



## Bereavement Policy

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## 1 Scope of this policy

It is hoped that these guidelines will ensure that any member of Ranches Primary School facing bereavement will receive the immediate care and long term support they need. The guidelines also recognise the need to offer support and guidance to those in direct contact with the bereaved, so that they too might be supported.

## 2 Supporting a Pupil following a family bereavement

Identify the member of staff who will be the contact point for the bereaved family. This would usually follow consultation with the Principal and School nurse.

- 2.1 Acknowledge the death with the pupil and family by phone, card or visit.
- 2.2 Decide with the family how the information about the death is to be conveyed to the rest of the staff and the other pupils.
- 2.3 Ensure regular contact is maintained with the pupil and family – this helps inform how they are coping, what their concerns are and what would be most helpful for the pupil if there are difficulties.
- 2.4 If the pupil is off school, ensure they do not feel forgotten – cards, messages or visits remind them that people care.
- 2.5 If appropriate, arrange a meeting with the pupil and family before they return to school to address any concerns or devise strategies to help the student cope.
- 2.6 Nominate a key member of staff who will offer ongoing support and monitor situation.
- 2.7 Ensure family are aware of additional support available.
- 2.8 Ensure all staff are aware of the bereavement and possible effects on behaviour and learning. Consider the appropriateness of staff attending the funeral – consult with the family. Pupils often appreciate the presence of their teacher as an acknowledgement of the importance of what has happened in their lives. Striking the right balance between support and unintended intrusion is a difficult one, and discussion should take place at SMT level before making these decisions.
- 2.9 Quietly check on an ongoing basis how things are and ask the pupil what could be done to improve the situation if difficulties arise.
- 2.10 The class teacher should make a note of significant dates that might affect the pupil – e.g. date of death, celebrations etc., and be prepared to acknowledge these potentially difficult times with the pupil.
- 2.11 Be alert to changes in behaviour – these may be an indication that the pupil is more affected by their bereavement than they are willing or able to say.



### **3 What to do when a Pupil or Member of Staff dies**

3.1 When the death of a pupil or member of staff occurs within a community there is often a profound sense of shock – even if the death is expected. A plan of action can help in this instance, as it can be difficult to think clearly in a time of crisis. It is advisable, that with the consent of the family, accurate and factual information is shared with staff and pupils as soon as possible to avoid rumour or gossip circulating. The following guidance may be helpful.

### **4 Immediate actions**

- 4.1 Identify the member of staff (usually the Principal) who will be the initial contact for the bereaved family.
- 4.2 Initiate contact to offer the collective sympathy of the School, to ascertain details of what happened and what can be told to the rest of the school. Some families may not want all of the facts known, but it is important to point out that information gets around by other sources and can be more distressing in the long run if not accurate.
- 4.3 Contact those staff and board members who need to be told immediately and then arrange a meeting to inform other members of staff, including administrative staff.
- 4.4 Be aware of the impact on some staff for whom the news may have special significance e.g. close relationship with pupil/member of staff or reactivating memories of own losses.
- 4.5 Ensure staff are aware of what support is available to them in school.
- 4.6 Identify who will liaise with press/parents in the event of a major incident or death due to contagious illness.
- 4.7 Agree what information will be given to the rest of the school, by whom and in what manner. It can sometimes help to write a short statement for various staff to read out to their classes to ensure consistency.
- 4.8 Where possible, with the family's consent, a letter should be sent home explaining what has happened, what the pupils have been told and what support is available in school for those who need it.
- 4.9 Send/take flowers, cards on behalf of Ranches Primary School– this can not only be an expression of support for the family, but an acknowledgement of how much the person was valued.
- 4.10 Consider who should go to the funeral and how this should be organised. Consult with the family. For those who cannot attend, consider marking the occasion in school in some way.
- 4.11 Be prepared to go over the same information several times with pupils as bad news is sometimes hard to take in the first time around. Ensure consistency of explanation amongst staff.
- 4.12 Discuss with family/staff/pupils the development of a memorial if appropriate.
- 4.13 Consider the need for a whole school assembly/memorial service.