



# Loss and Bereavement Policy



CURRENT

APPROVED – MAY 2018  
REVIEWED – MAY 2021  
PERSON RESPONSIBLE – SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT OFFICER

### **Introduction**

This policy reflects the values and ethos of Hillside Primary School. It provides a framework within which all staff can work sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances. Many of the pupils in our care are likely to encounter the death of a much loved pet, grandparent, other relative or family friend during their time at Hillside Primary School. For a few the loss will be more immediate and traumatic, involving the loss of a parent, sibling or personal friend. In many cases this is likely to have a significant impact on the child's emotional well-being, learning and educational performance.

Hillside Primary School aims to meet the needs of all of its children. When circumstances are changed because of a death in the family, we will work to be a place where a child can gain appropriate support.

### **Initial response when school is informed of bereavement:**

1. The family will be contacted by a member of staff.
2. Facts surrounding the death and what the child has been told will be checked.
3. Discussions with family about how school can provide support.
4. Hillside will ask for permission from the bereaved family to inform the school community of the death if appropriate, due to the speed of social media.
5. A whole school assembly may be required or classes spoken to individually by member of staff or their class teacher.
6. Identify members of staff, usually the Head teacher, class teacher and staff who work with the child, who may want to attend the funeral to represent Hillside.

### **Before creating a support plan it is important to remember that the plan needs:**

1. To foster a caring attitude for those suffering a loss/bereavement.
2. To encourage a consistent, flexible approach to meet the situation.
3. To discuss with family or carers how school can provide support.
4. To consider the religious beliefs/views of the family.

### **When producing a support plan bear in mind the following points:**

1. Pupils may need time to grieve.
2. Staff should find the time to listen and talk and do their best to comfort when necessary.
3. Pupils should be aware that staff will try to help them to come to terms with their feelings.
4. It may be helpful to allow a distressed child time and access to materials in order that he/she may express their feelings in their own way.
5. Within school a resource bank containing reference materials has been developed and will be maintained.
6. All staff involved in the care of a bereaved child should be aware of the situation.
7. The possible fears, insecurities and emotions of other children which may arise from the situation should be recognised and addressed sympathetically.
8. Religious, cultural and social backgrounds, as well as parental wishes, should be taken into account when considering appropriate responses.
9. Identify and allocate a quiet place where pupils and staff can go to talk.
10. To help raise difficult concepts with pupils through stories, suitable books are available in school. We need to remember in dealing with this type of situation that a bereaved child,

especially if the death concerned is that of a close relative, parent, sibling or friend, is likely to be feeling confused, anxious, shocked and insecure. At school we should aim to provide a stable and supportive environment in which he/she is able to come to terms with the loss. It is possible that this process could be lengthy and support may be required long term. Before the child comes back to school – the Head teacher or class teacher will discuss with parents what support the school can provide and how the return will be dealt with.

**Guidance for supporting a bereaved pupil returning to school:**

- The amount of authorised absence for bereavement will be at the Head Teacher’s discretion. When the child re-enters class – reassure them you know what has happened.
- Acknowledge what has happened and do not be afraid to use the word “death”, adult terminology such as ‘passed away / lost’ can be confusing for a child and create a false impression.
- Provide a special place for time alone in case they need it.
- Be prepared to listen, again and again and again.
- Be aware of what the child has been told by their own family rather than using ways to comfort that you feel are most appropriate eg telling a child a dead relative is ‘watching over them’ could be comforting for one child but very disturbing for another depending on the relationships before death, or what they have been told by their own family.
- When they want to talk – find time to listen.
- Do talk about the dead person and share any memories.
- Be honest – Although it is sometimes difficult, it is better to try and answer awkward questions truthfully. Don’t be afraid of saying “I don’t know”.
- Allow them to express emotion and feelings and do not be afraid to share your own feelings of sadness.
- Recognise the full tragedy – do not try to comfort with comments such as “you’ll feel better soon” or changing the subject.
- Don’t assume lack of reaction means they do not care, initially the full reality may not have sunk in.
- Try not to judge, grief is a very personal experience and every child will do it in their own way.

**Long-term considerations:**

- A bereaved child will find school very tiring
- They may have difficulty concentrating, think more slowly, lack initiative and need more help.
- Some subjects may be distressing for the child. Staff should be aware that Christmas, birthdays, Mother’s day or Father’s day and other special events can be especially difficult.
- It will be important to watch for changes in behaviour which may be many months after. Aggression may be a way of letting out feelings of anxiety or anger. Be alert for the child who is presenting these behaviours.
- Keep contact with family and let them know if you have any concerns or if you suspect the child is having difficulties.
- Inform new teachers/ supply teachers of the circumstances.

**Further sources of information, guidance, training and support within Kirklees:**

Educational Psychology Service: Tel 01924 483744 [dewsbury.psychology@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:dewsbury.psychology@kirklees.gov.uk)

Head teacher Support Kirklees: Carol Martin Tel 07531081299 Graham Altoft 07794217069

Kirkwood Hospice: Tel 01924 557900 [info@kirkwoodhospice.co.uk](mailto:info@kirkwoodhospice.co.uk)

Children's Emotional Well-being Service chEWS: Tel 01924 492183 [www.northorpehall.co.uk](http://www.northorpehall.co.uk)

Employee Health Care, Kirklees: Tel. 01484 221000 employee. [healthcare@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:healthcare@kirklees.gov.uk)

Michael Yarwood, Senior Communications Officer, Kirklees: Tel 01484 22100  
[michael.yarwood@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:michael.yarwood@kirklees.gov.uk)

**Useful UK Websites**

Help is at Hand (Dept of Health 2008)- anyone affected by suicide  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/you-are-not-alone-help-is-at-hand-for-anyone-bereaved-by-suicide](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/you-are-not-alone-help-is-at-hand-for-anyone-bereaved-by-suicide)

Winston's Wish- bereavement support including downloadable resources for schools  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

CRUSE Bereavement Care- Resources, books, DVDs, local support groups  
[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
0844 800 3309  
01484 546318

Hope Again- Youth website of CRUSE  
[www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk)

Simon Says- child bereavement support including telephone helpline  
[www.simonsays.org.uk](http://www.simonsays.org.uk)  
Support line 02380647550

Childhood Bereavement UK - 0800 02 888 40  
Downloadable resources for schools, support and information helpline  
[www.childbereavement.org](http://www.childbereavement.org)

Papyrus- 0800 068 41 41  
[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

Samaritans- 01484 53388  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

