

# Ramsden Infant and Nursery School

## Bereavement Policy

### School Background:

Ramsden Infant and Nursery School is openly inclusive, we welcome all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve their very best. At Ramsden Infant and Nursery School we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole-learner physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

### Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a 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 are occasionally recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – and on thankfully rare occasions, 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 often, 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](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

### 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 outside agencies, and clarify the pathway of support.
- To endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

### The role of the governing body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.

### The role of the head teacher (deputy head in absence of head)

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

- To inform staff initially and then pupils. The Headteacher will decide if children will be informed in small supportive groups with a trusted member of staff, in the class with their teacher or in a whole school assembly.
- To identify staff members who may be vulnerable, and offer help and support.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.

#### **The role of Outside Agencies – including the Educational Psychologist and School Nurse.**

- To advise and support staff.
- To consult on referral pathways and to help identification of complex grief.

#### **The role of all school staff**

- To undertake bereavement support training and be prepared to support parents, children and colleagues.
- To carefully identify vulnerable pupils and offer additional support.
- To make sure those children identified are placed on the school Vulnerable Child register.

#### **Social networking**

Ramsden Infant and Nursery School will make every effort to handle the event and the communication in a sensitive and efficient manner. It is the school's policy that no information be shared regarding the death using social media by staff, until all the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma.

## **Procedures:**

1. Contact with the deceased's family will be established by the Head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
2. Staff will be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Pupils who are affected will be informed, preferably one to one or in small groups, by someone known to them. Pupils who are particularly vulnerable, such as close friends of the victim or who witnessed the event, will be identified and offered additional support.
4. After consulting with the family, a letter to all school families affected will be composed at the earliest opportunity, again to prevent rumour and assumptions that are likely to cause the deceased family further distress. See Appendix for examples of letters.
5. The school is aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances. (Referenced in Funerals section of this policy)
8. Where necessary a press statement will be prepared by the Head Teacher, in consultation with the bereaved family.
9. School is aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life, so information will be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

## **The death of a pupil.**

After being informed of all the facts, staff will be available to provide support and comfort.

There will be opportunities for staff to meet as a group at the end of the day to discuss any concerns or difficulties that may have been encountered.

The head teacher, in consultation with the bereaved parents and the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school, should the press be involved.

Pupils will be encouraged to share their feelings and be able to discuss the death if they feel they need to.

Staff will be open and honest about their feelings.

There will be minimum disruption to the school routine, to enable pupils to not feel overwhelmed. However, pupils who are very distressed will be allowed to go to the chill out room, supported by an adult.

## **The death of a staff member**

The head teacher will decide if the children will be informed as a school, in groups or individually. Staff will then be available to provide support and comfort to the children.

There will be opportunities for staff to meet as a group at the end of the day to discuss any concerns or difficulties that may have been encountered.

Staff with very close bonds to the deceased will be offered extra support, including appropriate cover if needed.

The head teacher, in consultation with the bereaved family and the chair of governors, will discuss and draft an official statement on behalf of the school should the press be involved.

If possible, there will be minimum disruption to the school day as structure and regularity will ensure that pupils are not overwhelmed. However, flexibility may be required and great sensitivity shown when determining how classes might be covered following the death.

### **The death of a pupil's family member**

If a death occurs when the child is at school, it is preferable for a family member of the pupil comes to school to collect the child.

The head teacher will liaise with the pupil's family to determine their wishes before notifying any pupils.

The pupil's peers will be informed, in an age appropriate way, as to how the pupil wishes to communicate or respond to the incident.

The head teacher will liaise with the family regarding their wishes for the funeral and the sending of cards or flowers.

Staff will recognise that following being bereaved, a pupil may have reduced capacity for school work. They will be given time and space to recover and given extra help and support as necessary

### **Funerals**

The school will always abide by the family's wishes.

In the event of the death of a pupil in our school, the school will close on the funeral day, providing the family agrees.

In the event of the death of a staff member, the school will close on the funeral day, providing the family agrees.

In the event of a death of a family member or close friend, the head teacher will authorise an absence for a child or provide suitable cover for a member of staff, in order to attend the funeral.

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