

CLARENDON ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL



COVID-19 Bereavement Policy

Policy Review: *This policy will be reviewed by the full FGB on an annual basis.*

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Date of Last Review:

Signed:

Headteacher

Signed:

Chair of FGB

Date: 02/06/20

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June 2022

Guidance for Educational Settings on Supporting Those Bereaved During Covid-19

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all our educational settings, families, communities and way of life. This is coupled with a collective raised level of anxiety due to uncertainty around the coronavirus crisis and the additional complication of the nationwide closure of schools and other educational settings. There is also an increased risk of unexpected bereavement and feelings of loss in the community.

This guidance is designed to help staff at Clarendon Road Primary School on preparing and responding to Covid19 related bereavement issues that are affecting our school community. It is important to think about how to support children and members of staff before, during and after a bereavement.

The guidance covers:

- General bereavement guidance
- Things to consider following a bereavement during Covid-19
- Things to do to prepare for bereavements during Covid-19
- The 3 levels of response, dependent upon the impact on your community
- Best practice at level 1
- Supporting key adults and leaders
- Responding at level 2 and 3
- Links for a range of useful websites, helplines and resources
- Example of letter to a bereaved child

In this guidance we will use the term child/children in its broadest sense. Our intention is that the guidance is suitable for all settings within Clarendon Road Primary School.

General Bereavement Guidance

Key points to support best practice following a bereavement:

- Remember that help and support for those impacted are best provided by a trusted, familiar adult. It may be prudent to ask one of the children's **"trusted 5 adults"** in line with the Clarendon Road behaviour policy.
- Be as honest and open as you can with children, appropriate to their developmental level.
- Remember that children are all different and they will all react to the loss, trauma and bereavement in their own unique way. The differences in their levels of awareness, understanding, age, emotional maturity, security and not least, their relationship with the deceased, will also have significant effects. For further information on children's developmental understanding of death, click onto the following link:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents/childrensunderstanding-of-death#keypoints>

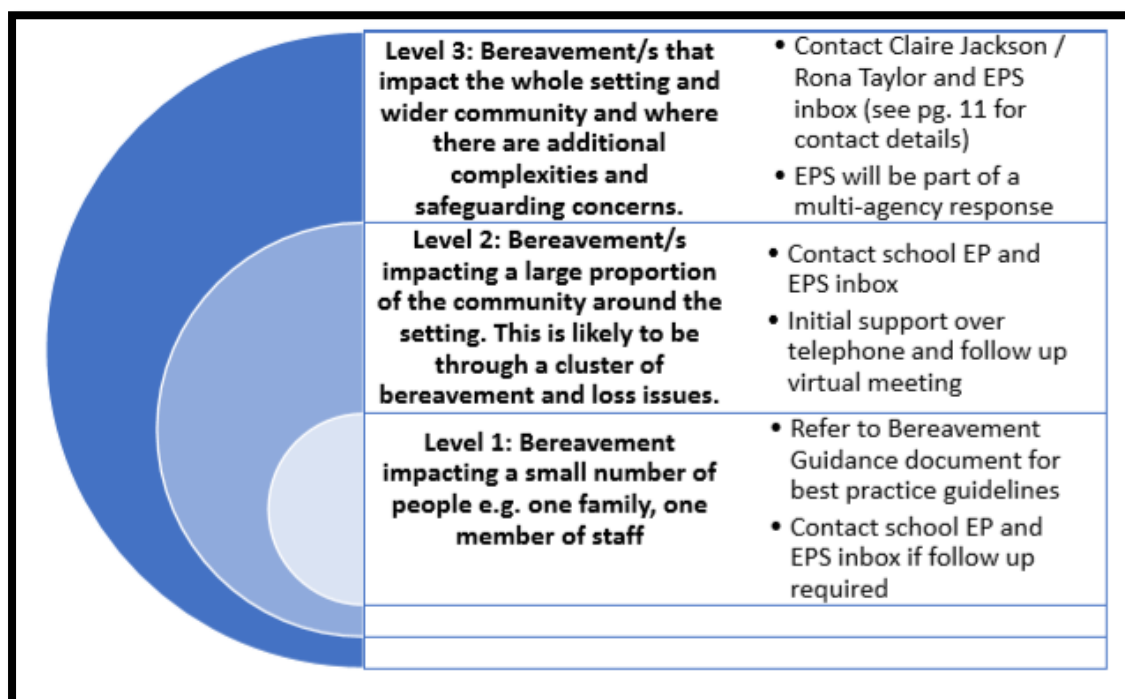
- When someone dies, use the words dead or died, not euphemisms like "passed away".
- Be guided by the family in terms of information they are happy to share and ensure these wishes are updated as things go along.
- Think about how the family can support children to share memories, perhaps through the creation of a memory box (see Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/help-bereaved-children-maintain-memories>; staff at Clarendon Road Primary can support the family to do this.

