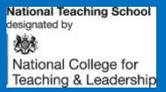
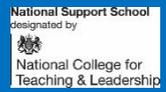


Bereavement Guidelines & Policy

Policy Updated: September 2018

Future Review: September 2020



Nurture ~ Believe ~ Discover ~ Achieve

Our vision for Woodstock CE Primary School reflects a passionate commitment to learning and recognition of the uniqueness of individual learners. It is driven by our desire to offer the best possible education for our pupils in partnership with parents, the church and the local community.

WOODSTOCK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL IS A CENTRE:

- For learning where high standards are pursued with consistency and enthusiasm.
- Where individuals are valued and helped to achieve their personal best
- Where effective partnerships secure the success of the school.

“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29, v11



*'Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the
o-er wrought heart and bids it break.'* William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

*'Death neither obeys the school timetable nor appears on it
...it enters the classroom without knocking.'* *Winston's Wish*

INTRODUCTION

This Policy aims to outline the basic principles and procedures that underpin our approach to supporting members of the school community with bereavement. Bereavement affects everybody at some time, and as a close community, our school aims to provide the best support for its members during times of bereavement.

We recognise that each bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved. We aim to have suitably trained staff in school who understand the complexities surrounding bereavement, and can help support families at times of bereavement to ensure that the school does what it can to best meet the needs of the bereaved.

It is important that children are helped to understand bereavement in clear and unambiguous ways, and given opportunities to experience the full range of emotions that may accompany bereavement within a safe and supportive atmosphere. As a school we recognise the importance of long term support for those who are bereaved, and will endeavour to provide opportunities for memorials and remembrance where appropriate.

OUR VISION

'Nurture ~ Believe ~ Discover ~ Achieve'

Our vision for Woodstock CE Primary School reflects a passionate commitment to learning and recognition of the uniqueness of individual learners. It is driven by our desire to offer the best possible education for our pupils in partnership with parents and the local community.

OUR ETHOS

Woodstock CE Primary School serves its community by working in partnership to provide an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice, and understanding of shared values. As a school we celebrate the diversity of the wider community and are committed to the principles of inclusion and equality of opportunity.

Through our aims and values we promote and endorse the Government's aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be Healthy
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Achieve Economic Well-being

OUR VALUES

Values are fundamental expressions of what we think and believe. As a school we encourage children to think about personal and social values, to become aware of, and involved in the life and concerns of their community and society, and so develop their capacity to be active and effective future citizens.

RATIONALE

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a 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

Death is a subject that nobody ever wants to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point in every teacher's career the school community will be affected by a death in some way or another. This might include the death of a pupil, the death of a staff member, the death of a pupil's family member, or the death of a key member in the school community such as a governor or popular visitor to the school.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. Our school is well-placed to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as to support those personally affected by it. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

Woodstock CE Primary School is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school'. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or divorce.

We are committed to involving the whole school community in the ongoing development of our bereavement policy. This policy was formulated with input from members of staff, representatives from the governing body, our School Nurse, the Local Authority/Healthy Schools Advisor, parents and pupils.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents/carers, prospective parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school.

This policy will be available to download on our school website, and in paper-form from the school office.

POLICY AIMS

At Woodstock CE Primary School our aim is to support all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

This Policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Headteacher** (Lisa Rowe) has overall responsibility for this Policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

There needs to be a designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that this person is absent then another named person will take responsibility: Deputy Headteacher - Anna Poole or Assistant Headteacher - Anne Hipwell

Leadership Team responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the Policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
- Co-ordinating the planned action to manage school-related incidents in and beyond the school; decide who will be responsible for communicating with the family directly involved, decide who gives news to the school community and if necessary who will communicate with the press.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary school.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

The nominated Governor with responsibility for bereavement issues is Karen Wiseman.

Governor responsibilities are:

- To contribute to generating and updating the Policy.
- To support the Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

STAFF SUPPORT & TRAINING

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and mutual support for each other and in implementing this policy. Bereavement awareness training will be provided for all staff, lunch time supervisors, and for relevant governors. We will ensure that members of staff are regularly consulted as to their training needs and training is provided as appropriate to keep up to date with developments.

CURRICULUM

Children explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of our PSHE curriculum. At Woodstock CE Primary School this is taught as part of the 'Relationships' theme using the SEAL materials. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy and Religious Education. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death, for example Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way. Children are given the opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death as well as being encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Our teaching will be based on an understanding of the principles stated above and that a variety of approaches should be used to meet the needs of our pupils and show sensitivity to their age and experience.

