POCKLINGTON CE (VC) INFANT SCHOOL

Bereavement Policy

Date Reviewed:	June 2024
Date Due for Review:	June 2025
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Rationale:

Pocklington C of E Infants School understand that bereavement is an experience which; could be faced by members of our school community, and that it may be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community – such as a child or staff member. We believe that it is an issue to be addressed openly and, consequently, guiding principles need to be outlined and developed in an objective manner.

This policy will deal with bereavement following the death of a school pupil or staff member. It will also address the procedures, which should be followed if a child become terminally ill or dies whilst at school.

Following a Bereavement:

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve.
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

We recognise that:

- Grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- Differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.

- The death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken toinform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching contacts.

The Management of Bereavement in School:

The purpose of this policy is to give all staff a confidence in recognising and adopting a particular procedure. It should be noted that a universally accepted procedure outline will, in itself, not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. One of our main concerns must inevitably be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such families, as may need practical, emotional and on-going support. The school may be notified in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- If death occurs parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can – they may have the phone number of a member of staff who cares for the child at school for example.
- In that instance, the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.

Dissemination:

It is important to agree, with the parent that the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. Bereavement is very difficult and the school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

If school is in session, the Headteacher will inform the SLT and admin staff as they are likely to be the people most involved in the next part of the process. The Headteacher will then immediately inform the child's class staff. Where necessary, a member of the SLT will support the class in order to allow the staff to come out and be told together. Class staff may need to be given time to process the news and start to grieve. A space will be made available to support this. Where necessary, the SLT will arrange cover for the class and the Headteacher will begin the process of informing other classes. However, as it is possible that these two functions may overlap, this is not a hard and fast rule. Additionally, it may be more appropriate to call a teacher out of a class and ask her to let the other class staff know – for example, where the child is less known to the class.

The next step will be informing people not at school. Again, there can be no definitive list but these could include:

- Current school staff not in school that day
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Social Work team if applicable
- SEN team
- Medical team – E.g First aiders
- Taxi driver and escort
- Chair of Governors
- Respite centres if applicable
- Other professionals who work with the child – Ed Psych
- Parents – if children have been informed it is appropriate to put out a note to parents informing them of the loss they may need to support or comfort their children.

Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but may not have been informed by the family.

The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss may be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

The Funeral:

If invited, the Headteacher – and/or the Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral – either by attending themselves, or by enabling another member of staff to attend. It is likely that the school could not run safely if every member of staff known to the child were granted leave of absence to attend the funeral. Consequently, difficult decisions will have to be made concerning attendance. If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed and can help the parents with their grieving.

Reflection:

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of a calm environment in which to meet with other colleagues and spend some time in reflective mode. One such means of accomplishing this would be to allocate a specific room for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.

Memory Assemblies:

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. However, although staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend - and that tears cannot be helped - they must endeavour to not break down in front of the children.

If A Child Dies In School:

If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they will contact the school trained First Aider and SLT. In most cases of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the First Aider and, or a member of the SLT. In all cases, a member of staff must immediately inform the Headteacher or, in his/her absence, the most senior member of staff on site. The Head Teacher will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital. If the child stops breathing a trained school staff will administer CPR. In some cases, the parents may have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of a serious health incidence. In rare cases, this may include a request that mechanical resuscitation is not administered.

However, whilst the school respects the parents' preference in this matter, due to the statutory responsibility imposed on the school regarding "duty of care", we insist that the need for school staff to administer manual CPR overrides such preference. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered. Where the parents have given the school a protocol to be followed in the event of an emergency medical issue occurring - e.g. no resuscitation - this protocol will be handed to the paramedics. Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. However, staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone. Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with the Headteacher and/or a member of the SLT.

The school will notify the LA if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be rooted through the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Local Authority.

If a Child Dies on a School Trip:

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher. The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions. The off site visits protocols give guidance for such situations and should be followed. The school will notify the LA, at the earliest opportunity, if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply.

On-Going Support For staff:

The Educational Psychology team offers counselling support and staff will be reminded about this service. For Pupils: Experience in many special schools has shown that most pupils can be supported by the school staff. In most cases, each child will have a favoured member of staff to approach. The PSHE co-ordinator/ELSA will ensure that we have suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss. Social Stories may be one way to help pupils to understand loss. The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.

For The Family:

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain ongoing links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

The Death of a Member of Staff:

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. In addition to the above, the school will notify the LA as an employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Headteacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors, to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.