

West Byfleet Infant School

Bereavement Policy – June 2017

To be reviewed: June 2018

Document purpose

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of West Byfleet Infant School in relation to the 'whole child' approach embodied in the 'healthy school' initiative. It provides a framework within which all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, work and gives guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

Audience

This policy document, having been presented to and agreed by the whole staff and the Governing Body, is distributed to all individual members of the staff. A copy of the document is kept in the Office, ensuring accessibility to visiting teachers and parents.

Contribution to School Aims

West Byfleet Infant School aims to meet the needs of all of its children and staff. 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 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.

Procedures

West Byfleet Infant School works in partnership with parents. Before 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. Parents should be asked about any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies etc). If there has been bereavement, information should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support (See Appendix 1)
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows, 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 'included care' will be explained - both parties assessing changes in behaviour. (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse.

It is important to stress the importance of communication between school and home. Without it ultimately both parties will fail the child.

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action should be considered;

- 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 available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this).
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend funeral or memorial services if 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.

Resources

It often helps to raise difficult concepts with the children through stories. Suitable books are listed in Appendix 2. .

Policy updated by Shirley James - June 2017

Ratified by *Governors*: June 2017

Review date: Spring/Summer 2018

APPENDIX 1

Before the child comes back to school - the headteacher or class teacher should explain what has happened to their classmates.

An example of suitable wording is as follows:

'------(child) has been away because -----
----- We must all be kind to him / her, and if you are worried
about them please come and tell me'.

When the child re-enters class - reassure them you know what has happened.

- Explain you know 'what has happened' and that 'you are there' if they need you/want to talk.
- Provide a special place for time alone in case they need it.
- Watch for changes in behaviour - never be cross.
- When they want to talk - find time to listen.
- Listen, show you care and encourage them.
- Be ready - there are always questions.
- Always be honest - don't be afraid of saying 'I don't know'.
- Remember saying 'You'll feel better soon' or changing the subject will only make things worse.
- Show them that when someone they loved has died it is good to keep all the happy memories alive by talking about them.

- Explain 'I care how you feel and we don't understand why they had to die, we only know that they loved you and that you'll never ever forget them'

It will take time and compassion - often with steps backwards and hurdles to jump- but only then can the healing begin.

APPENDIX 2

Suggested book list (some of these titles are in the school office, others can be ordered if required)

Water Bugs and Dragonflies - Doris Stickney

Questions Children Ask - Miriam Stoppard

A Child's Parent Dies - Edna Furman

Helping Children Cope with Grief - Rosemary Wells

Badger's Parting Gift - Susan Varley

I'll Always Love You - Hans Wilhelm

The Huge Bag of Worries - Virginia Ironside

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