

# BEREAVEMENT POLICY

FOR

ELMHURST SCHOOL & TWO YEAR OLD PROVISION



Adopted:	December 2014
Next Review Date:	December 2017
Responsible Committee	Full Governing Body

Signed:

Two Year Old Registered Person:	Mrs K. Rumble
Headteacher:	Mrs R. Lee
Chair of Governors:	Mr D. Gamble

## **School Background**

Elmhurst School is an inclusive school in the heart of Aylesbury. We continually make a positive difference to the quality of learning for all our pupils and are focused on giving all children the best possible opportunities to ensure they achieve well, enjoy school and love to learn.

At Elmhurst each pupil is known and cared about as an individual and we set very high standards for behaviour. We have a dedicated team of staff who work hard to support our families.

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 will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes 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, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence means 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)

## **Policy Objectives**

The objectives 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 LA, and clarify the pathway of support.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we 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.
- To support the Headteacher and senior staff when dealing with a bereavement
- To ensure that funds are made available for appropriate staff training

## **The role of the Headteacher**

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed
- To ensure that at least one member of staff is trained as bereavement support staff
- The one member of staff at November 2014 with the appropriate training is Mrs Lyn Harwood

## **The role of the LA**

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

## **The role of pastoral staff (including i.e. spiritual advisors, school counsellors, mentors)**

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff
- To support the child/family as appropriate
- To signpost additional support
- To maintain their training and keep up to date with developments

## **Other Support – [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)**

- To provide confidential support, information and guidance to families and professionals. Professionally trained bereavement support workers are available to take calls 9am - 5pm Monday-Friday. Tel: 0800 02 888 40.
- The support team can also be contacted at: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

## **Procedures for Managing a Bereavement**

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher 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 should 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 should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
5. The school should be 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.
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

## **Suggested templates for letter to parents**

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.*

*The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.*

### **Sample letter on death of a pupil**

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/she was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..>'s> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Head Teacher

## **Sample letter home about a member of staff**

Dear parent/carer

Sadly today I had to tell the children that a much loved member of staff (details) has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite upset at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement.

I am sure that there will be many parents and carers who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness and ask questions, whilst alternatively playing or participating normally in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find that your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find useful guidance and resources online at:

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

<We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it is not compulsory.> It is likely that the school will be closed in the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a <very popular> colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news and I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts on the whole school community. I am grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## **Support services for parents and children dealing with the loss of a child or sibling**

**The Child Death Helpline:** This is a freephone helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child, of any age and under any circumstance. Calls are heard in confidence and the helpline is staffed by volunteer parents who have also experienced the loss of a child.

The freephone number is 0800 282 986. The helpline is open every evening, from 7 – 10pm. It is also open from 10am – 1pm on Mon, Thurs and Fri, and from 10am – 4pm on Tues and Wednesday.

Website: <http://childdeathhelpline.org.uk/?www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk>

**BLISS:** Provides support for parents of babies in Special or Intensive Care Units, as well as for bereaved parents.

The helpline number is 0500 618140

Website <http://www.bliss.org.uk>

**The Child Bereavement Charity:** The CBC provides specialised support, information and training to all those affected when a baby or child dies, or when a child is bereaved.

**Telephone number** 01494 446648/0800 02 888 40

Website <http://www.childbereavement.org>

**Childhood Bereavement Network:** The CBN seeks to ensure that all children and young people in the UK, together with their families and other caregivers, including professional carers, can easily access a choice of high-quality local and national information, guidance and support to enable them to manage the impact of death on their lives.

**Telephone number** is 020 7843 6309

Website <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk>

**Foundation for the study of Infant Deaths (FSID):** The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths is the UK's leading baby charity aiming to prevent unexpected deaths in infancy and promote infant health.

Advice and leaflets are available from the FSID Website

**24 hour helpline** 020 7233 2090.

Website <http://www.sids.org.uk>

**Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS):** Provides support for bereaved parents when their baby dies at, or soon after, birth

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**Telephone** (10am – 3pm, Monday – Friday ) 020 7436 5881

**Website** <http://www.uk-sands.org>

**Winston's Wish:** Winston's Wish is the leading childhood bereavement charity and the largest provider of services to bereaved children, young people and their families in the UK.

It offers practical support and guidance to families, professionals and anyone concerned about a grieving child, as well as telephone help and advice for bereaved children and siblings.

**Telephone number** 08452 03 04 05

**Website** <http://www.winstonswish.org.uk>