Things to consider following a bereavement during Covid-19

- Bereavements linked to Covid-19 are likely to be less expected and the family will have had little time to prepare.
- Family members of the person who has died may have particularly strong emotions around feelings of guilt as well as feelings of loss.
- They may have been socially isolated from the person who has died, and not had recent or usual levels of contact.
- The person may have died in hospital and the family may not have been able to say goodbye.
- There may have been restrictions on the funeral and so the bereaved may have had this healing ritual denied to them.
- There may also be other members of the family who have become ill and there may be fears about their health.
- The people and routines that usually support people following a bereavement e.g. friends and the routine of school or other educational setting may not be accessible whilst social distancing measures are in place.
- The bereaved may feel anger and blame, e.g. towards others who may not have self-isolated quickly.
- It may be difficult to avoid reminders such as the news.
- If there are many deaths linked to Covid-19, the bereaved may struggle with the lack of specialness that their loved one receives.
- It will be important to consider many of the points above in relation to any bereavement at this time.
- It is also important to be aware that staff themselves may have bereavement and loss of their own to process. This means that a team approach will be required. The guidance in this document should also be considered and applied when responding to staff bereavements.
- The key focus with families is to listen to their worries, exploring the impact on the various members of their family. Relatively small-sounding issues may be overwhelming. They might be wondering; Should they be doing anything differently now to protect other members of the family? Are any family members feeling in any way responsible? Are they dwelling on what they might have done differently, for example to protect the person who has died from infection?

Responding to bereavements during Covid-19

Clarendon Road Primary School's response to Covid-19 related bereavement can be viewed as being at one of three levels, depending on the impact on the school community:



It is envisaged that in most cases, school will have the skills and experience to respond to bereavements at level 1 themselves. Best practice guidelines at level 1 are provided below. For further information about best practice at levels 2 and 3 and how the EPS can support you at each level, see Appendix.

Best practice at level 1 is likely to include:

- Selecting a trusted adult who will be the main point of contact between Clarendon Road Primary and family; this would usually be the head teacher, member of SLT or someone that knows the family well. They may need to talk through their role with one of the nominated leads.
- The trusted adult should contact the family or staff member to acknowledge the death and pass on their condolences, initially by phone. They could ask how family members are and how they are coping. They could consider recommending contacting Winston's Wish (08088 020 021) or Child Bereavement UK helpline (0800 02 888 40) if they wanted to speak to somebody about their bereavement. Ask if there are other people Clarendon Road should share the news with.
- The trusted adult should support the family to talk to their child about loss and mourning processes.
- Support the family to make decisions about how best to support their child. Do this collaboratively, drawing on the family's knowledge of their child and the unique circumstances of their family situation and your knowledge of general principles of supporting bereaved children.

Check with the family that it would be okay to send a letter to the child. Due to guidance related to physical distancing, restrictions on movement and concerns that people might have about sending and receiving post at this time, a letter emailed as an attachment would be recommended. An example is provided on page 8 of this document.

