

DRUMAHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Loss & Bereavement Policy

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At Drumahoe Primary school we understand that where children have to deal with loss and bereavement, the support they receive is crucial to their ability to cope and recover from their personal trauma. Grief is unique for each individual, and it is important to remember there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some children are able to cope and come to terms with their loss, there are some children that don't and these are the ones we recognise as needing support.

This policy has been designed to manage the grieving and adjustment period for a child returning to school following a significant loss or bereavement and outlines our whole school response loss and bereavement.

In this policy we have considered:

Part 1: Monitoring and managing a child's return to and behaviour in school.

Part 2: Procedures Surrounding a Funeral.

Part 3: Procedures to follow in the event of a critical incident.

Part 4: Monitoring

Part 1: Monitoring and managing a child's return to and behaviour in school.

Monitoring and managing the behaviour of a child who has suffered a loss or bereavement.

As soon as a child returns to school following a significant loss or bereavement we will make every effort to ensure their return is as normal as possible and all staff who have contact with the child will have been informed of the situation and will be aware of the need to be understanding and sympathetic towards the child.

The class teacher, directed by Mrs Hegarty will begin to monitor the child's personality and behaviour using a checklist of observable indicators (see appendix)

Along side the checklist the class teacher will also complete a school record on a child who has suffered a loss or bereavement and this information will be held at the front of the child's folder and passed on to subsequent teachers. If the class teacher observes severe and or prolonged changes to the child's behaviour or personality we will place the child on our SEN register and make additional in-school support available to them taking guidance from Mrs Johnston SENCO and Miss Manning Learning Support teacher. We will also seek advice and support of external support agencies (see appendix.)

Preparing the class before a bereaved child returns to school:

- Be honest; if possible tell the class what has happened before the pupil returns.
- Explain how their friend may be very quiet or may just start crying unexpectedly.
- Reassure them that they can help just by listening and being with their bereaved friend.

Guidelines for accommodating the needs of a bereaved child:

- Ensure all staff knows of the child's circumstances.
- If possible speak to the bereaved family and let them know of the approaches we will be using in school to support their child and what information we have communicated to other children and adults so the child can be prepared when he/she returns to school.
- Help a few close friends of the bereaved child how they can be supportive.
- Offer the child an opportunity to talk if they want to.
- Establish a quiet area (Learning Support Room) the child can go to for "time out" if they become upset or angry.
- Don't isolate the child by giving them too many special privileges or allow persistent rule breaking.
- Bereaved children often suffer a loss of concentration at school, which may have a detrimental effect on their work. Give them encouragement and reassurance.
- Give the family feed back whenever possible about the child's progress in school.

We understand that teachers also need to have knowledge themselves about the development of a child's understanding of the concept of death as well as their reaction to it. Staff members who have greatest contact with the child (class teacher and learning assistant) will be given more detailed training by Mrs Hegarty, on the stages of grief, physical, emotional and psychological indicators; and assessing and monitoring the child's needs and the strategies needed to ease the child's integration back into normal school life.

Managing a child who has suffered a significant bereavement can be a traumatic experience for the staff involved. To help alleviate stress for staff we have established a small team who will provide peer support and rest bite if necessary for any staff supporting a bereaved child on a daily basis. The loss and bereavement team are: Mrs Hegarty, Mrs Johnston and Mr McMaster.

Our school library contains a small selection of publications suitable for adults supporting bereaved children and bereaved children themselves. This stock of books will be added as and when relevant titles are needed.

Children with learning difficulties:

Children with learning difficulties may be more likely to take things at face value e.g.; if they are told "Mummy has gone to sleep" they often believe this is the case and we will endeavour to be particularly careful with the language used to explain death to children with special educational needs. Also,

children with learning difficulties may not be able to express their grief, so it is important that alternative means are found in order to allow them to grieve properly. In such cases our SENCO Mrs Alison Johnston, and our special needs teacher Miss Alison Manning will be consulted and involved in managing the child's needs on their return to school.

Part 2: Attendance at Funerals

Once the school has been initially informed of a situation, the Principal will contact the family concerned and offer condolences, sympathy and support on behalf of the school.

This contact with the family will also serve as a means to gain relevant reliable information which the Principal will disseminate to staff and pupils as soon as possible and if necessary.

In the event of a death, serious illness or injury the Principal and the Class Teacher will visit the home to represent the school. It may also be possible for the child's previous teachers to visit the home if they so wish or offer sympathy in writing.

Attendance at Funerals of:

- **Child attending the school:**
Principal
Chair of B.O.G.
Class Teacher
Any other staff at the discretion of the Principal
- **Member of Staff:**
Principal
Chair of B.O.G.
Any other staff at the discretion of the Principal

It will be the school's intention to close the school on the day of the Funeral of a member of staff and for a half day for the Funeral of a child attending the school, to enable all staff and pupils to attend the Funeral if they wish to.

- **Sibling or Parent of a Child attending the school:**
Principal
- **Member of Board of Governors:**
Principal
Chair of B.O.G.
Teacher Rep on B.O.G.
- **Spouse, Partner, Child or Parent of Staff:**
Principal
Other Staff at the discretion of the Principal

We are aware that every situation is different and will be treated as individually as possible and attendance of staff at any funeral will be sympathetically granted at the discretion of the Principal.

Individual or groups of pupils will **not** be asked by the school to attend funerals.

Part 3 : Procedures to follow in the event of a critical incident.

The following pages outline, for the critical incident team, the procedures to follow in the event of a critical incident.

Critical Incident team:

Mr Terry McMaster: Principal and Team Leader

Mrs Laura Hegarty: Vice Principal.

Mrs Heather Glenn: Clerical Officer

Mr McMaster and Mrs Glenn will inform all staff and the Chair of the Board of Governors by text message of any critical incidents that occur.

The critical incident team hold their own copies of their particular procedures to follow. Mr McMaster and Mrs Hegarty hold a full copy of the whole team's procedures.

Part 4: Monitoring

The procedures set out in this policy will be reviewed every two years and also in accordance with additional training or information that may become available to staff.

Any changes that are made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant staff at that time.