



Helmshore Primary School

Bereavement Policy

2023 - 2024

Background

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of Helmshore Primary School. When a child's home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family or in a child's close community, our school aims to be a place that both the 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. 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.

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 pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and the LA, and clarify the pathway of support.

The role of the head teacher

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

The role of the class teacher

- To provide sensitive preparation (in line with family wishes) in end of life situations.
- To enable the child to have quiet times/spaces in the classroom for reflection.
- To enable the child to have use of comforting items if appropriate.
- To provide use of other strategies as advised by bereavement specialists, for example via hospices/children's services.

The role of the LA

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

The role of support staff

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.

Procedures

Helmshore Primary 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 are asked to keep us informed of any changes that might profoundly affect 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, to ensure 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:

1. The family are asked to contact the school and are made aware of everyone's sympathy and support.
2. The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows, how they have been involved.
3. It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
4. The importance of both parties reporting changes in behaviour. (Eating and sleeping patterns may change, behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child may become withdrawn.)
5. Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. School Nurse.

It is important to stress the importance of communication between school and home as this liaison is very important. Without it ultimately both parties could fail the child.

When the school is informed of the death of a pupil or member of staff, the following action should be considered;

1. Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school.
2. Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this).
3. The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend funeral or memorial services if they wish to do so.
4. Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support.

Resources

It often helps to raise difficult concepts with the children through stories. Some suitable books for younger children are:-

- Water Bugs and Dragonflies – Doris Stickney
- Questions Children Ask – Miriam Stoppard

- 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
- Gentle Willow – Joyce C Mills
- Remembering Granddad – Sheila and Kate Isherwood
- Charlotte’s Web – E. B. White
- Supporting Children Through Grief – Cruse Bereavement Care
- Has Someone Died? – Cruse Bereavement Care

Additional information and resources can be accessed at:-

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

<https://www.childbereavement.org.uk>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Useful Contacts:

Cruse Bereavement Care – 0808 808 1677

Samaritans – 116 123

Child Death Helpline – 0800 282 986

Mon – Fri 10:00am – 1:00pm

Tues – 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Weds – 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Every evening – 7:00pm – 10:00pm

EPS Helpline – 01772 530444 Mon – Fri 12:30pm – 4:30pm (term time only)

The governing body will review this policy in September 2024, or earlier if deemed necessary.

Signed: Mrs C Myers Head teacher

Signed: Mrs J Hayton Chair of Governors

Date: September 2023

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 returns to class – reassure them you know what has happened.

- Explain you know 'what has happened' and that 'you are there' if they need you or 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.
- 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'.
- Don't say: '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.