The letter should be personal and should cover:

- o Acknowledging the death of the relative;
 - o Acknowledging how the child might be feeling;
 - o Telling the child that you (the key person) and other staff are thinking about them;
 - o Offering to check-in with them by phone.
- Check-in/s by phone. The trusted adult could ask how the family is doing since the bereavement and check if they have been able to access helpful information from any of the specialist websites. When speaking to the child, the trusted adult could ask for an update as to how the child is and listen to any thoughts and feelings they would like to share. The trusted adult could also ask about whether the child has had contact with their friends and if the setting could support with this. They could ask permission to share information with their friends.
 - Consider the impact of 'trolling' on social media. It may be helpful to check in with young people to see if they have received any negative comments.
 - Prepare other children and staff for the return of a grieving child or staff member. Ensure class teachers are aware of children impacted by a loss so they can welcome them back to school appropriately when the time comes. This might be overseen by one of the nominated leads.

Supporting leaders, nominated leads and key adults

- People who have been bereaved may need reassurance that their response is 'normal'. One of the helpful things that leaders, nominated leads and trusted adults can do is to listen to the bereaved speaking about painful issues. Those staff in direct contact with bereaved families or staff will need support around them to debrief and process their own feelings and may experience bereavement themselves. As a result, leaders and nominated leads will be holding and containing levels of anxiety from across different parts of their community and will need to think about where they get their own emotional support. You may wish to contact the EPS to support with this.
- If you would like support from the EPS to think together about developing your setting's response to bereavements due to Covid-19 please contact both your school EP and the EPS inbox (EPS@salford.gov.uk).

Responding at level 2 and 3 Level 2 is likely to be a cluster of bereavement and loss issues.

It's important that there is containment through structure and that the welfare of individuals who are likely to be triggered are monitored in enhanced ways following further triggering news. Level 3

would be when the whole school community is impacted by bereavement issues that may have led to challenges to cohesion that need a broader multi-agency response. Further details of best practice and how the EPS will support you can be found in the Appendix.

Resources Helpline telephone numbers:

Winston's Wish: (08088 020 021)

Child Bereavement UK: (0800 02 888 40)

Websites with information and guidance for schools and families to support bereaved children:

Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-youngpeople/>

Coronavirus: information and guidance for supporting bereaved children and young people.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

Information and scripts to use if someone the child knows has died from Covid-19.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Saying goodbye when children cannot attend the funeral.

Grief Encounter <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/professionals-schools/>

Support for bereaved children and their families. Includes downloadable documents at the bottom of the webpage on the following:

- o Children's concepts of death by age
- o Supporting a Grieving Child in the Classroom o Informing the School Community of a Death
- o Download grieftalk Posters
- o Preparing Students for the Return of Grieving Classmate

Child Bereavement UK

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bc9f3d7d7b43-421a-8ed4-4335f9c23b35>

Downloadable information sheet with tips for supporting bereaved children through difficult times.

Child Bereavement UK also have a drop-in facility for families and professionals in the Salford Royal Hospital on the fourth Thursday of each month. However, these have been suspended and online support is instead available.

<https://directory.childbereavementuk.org>

CRUSE materials

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. There's a section for schools

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools>

Gaddum

Gaddum provides a needs-led therapeutic service for Manchester and Salford children and families. The Gaddum Centre offers Children's Bereavement Counselling and works with individuals following a bereavement. Initially it has to be a young person who is referred. Once that referral has been accepted, they can also provide support to the adults who are caring for the child or young person.

<https://www.gaddumcentre.co.uk/>

- Online services are only being provided at present.

Example letter to send to a child

It is helpful to include the four points noted on page 4. Please note, it will be important that the letter is personalised based on your knowledge of the child, family and context.

Dear Bobby,

I am so sorry that your grandma has died.

I am wondering how you are feeling. It might be a strange and confusing time for you. All feelings are normal and OK. There is no right way to feel when someone has died.

I am thinking about you. Mr Fish, Miss Dean and Mrs Kazemi are thinking about you too. I will be thinking about your kindness, because I've noticed how caring and helpful you are to the younger children on the playground. I will also be thinking about your wonderful singing voice. At the moment, you might feel like singing sometimes, and sometimes you might not. I am looking forward to hearing you singing in assembly when we are all back together in school.

I plan to phone you and your family, to find out more about how you are doing. You can choose whether you would like to speak to me.

I hope to speak to you soon.

Best wishes,

Miss Carter

Clarendon Road Primary School