



BROADWATER
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Policy for Bereavement and Loss 2024-2028

Turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding (Proverbs 2:2)

Broadwater is a Christian School. We will enable children to become wise, confident, successful learners with the motivation, skills and responsibility to make a positive difference in God's world. Our vision is underpinned by the values we live by.

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22

It is this fruit that, in partnership with parents, we will instil in the children of our school.

Policy for Bereavement and Loss

2024-2028

Introduction

The death of someone we love is a shattering experience. It is an extremely difficult area to deal with, especially with children – we need to be sensitive, listen, have time, encourage, care and support.

This policy is primarily aimed at dealing with individual occurrence of bereavement. In the event of the school being involved in a major disaster resulting in multiple casualties, multiple bereavements, we will call upon external resources e.g. Parish clergy and counsellors, professional agencies, to assist us in dealing with the situation.

Emotions can be similar in other forms of loss (including family separation). While this policy focuses on death, many of the concepts may be transferred to other forms of loss (e.g. changes in the family home, divorce, burglary).

Aims of this policy

At Broadwater, we aim to care for the bereaved, be it a child, parent, member of staff or another adult and help those close to the bereaved to cope. This is done within the context of our Christian ethos drawing on the resources of Broadwater Parish Church.

As part of the Relationships, Health and Education curriculum, the concept of loss will be discussed with our pupils so that they understand that death is part of life and that it is permanent. We will explain that grief is the emotional reaction to a loss. We will provide opportunities for the bereaved to express their feeling and remember their loved ones. We will prepare others to be able to listen and respond appropriately.

Strategies

As part of the personal, health and social education area of the curriculum (RHE) the concept of loss is introduced.

Should a death occur in a family it will be discussed with the class of the bereaved. The wishes of the family and child concerned will, of course, be sought and followed in such matters as how they wish the information to be given, for example, whether the child should be present.

In situations where the death of a family member is expected, for example, terminal illness, the wishes of the family will be respected and acted upon. If the child is aware of the situation other class members may need to be told in order to support the child. This will be done sensitively, using simple language through circle time in smaller groups or as a class where the concept of valuable and precious things is addressed.

When the death occurs, should the bereaved family wish it, the teacher will inform the class and a letter may be sent to the class parents. The class teacher will encourage the class to be supportive and to listen to the bereaved child.

Actions

Dealing with the Bereaved

The teacher and pastoral lead will make themselves available to talk with and listen to the bereaved child and parent(s). This support will be ongoing and care will be taken to point out that each bereaved person, whether child or adult, will experience different emotions such as sadness, anger, pain as they work through the various stages of their grief. Each bereaved person may work through those stages at their own pace and there is not a right time period/fixed duration during which a person mourns. This information will be passed from teacher to teacher via transition processes. This will enable future teachers to be aware of and sensitive to this event.

The child's normal routine will be followed as much as possible while offering them reassurance and comfort. Questions will be answered as honestly as possible, but always within family wishes. There may be a period of time when the bereaved individual is not at school.

Strategies will be employed should a pupil or member of staff die. A way of remembering them will be discussed and carried out, for example a tree planted or a bench bought.

Child Bereavement Network - <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Cruse Bereavement Line: 0808 808 1677

Open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm

or visit the website www.cruse.org.uk for local contacts and further information

Winston's Wish: 08088020021 - Child's grief charity www.winstonswish.org

We want to protect children, they can sense when something serious is happening and their thoughts are often worse than the reality. Some children may not present as sad, this does not mean they are not grieving. Their heightened behaviour, vulnerability may make them suppress feelings which are then indicated through behaviour, e.g. sleep disturbance, clinging, bedwetting. Ideally, they need preparation before the death and an opportunity to ask questions. Children do not need protecting from their sadness, but support in it. It is precisely because young children don't understand what death is all about that children need to use and hear the correct language and the situation needs handling with honesty (for example using 'died' rather than 'lost' and 'gone to sleep'). They need help to talk about the dead person, to recognise, name and express their feelings.

We understand that communication can be one of the most difficult aspects of grief for families and friends and that within a family each member may grieve in a different way.

When talking to parents about telling children ...

