

BEREWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL



Bereavement Policy

Summer 2019

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| Revised by School | Summer 2019 |
| Responsible Person | Sue Patrick (head teacher) |
| Responsible Committee | Full Governing Body |
| Ratified by GB | Tuesday 25 th June 2019 |
| Next Review | Summer 2022 |



BEREWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

A distinctive vision

At Berewood Primary School we see education as a journey of discovery to fire the imagination, to establish a sense of self, and to gain the confidence to take full part in the wider world.

An ethos of local partnership

Berewood Primary School and the University of Chichester Academy Trust share the belief that education has the power to transform society. Our school is deeply rooted in its locality and encourages the involvement and interest of parents and the community, recognising that strong and vibrant communities have partnership and inclusion at their heart.

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent or sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation- or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Empathic understanding

in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff- require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

Objectives:

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and / or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathways of support between school, family and community
- To identify key staff within school, the Trust and the local authority, and access to support
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

The role of the Governing Body

- To approve this policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed as part of the three year policy review cycle.

The role of the head teacher:

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies
- To respond to media enquiries
- To be the first point of contact for the family / child concerned
- To keep the Governing Body informed as appropriate

The role of the Trust / Local Authority

- To advise and support staff
- To advise on referral pathways
- To support school in identifying when further advice is required, for example in identifying complex grief, and signpost other agencies

The role of pastoral staff and the senior leadership team

- To have access to high quality bereavement training and to cascade learning to other members of staff

Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in an age-appropriate way, as agreed for each individual circumstance

3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone who knows them well
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed
5. The school should be aware that the timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the head teacher
9. School should be aware that the impact of the bereavement follows a child throughout their school life, so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy was developed by staff and presented to Governors in Summer 2019 and will be reviewed as part of the 3 year review cycle.

Appendix

Template letters

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school

Sample letter on the death of a pupils:

Dear Parents and carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of NAME , a pupil in Year...

NAME died from an illness called cancer. As some of you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better, but sadly NAME had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/she was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers will try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating NAME's life.

Yours sincerely

Sample letter to bereaved parents:

Dear

We are so sorry to hear of NAME's death. 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, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to comfort and support his/her friends and classmates. He/she was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help you as you plan his/her funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of Toby's that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Please 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 to you in any way.

With my deepest sympathy

Sample letter on the death of a staff member:

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff NAME has died. The children were told the news today and many 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 means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness and ask questions, whilst alternatively playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may find some useful advice and resources on line at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it is not compulsory. It is likely that the school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will wish to pay their own respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of such sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts on the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely