to ensure that the response from school is sensitive and accurately reflects the gravity of each situation.

- 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.
- 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.
- Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
- 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. (Suggested letters are saved in the Bereavement Policy folder).
- 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.
- Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
- 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.

- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher
- 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.

Additionally the following strategy has been included as it also pays attention to the practical considerations for a child in the initial bereavement period and in the longer term.

- The family share the bereavement story with you.
- Discuss as a team the task required and who is best to complete them.
- Senior member of the team to send card/letter of condolence.
- Appointed person from the setting to discuss with the family and child who they want their story shared with others.
- Inform others – staff, families, children of the setting as agreed with the bereaved family and child.
- Appointed person to be point of contact for family – discuss funeral arrangements.
- Appointed person arrange to see child at home or in school to assess their needs and level of support required at this time.
- Appointed person liaise with the child and support their return to the setting.
- Appointed person ensure significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with all staff for future reference.
- Appointed person continues to assess the needs of the child. Observation, discussion with significant people, including the child regarding their concerns or worries, and outside agencies if required.
- Ensure friendships are secure as peer support can be very important.
- Continue regular contact with the family – show you still care about them and their child.
- Ensure information is passed throughout the setting, particularly at transitional periods.

Remember: Grief will last a life time and can surface throughout with new questions and many reflections

(Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People During Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education, pg. 23, Simon Says)

Additional Information and links

All responses to bereavement/loss and change need to be focused on individual need.

The following information is available in the Bereavement Policy folder to support the school in developing comprehensive, supportive and sensitive plans.

There is also a Bereavement Folder in the inclusion room which holds relevant resources to reference.

- Developmental responses to bereavement
- Practical Considerations
- The needs of Children facing Loss and Change
- General lesson plans around bereavement (taken from Winston's Wish and Child Bereavement Organisation)
- Suggested letters to parents/carers
- '*Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People During Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education*' resource from 'Simon Says'
- Book List

Useful links and resources can be found at:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.macmillan.whybother.org.uk

www.simonsays.org.uk

www.cruse.org.uk

www.chestnuttreehouse.org.uk

<https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/information/bereavement/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

<https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages-civil-partnership-and-citizenship/bereavement-service-contacts-and>

<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/covid-19/>

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>

<https://www.ataloss.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/coronavirus-pandemic>

<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/need-know-info/coronavirus-bereavement-advice/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

