



THE FOREST FEDERATION

Bereavement Guidelines

School Background

Our schools are rural village primary schools at the heart of their communities. We are dedicated to maintaining a strong family atmosphere and culture of success, within the Christian ethos. We believe that education should be an exciting and inspirational experience for everyone so they develop a love of learning and sense of pride in their achievements. We aim to make learning rich, diverse, creative and fun! Each person within the school family and their contribution to school life are held in high regard. It is with this in mind that we endeavour to maintain, not only high academic standards, but individual personal, social and moral achievement.

Rationale

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. Within our school communities there will almost certainly 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 bereavement guidelines in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations. Emphatic 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.childbereavementnet.org.uk

Objectives

The core intentions of the guidelines are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and LA, and clarify the pathway of 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 (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of these guidelines endorse the aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond, on behalf of the governors and with support, to media enquiries.
- To be the first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.

LA

To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

Teachers and pastoral Staff

To have bereavement support training and if leading, cascade learning to other staff.

Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher 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 age appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. Subject to the family's wishes, a letter / correspondence may 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 school 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.
<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/m/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf>
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial closure in some circumstances.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared.
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.