Teaching methods adopted in the classroom include:

- A range of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama.
- Introducing supporting resources – photographs, mementoes, stories, poetry and music.
- Giving clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to soften the blow with ambiguous language which does not tell the truth.
- Practising the collaborative social skills necessary to help cope with the feelings of loss.
- Giving relevant and appropriate advice and support.
- Providing continuity and progression by visiting and revisiting issues as pupils develop and their needs and understanding change.
- Considering the attitudes and values of pupils and a range of other significant groups in their locality.

PROCEDURES

Many of the guidelines in this Policy are only appropriate when the school community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a pupil or another staff member. Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a pupil experiencing the death of a parent. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual pupil will still be given careful consideration. If a child has been bereaved it is important to involve them in decisions about how our school manages issues relating to their loss. We would talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.

Information Gathering

To best support staff and pupils during times of bereavement it will be necessary to ascertain sensitive and potentially distressing information regarding the nature of an illness or cause of death. We will always ensure that any meetings with families are conducted in a comfortable, private space, in an unhurried atmosphere. Information will need to be shared with other members of staff, and to sometimes with pupils, and we will always be clear with parents beforehand about how we will respect confidentiality and share information sensitively where it is in the interests of the bereaved and the school community.

Terminal Illness

In the case of a terminal illness the school will liaise with the family to agree a member of staff who will be the main point of contact throughout the illness. This member of staff will support the family regarding school procedures to support them during the illness and will help keep the pupil informed about events at school during any prolonged periods of absence. This member of staff will support the pupil during their time in school, and be available to the family before, during, and after the death. This staff member will co-ordinate attendance at the funeral, and any memorials the family may wish the school to facilitate. Where possible, this may be a staff member who has an existing relationship with the family. In turn, this staff member will be given close support by the Headteacher, and will be supported in developing their professional practice in this regard.

Rumour & Speculation

At times of bereavement it is important that rumour and speculation are avoided. We will take time to talk to the affected family or staff member about the circumstances surrounding the bereavement. Knowing the background will help us provide the best support for those affected by bereavement. We will discuss with the family the extent to which the circumstances should be shared with other staff members and pupils, in order to provide the best support for the grieving child.

Informing Others

This is usually done when a pupil or staff member has died. Publicly talking about a single pupil who has experienced the death of a parent or family member may not be the best thing to do.

- Speak to the family if possible, offer them condolences and support before ascertaining what they would like to happen. Give them a direct telephone number for someone they can contact in school.
- Obtaining factual information will be made a priority. Thought will be given to how this might be done; remembering that contact with those directly involved may be difficult. It is vitally important that we do not make assumptions or repeat what has been heard through rumour. This will only add to distress. It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before pupils.
- Identify ways of doing this sensitively. Don't forget part-time and peripatetic staff.
- Decisions need to be made about where pupils will be told if this is necessary. Identify the most vulnerable pupils and what support they might need.
- Pupils will be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. A large school assembly is usually not ideal. Staff may well need guidance on words to use and the approach to take. Have something pre-prepared.
- If necessary send a letter to families the same day if possible. A pre-prepared script will be very helpful; it is difficult to find the right words when emotional and in shock.
- Consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter.

The First Few Days

- Map out the first few days after an incident. It is usually best to have minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required.
- Consider what the school approach will be if pupils or staff are too upset to attend lessons. If it is a teacher who has died, what will happen to his/her class?

The Funeral and School Closure

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- Identify which staff and pupils may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Involve staff and pupils in the decision.
- Cultural and religious implications need consideration.

'It is impossible not to communicate with children ...The way in which children are helped to deal with loss will have a profound impact on their future emotional development...'

Barbara Monroe (Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children)

Death of an Immediate Family Member:

- Being realistic and honest is the best any teacher or adult can do for a child. No child is taken in by pretend cheerfulness.
- Be aware of and respect the wishes and beliefs of the family.
- Encourage children to express their feelings. Do not tell a child how to feel.
- Help children use up their feelings in a positive way.
- Children learn to mourn by observing others. They need to be warned about different adult reactions and receiving mixed messages.
- Emotional pain is catching – be prepared.
- Try not to single out a grieving child for special attention. They need to feel part of the class and it helps if you expect them to continue to perform, though obviously at a different level.

Death of a Pupil

Whilst the issues raised will all apply, the following points should also be noted:

- Where a pupil has died, the effected class will grieve far longer than the rest of the school. Those who had a close relationship with the deceased will need extra care.
- The child's workspace should be left as it is for a while, and should be referred to.
- This allows grief to continue in the hearts and minds of the children. The deceased made a contribution to the class and continues to be part of it because of his/her death.

Death of a Member of Staff

Children generally believe that teachers/support staff leave the school for other posts or to retire. For most, it is quite inconceivable that they might die whilst still being employed by the school. We as adults have an inbuilt resistance to accepting death, especially if it is someone of our own age or younger. When such an event occurs it is usually extremely traumatic, especially for members of staff forced to deal with their own grief as well as comforting the children. Planning how we as a school would manage such an event is very important.

Multiple-Loss in the School

Where several children and/or staff die in one accident, staff, pupils, parents, governors, outside agencies and the press, all become entwined. Areas of responsibility need to be very clear. It is essential to gather together all of the facts and details of the accident, and then determine the likely impact on the whole school.

This then has to be dealt with appropriately. In the case of multiple deaths, additional support and resources may well be required. Additional staff may also be needed. In such instances, effective communication channels are essential.

SUPPORT

Support for Bereaved Children

Not all children and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners; they need familiar people who care.

Schools can offer children and young people:

- A routine, providing a sense of normality.
- Some space, away from an emotional intense atmosphere
- Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent).
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside of the home environment).
- Regular correspondence with home, providing reassurance about behaviours and general well-being, will ensure the child or young person is managing their grief.
- Access to appropriate resources via Healthy Schools, resources libraries, and Spiral or other support agencies.
- Preparation time for children and young people to discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved child or young person returns to school. This can help young people to see death as a common experience for us all at different times and places.
- Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be related to the death.
- An individual link person to support the pupils when necessary.
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

Support for Pupils Generally

- It is important to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example anyone who witnessed the death.
- Compile and keep updated a list of outside professionals and agencies who can come into the school in the event of a traumatic death to counsel pupils. Make sure that the help offered from outside agencies is appropriate before accepting. Pupils may find it difficult to be receptive to support or counselling from families of fellow pupils.
- Remembering/commemoration: this is difficult to plan in advance, but careful thought is required. The dead person's family and the young person need to be consulted. Schools often find that an assembly that takes the form of a celebration of life is appropriate.

Support for Staff

- Supporting bereaved pupils will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. See list of outside agencies, including professionals from Children and Young People's Services that may offer help, both short and long term.
- Plan for some sort of informal mutual support, for example in the staffroom at the end of the school day, to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.
- Give people time to attend the funeral if appropriate.
- Training before events happen – general for all staff and specific to bereaved children and young people.
- Awareness of available resources and time to become familiar with what is available.

Support for Parents

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people.
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection/flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.

Self-Care for Those Working with the Bereaved:

It is easy to overlook the stresses and anxieties placed on those dealing with the bereaved. In many instances these can be quite exacting and yet because our sympathy and attention naturally rests with those grieving we can easily forget the emotional weight resting on the shoulders of those offering support. The following points are worth bearing in mind. Anticipate possible reactions you may experience with grief and loss. Each one of us is likely to react differently depending on our age, personality, cultural and religious backgrounds. If you are ever unsure about how you should react to others' grief, honesty is always the best line of approach.

Try to accept that you may experience emotional reactions yourself. Such an event might trigger thoughts of your own past grief experiences. You may find yourself doubting your own abilities. It is not unusual to experience existential thoughts and find yourself querying life's injustices, questioning perhaps your own beliefs. Panic attacks and worries about death – your own, or perhaps that of your family – may also become a preoccupation.

Try to accept that giving such support can affect you in ways perhaps you had not considered. Normally these reactions will subside after a few days or weeks but if they persist do not be afraid to ask for professional support. Never take on too much. If you find that you are having difficulty in managing to cope, look to other support – a partner, friend or colleague.

It is important to remember that you alone cannot carry other people's grief.

Transition

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

Confidentiality

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure, pupils will be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This will help in retaining the trust of pupils and parents/carers and will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information is only disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals.

When the child returns to school it is important to discuss with them whether they want certain people with whom they come into contact to be informed, such as class teacher or other adult.

INCLUSION & EQUALITY

At Woodstock CE Primary School we recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures concerning death and that there may be different expectations of the bereaved child and family. Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We try to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Children will be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

Responding to the Media

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff have been advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Headteacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority Press Office.

'A child can live through anything so long as he or she is told the truth and is allowed to share the natural feelings people have when they are suffering'

Eda Le Shan, The Compassionate Friends Newsletter.

Reference Documents used in the Development of this Policy

Schools Information Pack, Childhood Bereavement Charity

Winston's Wish online support materials

'Dignity and Respect, Cultural Awareness: Religion and Belief' NHS

'Childhood Bereavement' National Children's Bureau

Useful Websites:

www.griefencounter.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.thelauracentre.org.uk

www.rd4u.org.uk

www.rip.rap.org.uk

www.penthaligonsfriends.org.uk

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This Policy was developed by the Leadership Team as part of the design and implementation of the 2014 Primary National Curriculum. It was adopted by the Curriculum Committee on behalf of the Governing Body at their Spring Term meeting 2015.

FUTURE REVIEW: Autumn Term 2020