- Accept that it is not easy
- Warn parents to be prepared for resistance from others
- Tell parents children will ...
 - Read the emotions around them
 - Respond to body language
 - Overhear conversations
 - Ask questions directly or indirectly

Children need:

I. Information

- They should be told as quickly as possible in age-related language by someone very close to them
- Clear simple truthful and repeated information

- Avoid confusing explanations of death
- Link explanations to things children have noticed already

2. Reassurance

- Practical anxieties
- Illness of others/self
- Guilt
- Extra stability, order, routine, physical affection
- Remember the special needs of teenagers

3. Parents Need to Share Feelings/Model

- Children learn to mourn by observing others
- They need warning about different adult reactions and mixed messages

4. Encourage Child to Express Feelings

- Don't tell them how to feel
- Acknowledge the child's loss
- Allow involvement
- Warn parents that grief may be acted out in behaviour rather than words
- Discuss discipline
- Consider special time, buddy time to talk, class teacher, pastoral lead and/or chaplain

5. Help Child Use Feelings in Safe Ways

- Let them know that anger is normal and that sadness is not forever
- Give them room to act
- Drawing can help a child to express feelings and get them under control
- An older child may like to write a letter to the dead person
- Remember happy feelings and memories and make a memory book/box
- Look at photographs, provide books, leaflets scrapbooks
- Remember a memento
- Suggest that physical outlets are important
- Remember child's right to fun and hope

6. Approach Parent as a Colleague

(often you will not work directly with the child)

- Increase their feelings on competence by giving them tools to use for themselves (e.g. books, leaflets)
- Give parents suggestions for conversation and try to ensure that bereaved parents are not isolated on the playground
- Professionals should model for parent, they learn fast.
- Communicate with the Play therapist for advice.

7. Encourage Parents to involve Others

- E.g. A teacher, or friend or relative

8. Be Aware of the Family Belief System – do not conflict with it

9. Tell Parents Not to be Hard on Themselves

10. Be Realistic – you are working through others. Accept 'good enough'.

11. Emotional Pain is Catching – Remember Your Own Supports

Development Concerns

<u>Age</u>	<u>Concept of death</u>	<u>Common reactions to loss and change</u>	<u>How parents/professionals can help</u>
0 - 3	Separation by absence	Protests against separations. Stranger anxiety, regression. Feeding, sleeping, toileting difficulties	Consistent care giver. Meet physical needs. Normal routines – provide stimulation and distraction
3 – 5	Sees death as living under changed circumstances – not irreversible. Separation and abandonment	Fears – abandonment, separation, mutilation. Aggressive rejecting behaviour and/or clinging demanding behaviours. Dislike changes. Guilt. Regression. Feeding, sleeping, toileting difficulties	Normal routines, comfort, assurance. Answer questions simply and honestly. Child to attend funeral, grave. Child to keep mementos. Child to know that God is looking after deceased. Don't equate death with sleep.
6 – 8	Death still personified, associated with old age and illness. Fear of death associated with fear of loss of self.	Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression, anger, may become perfect child. Tries to be brave, stay in control, clingy.	Give short honest concrete explanations. Allow dependence, short term regression. Play therapy. Reassure child that they will always be cared for by someone. Child attend funeral, grave, keep mementos.
9 – 12	Death is inevitable – awareness of own death. Sees it as biological process. Fear of death	More stable acceptable responses to death and loss. Surprisingly calm	Encourage and enable child to talk about the deceased. Give clear truthful answers about manner of death. Do not hide your feelings. Reassure child that help is available.
13 – 17	Difficulty in recognising the personal implications of mortality. Aware of implications of risk-taking	Withdrawn, sad, lonely, depressed, angry hostile, acting-out, rejected. Sarcasm to cover fears, regression and dependence.	Give as much comfort as possible. Set rules and boundaries. Involve in practical considerations. Maintain privacy, give space, take feelings seriously. Reassure that extremes of feelings are normal.

Please refer to:

Emergency Situation Policy – other potential disasters detailed

RHE Policy

Discretionary Leave Policy

Multiple bereavements/illness e.g. Pandemic Illness

In the event of the above, guidance will be issued at the time as to how employees can protect themselves and how to respond to the situation. (Schools Advisory Service and West Sussex)