

Alfred Street Junior School

Bereavement Policy

Document purpose

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of Alfred Street Junior School in relation to the 'whole child' approach embodied in the 'healthy schools' 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 staff. A copy of the document is kept in the Office, ensuring accessibility to visiting teachers and parents.

Contribution to School Aims

Alfred Street Junior 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 where they can 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

Alfred Street Junior 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 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 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.

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

- 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 (See Appendix 1).
- 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 (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn).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, Bereavement Services.

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 may 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.
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend funeral or memorial services if they wish to do so.
- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death. Outside agencies should be involved with this, and can be contacted through Children and Young People's Services (see Appendix 2). In the event of death within school premises NCC Emergency Planning should be contacted (see Appendix 2).
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support through the Bereavement Service (Children and Young People's Service).

Resources

It often helps to raise difficult concepts with the children through stories. Suitable books are listed in Appendix 3. Some of these would be appropriate to share with children in the event of the death of a pet. It should not be underestimated that for many children this is their first experience of bereavement.

Policy reviewed by John Kidney July 2014.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the staff and Governing Body.

APPENDIX 1

Before the child comes back to school - the head teacher 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 to/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 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

Contact telephone numbers:

School nurse 01933 414 934

Children and young People's Service 01604 236208

Bereavement Services 01933 440289 (Wellingborough)

Bereavement Services 01604 545131 (Northampton General Hospital) or
mobile 07810551318

Emergency planning:

01604 236844 (daytime)

07659 145277 (out of hours Duty Officer)

07659 182932

07885 292851

APPENDIX 3

Suggested book list (some of these are in school *, others can be ordered from the Library service if required).

Water bugs and Dragonflies - Doris Stickney

Up in Heaven - Emma Clark *

Questions Children Ask - Miriam Stoppard

A Child's Parents Dies - Edna Furman

Helping Children Cope with Grief - Rosemary Wells

Badger's Parting Gift - Susan Varley (Tennyson Road Infants has a copy)

I'll Always Love You - Hans Wilhelm

The Huge Bag of Worries - Virginia Ironside

Falling Angels - Colin Thompson *

Brother Bear (DVD)