

St Andrew's CEVC Primary School, Great Yeldham

Bereavement Policy



**Reviewed by Maria Trappitt
May 2010**

**St. Andrew's CEVC Primary School
Church Road
Great Yeldham
HALSTEAD
Essex
CO9 4PT**

Rationale

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of St Andrew's CEVC Primary 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.

Many of the children in our care are likely to encounter the death of a pet, grandparent, other relative or family friend during their time at St Andrew's Primary School. For a few the loss will be more immediate and traumatic, involving the loss of a parent, sibling or personal friend.

Aims

St Andrew's 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.

Purposes

1. To foster a caring attitude to those suffering a bereavement.
2. To encourage a consistent, yet flexible approach to the situation.
3. To inform all those concerned, including teaching staff, HLTA & LSAs and all other support staff and parents of possible approaches.

Procedures

St Andrew's 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 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 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:

- The head teacher will initiate discussion 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.

When a member of staff suffers bereavement of a close relative:

All staff will need to consult with the head teacher who will follow the procedures laid down in the 'Leave of Absence' Policy.

Guidelines

These guidelines are particularly relevant and appropriate in cases where the loss concerned is of a close relative or friend but can, and should be adapted according to individual circumstances.

1. Children should be allowed time to grieve and know that tears are often an outward sign of that grief.
2. It should be made known that staff will find the time to listen and talk and will do their best to comfort when necessary.

3. Children should be aware that staff will try to help them to come to terms with their feelings.
4. A distressed child should be allowed time and access to materials in order that he/she may express their feelings in their own way.
5. Within school a resource bank containing reference materials for staff, parents and pupils should be developed and maintained.
6. All staff throughout the school, involved in the care of a bereaved child, should be aware of the situation.
7. The possible fears, insecurities and emotions of other children which may arise from the situation should be recognised and addressed sympathetically.
8. Religious, cultural and social backgrounds, as well as parental wishes, should be taken into account when considering appropriate responses.

Resources

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

Conclusion

A bereaved child, especially if the death concerned is that of a close relative, parent, sibling or friend, is likely to be feeling confused, anxious and insecure. At school we should aim to provide a stable and supportive environment in which he/she is able to gradually come to terms with the loss. It is recognised that this process is lengthy and support is likely to be required long term.

Reviewed: May 2010

Shared with Staff: May 2010

Shared with Governors: June 2010

Review date: May 2013

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 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.
- Hold their hand and 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 from the Library service 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