



Blairdardie Primary School Bereavement



Strategy Statement

Aims & Ethos:

- To ensure a consistent approach to dealing with bereavement across the school
- To maintain a supportive ethos where staff show an empathic understanding as a result of grief to children and colleagues
- To ensure inviting and secure surroundings within the school environment where children feel at ease and supported.
- To consider a referral to more specialist support where the impact of the grief is more complex

childbereavementuk.org

Rationale:

Statistics confirm that 1 in 29 pupils aged 5 to 16 years old has been bereaved of a parent or sibling. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or significant other person. Within the school community there will always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement - or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or pupil. In Blairdardie we will have a bereavement aware culture in order to best support our community.

Objectives:

- A framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement.
- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, families and the community.
- To identify key staff within school who can oversee & monitor the strategy and support staff
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

Roles & Responsibilities:

The headteacher will be informed of and take charge of all bereavements in a sensitive and proactive manner. Senior Leadership Team will deputise in her absence as instructed.

In the case of sudden or traumatic death of a pupil, the headteacher or depute headteacher will represent the family and school at multi-agency reviews and meetings.

The best person to liaise with the family directly will be agreed on an individual basis dependent on the specific situation and relationships between the family and staff; headteacher, class teacher, support for learning worker. This will be allocated at the headteacher's discretion..



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The indiscriminate spread of news via social media may mean that some members of the school community hear the news before others. If sensitive information is public then the Leadership team will agree to contact members of staff verbally, as soon as possible. This will not be sent in a text or other written format.

When delivering news to pupils, some schools prefer to do this in smaller groups with a familiar adult, while others choose a whole school assembly. If a pupil has died, it may be more appropriate to share the news with their class first.

Blairdardie Primary will immediately provide a safe place and time for individuals to grieve, within the Zen Den. The principal teacher, leading Health & Wellbeing will offer the children immediate emotional support. In the longer term, Seasons for Growth will be offered to children to allow them to grieve and express their emotions over a set period of time within a safe and structured environment.

If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools. They can be contacted on: 0808 168 2528

Procedures:

Some families may wish to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available or where applicable, the family are consulted. The school can help to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community.

It helps to feel prepared when delivering sad news, so a script will be particularly useful. Do not be afraid or surprised to show emotion, this is a human reaction. Suggestions for writing a script:

- Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.
- Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.
- If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred
- If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct, if known. Where appropriate remind pupils of their responsibilities and the impact when posting on social media.
- Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them.
- Mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support.
- Acknowledge that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is OK.
- Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.
- A template letter to parents/carers is provided if required (appendix 1).



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The First Few Days:

- Although school can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, some flexibility may be necessary.
- Bereaved young people may need time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings, being able to leave a classroom and take time out in a safe space can be very welcome.
- The location for a temporary tribute/book of condolence needs to be safe, accessible and ideally where pupils can be supervised. Offer the family the opportunity to visit, if they wish to, or take photographs to share with them later.
- Consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.

The Funeral:

- Rather than making assumptions, the headteacher will consult with the family to find out whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral.
- Senior Leadership Team will consider practicalities of issues such as staff cover to allow all those wishing to attend the funeral to do so. (For some circumstances, it may be appropriate to close the school, for others, it may not).
- They will also consider any arrangements for pupils attending the funeral, and how they will be supported/supervised.

Support for Staff:

- Supporting bereaved pupils can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Senior Leadership Team will ensure the wellbeing of staff is at the forefront and will be continuously monitored by 'checking in'
- Staff will be made aware of Glasgow City Council's counselling service, 'Workplace Options' which is available to all employees and resources linked to Mental Health & Wellbeing to provide all staff with a range of Support Agencies (Appendix 2).
- Further information about training can be found at childbereavementuk.org Or contact Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on **0800 02 888 40** or **Live Chat** on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.
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Remembering:

- We will consult the family of the person who died about any plans for a memorial, assembly or other tribute where appropriate. If this is agreed then the children's voices will be listened to in agreeing a suitable memorial.
- A more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork, a bench) may be appropriate, but in future the removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed sensitively.



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Returning to School after a Bereavement:

- Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert', they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person.
- It can be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school. This could be a familiar adult, such as the class teacher, Headteacher.

The purpose of this meeting should be to:

- Acknowledge the death.
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space, the Zen Den, for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'. A strategy will be agreed with their class teacher and other appropriate staff to enable the child to leave class discreetly without speaking out. Consider 'Time-out' activities - journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc. will be considered if the headteacher agrees this is appropriate
- Support for peers will be considered within the Zen Den when children have a bereaved friend.

A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website:

childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved

Longer Term Support:

- The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support. Significant dates or anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day, etc. may be particularly difficult. Regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping.
- The grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. There may be changes in the child's behaviour, which staff will observe and sensitively acknowledge.

Death, Grief and Bereavement in the Curriculum:

- Teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. Informing parents and carers in advance will help to gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson. Recently bereaved pupils may find it helpful if they are given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.
- Seasons for Growth is taught in Blairdardie Primary allowing the children time to explore their emotions.