

Shipbourne School

Policy for Bereavement and Loss

September 2022

Rationale:

We believe that the learning environment should be challenging, expecting pupils/students to take as much control of their lives as they are able. In order to achieve this, pupils/students must be given relevant knowledge and experience to reflect on the world within and beyond the school.

We believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. Therefore, to achieve our aims of challenge and independence, we must comfort pupils/students with the reality of bereavement and loss so that they can develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to deal with these experiences.

We believe that the ethos of the school, based on openness and mutual support, provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in an enriching manner.

Process

The school will act in a planned and agreed manner, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute their part in a way that is consistent with the values that have been adopted.

- Someone of significance to all in the school community should prepare themselves for the inevitability of loss. They should have already thought through the way in which they intend to respond so that their thoughts and actions are ordered. This named person, probably the head, will co-ordinate the school's response and be fundamental in creating the most appropriate atmosphere.
- As far as possible, all staff should be told together by the named person. By creating a list of people to be told, the school can be sure that no one close to the situation will find out by chance.
- All of the pupils/students and parents/carers will be told at the same time and as promptly as circumstances will allow. Pupils/students in school will be told face-to-face, parents/carers by letter the same day. Absentees from school will also need to be informed. The school will have procedures to track who is informed, when and by whom, to ensure that no one is missed. Roles and responsibilities for those involved in this aspect will be clearly stated.
- The school will have a range of strategies that it may adopt in the days and weeks that follow any significant loss. Decisions about which to undertake will be determined following discussions with the family

concerned and will take into account the cultural/religious beliefs of the family.

- An individual or small group of school staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all of the initial attention.

Curriculum

In the event of bereavement or significant loss the school has established clear guidelines for action. However, a truly proactive school will prepare for such an experience by ensuring that it is dealt with as a matter of course for all pupils/students within planned programmes of study within the school's curriculum. Some opportunities may include:

1. RE

The spiritual dimension relating to loss and bereavement can be explored within themes dealing with:

- Rites of Passage
- Worship
- Key beliefs and values within the major world religions.

2. PSHE

The emotional element and the nature of ongoing relationships with those who suffer bereavement or loss can be explored within PSHE.

3. Science

The reality of death can be included in schemes of work dealing with

- Ourselves
- Life processes.

4. Cross-Curricular Studies

There are a number of opportunities within cross-curricular themes and dimensions such as equal opportunities and citizenship where the issues can be raised.

In planning for such experiences there must be a continuity of practice which is consistent with the rationale explicitly stated in this policy.

Parents/carers

In acknowledging the role of the school in dealing with bereavement and loss, the school must not undermine the place of parents/carers in this process.

The parents/carers remain the most significant support to young people trying to come to terms with the death of a school friend. The school can support parents/carers in this by:

- Sharing with parents/carers the intentions of the school to act in a particular way in the event of a death.
- Offering guidance to parents/carers on how they might act. Schools may even wish to do this formally by running training sessions and workshops.
- Keeping parents/carers fully informed about the actions of the school throughout the immediate period of grieving.
- Parents/carers will be invited to be involved in any school response that occurs after the death, e.g. a memorial service. The format of any memorial service will take into account the beliefs of the bereaved family.

Outcomes

By adopting a planned and considered approach the school can promote desired, positive outcomes for both staff and pupils/students within the school and those in the wider school community. These may include:

Staff will

- Feel equally valued.
- Have an opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenging role they face.
- Be given time and space to work through their own feelings.
- Become aware of the skills needed, and be offered training, to develop them.

Pupils/students will

- Be offered support by sensitive, trained staff working in unison.
- Grow as a result of this experience and be more able to come to terms with their feelings.
- Develop a sense of perspective about their own lives and the fears that this might engender.

The school will

- Have clear expectations about the way it will act, not simply react.
- Promote a sense of unity and identity in the whole community.

The family will

- Have real support to draw on.
- Be given an opportunity to reinforce feelings of worth rather than a sense of loss.

The parents/carers will

- Be drawn into a closer partnership with the school.
- Be given guidance on how to support their sons and daughters.
- Have time to prepare their own responses to loss and bereavement.