



## **THE CLARE SCHOOL**

# **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

This policy is intended to support our response to a critical incident involving the death of a current pupil. It is not a prescriptive policy: every situation is unique, what is deemed appropriate will vary.

This policy has been written because of the vulnerability of our pupils. Any other critical incident affecting the school will be dealt with in line with the guidance provided in The Red Book : Critical incidents and trauma management.

### **General Principles**

#### **The understanding of death**

Opportunities to teach about death form part of the school curriculum in Science, Religious Education and PSHE. An individual can begin to develop this understanding once he or she has an awareness of himself or herself and others.

In the early stages of understanding, pupils may recognise the absence or loss of a close person. As the child develops intellectually and emotionally, death becomes understood as something that happens, for example, to plants and pets. At this stage death may be perceived as temporary. The understanding of death as permanent occurs as the individual's general intellectual development progresses. Pupil responses to death will vary according to the stage of development and own life experiences. The understanding of death is likely to accelerate where a person has immediate experience of bereavement.

The emotional impact of grief may involve various responses and may occur over an extended or delayed time period. Shock, denial, searching, despair, anger, anxiety or depression and guilt are all normal

manifestations of grief. This is not a definitive list, other changes in behaviour are possible.

### **When a Clare School pupil dies**

Every situation is different and the way in which the school learns of an incident will also affect the response. The following framework is intended as guidance.

- A member of SMT will assemble the staff at the earliest suitable opportunity to advise them of information available to date. Staff arriving at school after this meeting, e.g. Lunchtime staff will be informed by a member of SMT individually or as a group.
- If a member of staff is informed of the death of a pupil at any time (for example during a weekend) they should make every effort to inform a member of SMT as soon as possible.
- Teaching staff will discuss with a member of SMT the most appropriate way to advise pupils. This is most likely to be through a whole school or departmental assemblies or in class groups.
- All staff and pupils will be given time and opportunities to discuss their feelings as needed.
- The school office staff will inform members of the school's governing body at the earliest appropriate opportunity.
- In the case of a pupil on dual placement or having regular inclusion in another school, The Clare School office staff will inform and liaise with the other school.
- On agreement of the family the Headteacher will advise the parents of all children at the school by letter.
- A letter of sympathy will be written to the family.
- The Director of Children's Services will be informed via Norfolk Children's Services protocol. This may involve the Local Authority Critical Incidents Team if unexpected or the Specialist SEN Commissioner if expected.
- The possibility of support being provided for staff will be considered.
- Further information will be given to staff as it is forthcoming. Staff will be reminded of the formal support available - see Support section of this policy.
- The Headteacher (or their representative) will attend the funeral. Classroom staff will be invited to attend if possible. Attendance will be in accordance with family wishes.
- Members of staff wishing to attend the funeral should ask the Headteacher, who will make decisions on an individual basis, each

situation is unique and therefore cannot be prescribed in this policy.

- Pupils may attend the funeral with their parents if under 16. Pupils over 16 may be encouraged to attend without parents. If this is not possible the school may seek further advice on the attendance of pupils aged over 16 at a funeral where it conflicts with the wishes of the attendee's family.
- Families are invited to remain in touch with the school and the school will seek to continue to support families. The school will maintain contact with the family in accordance with the family's wishes. This ongoing relationship will be offered to the family by a member of SMT.
- Staff who have contact with the family should record their contact on a parent liaison form.
- Pupils' work and record of achievements will be offered to the family.

#### Breaking the news and supporting bereavement

The following principles can help pupils to cope with a bereavement:

- find time to listen if a pupil wants to talk, time to explore the pupil's feelings if the pupil wants to communicate.
- be prepared for questions and answer honestly including saying "I don't know" if that is the case.
- be prepared for questions to be repeated many times, pupils may need to hear the information again to help comprehension.
- watch for changes in behaviour and treat behavioural incidents patiently
- allow pupils to express emotional responses
- some pupils may not show a response, but that does not mean they don't care
- particular sensitivity may be needed with pupils who themselves have degenerative or life limiting conditions

The situation may arise that staff will have to break the news of a death to pupils. Communication must be appropriate to the pupils' needs, with consideration given to the developmental level of the pupils as well.

Time must be given for pupils to assimilate the information, which they will do at different rates and with different immediate responses. Whilst it is acceptable for staff to demonstrate an emotional response to such sad news, provision must be made for members of staff to withdraw if they feel too upset, rather than displaying excessive emotion in front of pupils. Individual staff must use their own judgement and be guided by colleagues in this. The primary role of staff is to support pupils, therefore

the pupils' emotional needs must take precedence: for pupils to witness distress in adults is not appropriate.

At The Clare School pupils may occasionally ask what the cause of death was when a pupil has died. This is a very sensitive issue. As a general principle it is probably better to say "I don't know" which is likely to be true in fact, since we may be breaking the news of a death to pupils before a formal death certificate with cause of death has been issued.

## **Support**

### **Staff**

At The Clare School we work within a supportive team. However the death of a member of the school community is very stressful and we recognise when we need additional support in coping with this. There are many ways of getting help, the following contacts are available to staff:

- Norfolk Support Line 0800 169 7676 (24 hours - 7 days a week)  
Offers a free and confidential counselling service to Norfolk County Council Employees
- The Child Bereavement Trust: 01494 568900  
<http://www.childbereavement.org.uk> This is a professional support line available to staff working with children.
- The Norfolk Critical Incidents Team: support line 07623 912974

### **Pupils**

Pupils may exhibit a range of responses. If a member of staff is concerned about the reactions or behaviour of a pupil this should be reported in the same way as a child protection issue would be; as quickly as possible, so that the need for additional support can be assessed.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Bereavement resources**

Available at The Clare School located with PSHE resources or in Staff Workroom

### **Book list**

To be found in staff study room

When Uncle Bob Died	Althea
Death	Amos, J
Everybody Feels Sad,	Binham, J
When I die will I Get Better?	Breebaart, J & P
The Fall of Freddie the Leaf	Buscaglia, L
Up In Heaven	Chichester Clark, E
The Lonely Tree	Halliday, N
Grandma's Party	Harper, M
Rose Blanche	Innocenti, R
Michael Rosen's Sad Book	Rosen, M
Waterbugs and Dragonflies	Stickney, D
Badger's Parting Gifts	Varley, S
Frog is Sad	Velthuis, M
Frog and the Birdsong	Velthuis, M

#### Resources to be found with PHSE resources

Grandad I'll Always Remember you	Broere, R & De Bode, A
What do We Think About Death	Bryant-Mole, K
Rachel's Roses	Christensen, K
Grief and Bereavement: Understanding Children	Couldrick, A

Someone Special has Died	Dept of Social Work
Grief, Bereavement and Change: a quick guide	Gobey, F & Casdagli, P
Will my Rabbit go to Heaven	Hughes, J
Helping Children Cope With the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grownups	Kroen, W C
Goodbye Pappa	Leavey, U & Eachus, J

Beginnings and Endings With Lifetimes in Between	Mellonie, B & Ingpen R
Emma Says Goodbye	Nystrom C, Perkins, G & Morris, L
Remembering My Brother	Perkins, G & Morris, L
Loss Bereavement and Grief: A guide to effective Caring	Spall, B & Callis
Badgers Parting Gifts	Varley, S

Good Grief: Exploring  
Feelings, Loss and Death with Over  
Elevens and Adult Ward, B et al  
Children and Grief Directory

**Appendix 2**  
**Other Agencies**

Critical Incidents Team: red book in school office - support line 07623  
912974 (24 hours)

The Child Bereavement Trust: national organisation offering support and  
advice to families and children about bereavement -  
[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

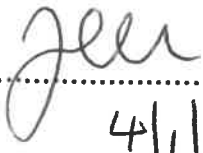
If I Should Die: website offering advice about a range of bereavement  
issues - [www.ifishoulddie.co.uk](http://www.ifishoulddie.co.uk)


Winston's Wish: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) - national organisation  
offering support to bereaved children and their families.

This Policy is to be reviewed Spring Term 2022

See also:

Red Book Responding to Critical Incidents  
Child Protection procedure (within Safeguarding policy)

Signed .....  ..... Headteacher  
Date ..... 4/1/19 .....  
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Signed .....  ..... Deputy Headteacher  
Date ..... 4.1.19 .....  
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