



Loss and Bereavement Policy

Date agreed by governors	June 2021
Review Date	June 2024
Policy Written by	Lane End Primary School

Safeguarding Statement.

At Lane End Primary we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by or invited to deliver services at Lane End.

We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

We also exercise this responsibility by educating our children so that they grow in their understanding of their rights and responsibilities to themselves and others, in safety consciousness, and, in their maturity and abilities to keep themselves and others safe.

We perceive this to be part of our role in promoting British values.

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, 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

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 pathway of support between school, family and community
 - To identify key staff within school and Local Authority, 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. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

Roles and responsibilities:

The role of the Head teacher:

- To have overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy
- To liaise with external agencies as appropriate
- To respond to media enquiries as appropriate
- To inform Pastoral staff/staff and arrange for the children to be informed, as appropriate, in line with the family's wishes.
- To keep the governing body up to date and fully informed as appropriate.

The role of Pastoral Staff/Staff working with the child:

- To support the Head teacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy
- To support staff, children and parents following a death, as directed by the Head teacher
- To support other staff members with communicating the news of a death
- Where necessary, to make referrals for children to the JESS Cluster, staff and other members of the school community to receive support and counselling
- Where requested, undertake bereavement support training and share this knowledge with all other staff members.

The role of the Local Authority/JESS Cluster:

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

Responding to a death

Breaking the news to staff, pupils and families news of the death of a close member of a child's or staff's family, the death of a pupil or member of staff or a member of the school community will be passed to the Head teacher who will try to obtain factual information to avoid unnecessary rumour or assumption, which could lead to further distress.

Where possible the Head teacher will liaise directly with the family involved and agree exactly what information should be passed on to staff and pupils. The family's wishes will be taken into account before any information is given to the pupils.

Staff will be informed as soon as possible, ideally before the pupils, ensuring enough time is given to enable them to discuss what has happened, how they feel and what internal and external support is available. All this information will also be shared with part time staff, governors and those who may not be in school that day.

Where necessary a press statement will be prepared by the Head teacher and agreed with the Local Authority.

If pupils need to be told they will be told as soon as possible to avoid rumour and uncertainty. This will be done in familiar groups by someone they know, for example their class teacher, and the information will be shared in an age appropriate way. Opportunities will be given for pupils to ask questions and respond to the news. The bereaved child or member of staff may or may not wish to be present when the news is broken.

It may be appropriate for a letter to go home to all parents that same day, respecting the wishes of the family.

Children with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately.

These needs include the following:

- Children that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
- Children with SEND
- Children who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour

Family Bereavement

- When school is informed of bereavement or loss, the following action should be considered:
- The family should be contacted for appropriate support.
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and 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 working together and liaison will be explained – both parties assessing any 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, Psychological Service, Barnardo's.
- For a member of staff experiencing close family bereavement, absence will be arranged for attendance at a funeral and appropriate time off in line with the Lane End Absence Management Policy. Additional time may be given through sick leave as appropriate.

Class Teacher and Pastoral Team

The class teacher will be the first line of support for the child but should the child need extra support away from the classroom, extra support will be provided. E.g. a child finds it difficult to stay in the classroom when they are upset, it may be necessary to identify with them a suitable place, where they can go for some quiet time with an adult they trust. Both school and families need to work together to note changes in behaviour and if necessary counselling from outside agencies may be sought. Children and young people bereaved through suicide or violent death are likely to need skilled help and support but the informal support of familiar adults is still vital.

The pastoral team within school will support both the pupil and class teacher to find the best bespoke approach for each pupil in dealing with their bereavement.

The pastoral team will support any pupil in school who has experienced a recent loss or bereavement through targeted intervention where necessary such as using the Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine workbook.

Death of a child or member of staff

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action should 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 pupils in school.
- Counselling should be available, if necessary, e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death, outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Psychological Service.
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial service, should it be appropriate and they wish to do so.
- Staff and pupils should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support.
- Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers.
- The class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family to assist in the planning of the service.
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings, as such services are important in the grieving process.

Terminally Ill Pupils/Staff

- In the event of a pupil or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/guardians/next-of-kin should always be respected.
- Should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the pupil's condition.
- Occasionally, the pupil may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach. Sometimes there is just no other way.

School Routines and Structures

The first few days after a bereavement, it is best to have as little disruption as possible to the school timetable and school life should try to go on as normal, but with flexibility as necessary. If it is a teacher who has died, the class will be covered by another teacher from the school whom the children know well and feel comfortable talking to. Many bereaved children and young people find returning to school as soon as possible a welcome refuge of normality after the chaos of emotion at home and their return should be as fuss free as possible. A bereaved child will require enormous support but, as far as possible, school life should go on as normally as possible. A bereaved member of staff will need to be supported to have the appropriate amount of compassionate leave.

Talking to the Bereaved Pupil

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible
- Be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions
- If people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling
- Beware of using platitudes e.g. “I know how you feel,” (pupils may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

Top Tips when talking to a bereaved pupil:

Do

Let the pupil know that you genuinely care
Make time to be available and listen
Accept all that the child is saying
Allow them to express their feelings their way
Let them know their feelings are normal
Let them know that it is OK to cry
Talk honestly and share your feelings
Be honest
Have eye contact
Have appropriate physical contact
Let them know that it is not their fault
Be aware of the home situation

Don't

- Stop the pupil talking
- Tell them how they should or should not feel
- Avoid contact
- Change the subject
- Deny your pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful
- Be frightened of sharing your own feelings

Useful Websites for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/yorkshire-and-humber/leeds/children-and-young-people>

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.janetomlinsonappeal.com/our-work/owls-bereavement/

www.charlies-angel-centre.org.uk/

Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure that all areas are up to date and in line with current practice and statutory requirements. Should any amendments need to be made; the review will be carried out by the Headteacher shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Governors prior to them being adopted at whole school level.