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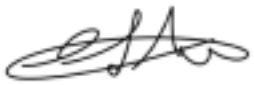
Bereavement Policy

Reviewed on: 26th January 2026

Next Review due: Spring 2028

Signed by:  Chair of Governors

Signed by: Headteacher

Aim

The aim of this policy is for all stakeholders, school governors, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, visitors, pupils and parents are aware of how Ranelagh Primary School will respond to such news.

Rationale

It is inevitable at some point there will be bereavement either within the family or in the school community itself, being a pupil or teacher.

Objectives

- A framework for all staff to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement
- To support pupils and/or members of staff (where applicable), during and after the bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community
- To identify key staff within school and the governing body who are specially trained in bereavement to provide support and guidance and training to staff
- To have clear expectations about the way our school will respond to a death and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all

Section 1 – The death of a pupil or staff member

Roles and Responsibilities

The Bereavement Co-ordinator is Jackie Sunderland (Mental Health First Aider).
Deputy Co-ordinator is Faye Turner (Senior Mental Health First Aider).
Deputy Co-ordinator is Jo Felgate (Mental Health First Aider).

If there is a case of a sudden or traumatic death of a pupil, the school may be called upon to be part of a multi-agency review. If this is the case, then the school representative will be the Headteacher or representative.

The best person to liaise with the family will depend upon the specific situation, any trusted relationships with pupil/family, any language needs and the experience of the member of staff.

These will be either Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, DSL, SENCO, Inclusion Support or Bereavement Team.

Media Policy

There may be local or national press interest in relation to the bereavement and any responses will be dealt with by Headteacher and Chair of Governors or their representative.

It may well be that indiscriminate spread of the news may already be across social media, newspapers and television, before the school community become aware of it.

Delivery of the news to school community including parents and regular visitors involved with the student or member of staff

Members of the school community will be notified of the bereavement by way of telephone/email/in person/school website by Headteacher and Chair of Governors or their representative.
Once staff have been notified then the phase lead and class teacher with support from a member of the bereavement team will be advised first of the news as that pupil was a member of their class.
A safe space will be set up for those staff and pupils who wish to have time to grieve and ask questions, if appropriate.
As a school we will offer counselling/bereavement support to come into school to speak to staff and pupils.
Suffolk County Council Schools Organisational Support Education Officers will be notified either by phone on 01473 26394 or by email at Educationofficersresolution@suffolk.gov.uk
If the death is via suicide Samaritans provide a step-by-step programme to support schools which will be implemented by contacting 0808 168 2528 there is also Winston's Wish 08088 020 021 or Cruse 0808 808 1677 or Child Bereavement UK 0800 028 8840.
The amount of information that will be disseminated may depend on what the family wish to share with the school community. A simple confirmation of death may be all that has been given initially and the family will indicate what other information they are happy to be shared with the school community.
The school will endeavour to prevent speculation and rumours from spreading throughout the school community.

The first few days
Bereaved young people and adults will grieve in a variety of ways. They may need time to grieve and manage their overwhelming feelings. Consideration is to be given to manage these feelings one of which will be permitted to leave the classroom and take time out in a safe space. The designated safe space will be the Rainbow Room.
The class teacher/phase lead to be made aware that this pupil may require this time out.
Consideration of a tribute/book of condolence either a paper copy or on line which is accessible and the content supervised for appropriate content to be added.
Staff and pupils to be advised if and when this tribute/book is removed and consideration of offering this to the family or a copy be given to family if required.

The funeral
Consultation to take place by the designated person with the family as to whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend. It may be that a nominated member(s) of staff attends on behalf of the school community which is agreed by the family. This will depend on the type of service and their own particular culture and traditions.

Whether a collection or flowers are permitted by the family. Consultation again with the family with respect to this.
If member of staff wishes to attend the funeral, this will be at the discretion of the Headteacher dependent upon staffing levels.
If pupils wish to attend, who are not immediate family, it will be at the discretion of the Headteacher to whether the absence will be authorised.

Support for pupils

Guidance to be sort from the Education Support Officers in relation to external agencies or local services coming into school or whether this will be fulfilled by the Bereavement Team in school. Also checking with the parents whether they authorise their child(ren) to be spoken to about this within the school setting.

Support for staff

Supporting bereaved children can be very stressful for staff that may already be struggling with their own grief and heightened emotions. Some staff may be more vulnerable than others depending on their own life circumstances.

Remembering

With consultation of the family of the deceased about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute. Dedicated person to liaise with family and Headteacher.

SECTION 2 Supporting a bereaved pupil

Returning to school after a bereavement

Most grieving pupils do not need a “bereavement expert”, they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person with some sense of normality.
Dedicated person to meet with the pupil and their family/carer to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school.
The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Acknowledge the death
- Find out how the pupil would like to share the news
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they are feeling overwhelmed by grief and need to take “time out” from class or the school day
- Guidelines are to be set out with staff as to communication between staff, home and school

Long term support

Grief may last for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support to deal with this.
Consideration to significant dates such as anniversaries of the death, birthday of the deceased, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day etc which may be a difficult time or specific religious celebrations.
Regular communication between the designated person and the family to report on how the pupil is coping in school and see how they are coping at home and whether there are any disparities.
Grief may hinder their progress in school, or they could immerse themselves into their work shutting out everything around them.

There may be changes in behaviour such as being sad, angry, guilty, having lots of questions for which there are no answers and may want someone to blame.

Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum

Teaching the topic of death grief and bereavement as part of PSHE will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. Informing parents and carers in advance will help gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson. This is to be done by either the phase leader or the class teacher in question. It may not be appropriate for recently bereaved pupils to be in the class but they are to be given the choice and discussion to be had with the parents by the phase lead or the class teacher.

Learning about how other cultures deal with grief and death will assist both staff and pupils to have a better understanding of how others deal with this process according to their traditions or religion.

Support for staff

Supporting staff and pupils with dealing with grief and loss can be emotionally draining and in particular supporting a bereaved child or member of staff. Support to be provided to staff as well as regular supervision with the Bereavement Team and the Wellbeing Team.

Appendix 1 - Template letters to parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil permission must be gained from the children's parents the contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

Dear Parents,

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of …….. a pupil in ……. Class. Pupil's name died from ……
as you may be aware many children who have …….. get better but sadly …… had been ill for a short/long time and died peacefully yesterday. He/she was a very popular member of the class. When someone dies it is normal for friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that the teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know please do not hesitate to contact the Bereavement Team via the school office. We would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial in school to celebrate the life of …..

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 2 - letter to bereaved parents

Dear ……
We are so sorry to hear about the death of …… there are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through. Clearly as a school community will miss …… very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to their friends and classmates. They were a much-loved member of our school family.
If we can do anything to help when you plan their funeral service or other memorial opportunities please let us know. In time we will also ensure that any of their books or photographs that we have of them in school will be returned to you.
Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time, and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.
With sympathy

Headteacher

Appendix 3 - Letter for bereaved Teacher

Dear Parents

I am sorry to have to tell you about the sad passing of a member of our staff being ……..
The children were told today, and many of them will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best ways to deal with bereavement with children. I am sure that there will be many parents that will be saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways, and may dip in and out of sadness and questions, which alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find that your children may have questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support or advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the Bereavement Team via the school office. You may also find many usual resources on line at Winston's Wish, Cruse and Child Bereavement UK.
We will share details of the funeral if appropriate and provided by the family. It is likely that school may be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will of course wise to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.
I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but I appreciate that an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership that we have with parents/carers and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children, for many which will be a new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher