




Bright Stars

Rudston Primary School and
Bright Stars Nursery

**Grief, Bereavement
& Separation Policy
(For Children & Adults)
Date: September 2023**

This policy and all school policies are produced in accordance to guidance set out in our school legislation and guidance policy.

Approved: September 2023

Review Date: Autumn Term 2025

Our Mission Statement:

To develop a love of learning,
enabling all children
to reach their full potential.

* Respect * Resilience *
* Responsibility * Enjoyment *
* Challenge *

Safeguarding Statement:

“Rudston Primary school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

INTRODUCTION

Death is a subject that is difficult to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point the school community will be affected by a death. This might be the death of a child, staff member, a family member, or of someone connected with the school. Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. Discussions about death should not be avoided or dealt with in a glib manner; instead they should be sensitive and open.

Our school is well-placed to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as to support those personally affected by it. An important part of this is the ability to support children, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

At Rudston Primary School, we are committed to the emotional health and well-being of all staff and children. We are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school'. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare children for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or relationship breakdown. This policy is for all staff, children, parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school.

AIMS

Our aims are to:

- support all those affected by separation, loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances;
- offer understanding of the impact of separation, loss and grief on children and young people's physical and emotional health;
- gain insight into children and adult reactions to separation, loss and grief and how we should respond in order to meet the needs of grieving children, parents and staff;
- give pastoral support for children, parents and staff;
- provide effective support for all members of the school community and access to relevant support materials.

This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances. It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently and that every case should be dealt with on an individual basis. The steps outlined in this policy are to ensure consistency of support but having a dialogue with the bereaved is essential. Although separation is not directly mentioned below, some children and adults may go through stages of grief and bereavement as a result; some of the guidance below may be useful in providing them with support if necessary.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The management of a bereavement situation is a whole school issue but there needs to be clear lines of accountability to ensure our aims are fulfilled. The main areas of responsibility are outlined below.

Governors are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and to provide support in terms of media enquiries.

The Head Teacher, with the support of the governors, will have overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that this person is absent then the Deputy Head Teacher will take responsibility.

These responsibilities are to:

- monitor progress and deal with external agencies;
- co-ordinate media enquiries;
- be the first point of contact for the individual concerned and their family or nominate a member of staff to be first point of contact;
- identify appropriate support within the school community for the individual(s) concerned;
- offer support as appropriate to children in the wider school community

PROCEDURES (*if appropriate)

When a bereavement or loss situation occurs the following steps will be taken:

- contact will be made with the family to identify the facts and offer support;
- staff will be informed and decisions taken concerning the best way to inform children and for the internal mechanisms for support to be organised and employed; *
- children will be informed in the agreed manner. If possible parents will have already been informed; *
- the Local Authority, faith groups and other agencies will be informed and involved as appropriate;
- if appropriate, a press statement will be prepared and a strategy for dealing with the media agreed with the family. This should be discussed with the Chair of Governors before any statement is made;
- discussions will take place concerning attendance at the funeral and any memorial service (including school assembly) agreed with the family;
- a review process will be agreed with those affected.

When/if it is considered appropriate, a short assembly will be held to remember the deceased. Faith group representatives could be invited to attend and support, if appropriate. This assembly may be Key Stage or whole school based depending on the connection with the deceased and any school community member who has had close links with the pupil, staff or school community member will be invited. If applicable the child's parents and close family should also be invited to this.

TRAINING

Training and development is a fundamental aspect of our school community and appropriate staff will have the opportunity to undertake relevant training in the management of bereavement where/when appropriate. This may include general awareness-raising for all staff and more specialised training for those with specific responsibility, such as senior staff members and pastoral staff, for example our home school support worker.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Senior Management Team on an annual basis.

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

Date

Address

To all parent/carers

Dear Parents/Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <name> family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours Sincerely

Wendy Walters
Head teacher

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

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.

Date

Address

To all parent/carers

Dear Parents/Carers

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> life.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Walters
Head Teacher

Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and Governors

- ❖ Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible.
- ❖ Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- ❖ Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways.
- ❖ Be considerate of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died.
- ❖ Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting, i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent, e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or e-mail etc.
- ❖ Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
 - a) support members of staff
 - b) support groups of children

The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.

- ❖ Identify an appropriate member of staff who will liaise with the individuals family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary).
- ❖ Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a “protected” telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information.

Telephone line providers may provide an additional line if the situation requires one.

- ❖ Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day.
- ❖ Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation. Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues. Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.
- ❖ Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement.

Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the children/young people

- ❖ Inform the children/young people as soon as possible about the death.
 - ❖ Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups, i.e. class groups.
- Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.
- If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died.
- ❖ Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
 - ❖ Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
 - ❖ Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
 - ❖ Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person.
 - ❖ Avoid using euphemisms.
 - ❖ Those children/young people who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or on a one-to-one situation.
 - ❖ Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.
 - ❖ Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
 - ❖ Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.
 - ❖ Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family.
 - ❖ Be available for any child/young person who needs additional help and support.

Things to consider in the days following the news of the death

- ❖ It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- ❖ Ensure nominated staff, with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so. It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- ❖ Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary. It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.
- ❖ Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and secretaries/administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- ❖ Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.

Consider practical issues like:-

- putting an obituary in the paper, sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc;
- who will attend the funeral, making a collection etc;
- cover for any staff who may be going to the funeral;
- transport to and from the funeral;
- informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved;
- possible closure of the school. If this is the case remember to tell lunchtime supervisors, site manager etc in advance.