FOREST SKIES INFANT SCHOOLS

Grief and Loss Policy

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GRIEF AND LOSS POLICY

"Grief is the involuntary emotional and psychological reaction which follows any loss. Each loss will cause a grief reaction which is proportionate to the child's or adult's perception of that loss."

1. Introduction

We believe in adopting a holistic approach to the support and care of its pupils and staff. When grief or loss occurs through bereavement or any other traumatic event, it can affect a variety of people, not just the immediate family concerned. To this end we aim to ensure that the whole community, inside and outside the school, is given the appropriate support and advice required.

The management of a grief and loss situation will be an integral part of our ethos as a school. Support is delivered through collective worship, RE and our Personal and Social Education programme and may involve whole class circle time, a collective worship, or involvement of the Grief and Loss Counselling Services. The grief and loss reaction is a normal part of life, and if recognised and responded to in an appropriate way, can be an invaluable source of learning and development for the child. Each primary loss experienced will have secondary losses as a consequence. Initially these secondary losses may be the major cause of disturbance for the child, with grief directly attached to the primary loss following in time.

2. Implementation

a) Death of a Pupil, Member of Staff or Governor

i) Liaison with parents/family to offer support and condolences made. This is confirmed in writing by the Headteacher.

ii) The school needs to ensure it has the right facts, and to seek approval from the family on a suggested response for the school.

iii) The Headteacher should discuss funeral and/or memorial service arrangements with the family concerned, and decide on representation of the school at the service.

iv) All staff and governors, including our parish priest, should be informed.

v) If agreed by the family, a letter should be sent to all parents which includes known facts, funeral arrangements, school's response.

vi) A service of whole school collective worship will be dedicated to the deceased child or adult.

vii) This may include a celebration of the person's life

viii) A physical focus of remembrance in the form of a tribute in or outside the school building may be set up.

ix) The school will ensure that all pupils have access to appropriate support after the death of a pupil or an adult working in the school. This may involve a referral to the Lincoln Grief and Loss Counselling service or to the parish priest

x) The LA and other agencies are to be informed, and involved as appropriate

xi) If appropriate, a press statement will be prepared and a strategy for

dealing with the media agreed with the family

xii) The basic information will be recorded on a 'Bereavement Record' sheet (appendix 1).

b) Death of a Parent or other family member

i) Procedures will take place as in section a) as appropriate, with the main focus being the support for the child of a deceased parent (see appendix 6 for advice)

ii) It is important that before any action takes place, the wishes of the child and family are observed, especially in gaining approval of the appropriate response of the school

iii) The school will ensure that pupils directly involved have access to appropriate support after the death of a family member. This may involve a referral to the Lincoln Grief and Loss Counselling service or to the parish priest

iv) The basic information about the death should be recorded in pupil records

c) Separation/Divorce of Parents

i) The class teacher should ensure access to adequate support for the respective child

ii) The school should be aware of any legal rights of access for the parents.

iii) The school will ensure that the child(ren) involved have access to appropriate support. This may involve a referral to the Lincoln Grief and Loss Counselling service or to the parish priest

iii) Peer support may be arranged for the child e.g. special friend, buddy.

iv) Separation and divorce, although a common occurrence in our society, can result in a severe form of grief and loss for a child. The reaction may be more severe than it would be with a bereavement, (death is finite and conclusive for a child, divorce and separation are not) and the child may feel very guilty that he/she is to blame for a parent leaving the family home.

v) The basic information about the family situation should be recorded in pupil records

d) Further Incidents of Grief and Loss

There are many other life events which create grief or loss e.g. parent posted away for any length of time, death of pet, friend moving away, death of grandparent.

Once a grief and loss situation occurs, the following steps may be taken if appropriate:

i) The Headteacher and School Leadership Team are informed.

ii) Contact is made with the family

iii) Staff are informed and decisions taken concerning the best way to inform other pupils and provide appropriate support

iv) Pupils are informed in the agreed manner if appropriate

v) The school will ensure that the child(ren) have access to appropriate support after an incident of grief and loss. This may involve a referral to the Lincoln Grief and Loss Counselling service or to the parish priest with permission of the parents. See appendix 6 for further advice.

vi) The LA and other agencies are informed and involved as appropriate

vii) The basic information will be recorded on the pupil's records

3. Responsibilities

The management of grief and loss is a whole school issue but there are clear lines of accountability to ensure our aims are fulfilled. The following section summarises the main areas of responsibility:-

i) **The Governors**
To ensure the policy is implemented, and support the school in the event of a serious, unexpected situation, particularly one in which the LA or the media are involved

ii) **Headteacher/School Leadership Team**
To lead the school's response, monitor progress, deal with external agencies and co-ordinate any media enquiries

iii) **Class Teacher**
To be the main point of contact and support for the individual child

iv) **Named Co-ordinator**
To offer support as appropriate to the individual and others in the wider school community, and to keep a record of any bereavement in the school (appendix1). The current co-ordinator is the Headteacher

v) **Our Parish Priest**
To advise school staff and offer support as required to staff, parents or pupils

vi) **All Personnel**
To be aware of any grief and loss situation and offer sensitive support as appropriate to staff and children closest to the event.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed and amended if necessary on a regular basis. In the event of the DfES or the LA producing guidance on the management of a grief and loss situation, this policy will be amended to incorporate any further advice.

Appendix 1 - Bereavement Record

Name of person bereaved ……..

Class……..

Deceased……

Relationship to deceased……

Action taken……

……..

……..

Details of funeral……

……

School attending YES/NO

Names of staff attending……..

……

APPENDIX 2 – CYCLE OF GRIEF AND LOSS

0 – 2 WEEKS

- SHOCK
- NUMBNESS
- DENIAL

1 – 3 MONTHS

- YEARNING
- SEARCHING
- ANXIETY
- ANGER
- GUILT
- LONELINESS

8 – 9 MONTHS

- DEPRESSION
- APATHY
- LOSS OF IDENTITY
- MITIGATION
- STIGMA

1 – 2 YEARS

- ACCEPTANCE
- HEALING

APPENDIX 3: HOW DO CHILDREN RESPOND TO GRIEF & LOSS?

The grief and loss process is experienced by all life forms. However, in the case of humans, although the FEELINGS are similar, the COGNITIVE PROCESSES are dissimilar. In an ideal world, fully functioning adults are able to rationalise, reason and use their prior life experiences to inform (whether conscious or unconscious) their responses throughout the grief process. Conversely, children are not always able to draw on:

the ability to rationalise or reason

- past life experiences
- descriptive language to describe how they feel
- understanding of their feelings and why they have them
- effective communication skills
- honest, understandable information from adults

As a consequence of these inadequacies, children can present their unmanageable feelings of grief in diverse physical ways, eg:

Physical Presentation	Comment
Disruptive	Cannot manage emotions, unable to stay on task, needs attention
Angry	Confusion and lack of understanding of the feelings attached to the loss, powerlessness and no control over the situation
Aggressive	Displacement of anger caused by emotional pain and inability to accept the loss
Insecurity	The pattern of life has changed and adults in the family may be unable to cope themselves so cannot provide security within the unit
Withdrawn/isolated	To withdraw from life is an unconscious *defence,* which prevents us from feeling any more pain
Over emotional	Inability to contain feelings, constantly preoccupied with the loss
Lack of any emotion	Can represent denial, non-acceptance of loss, ego defence that if we BEHAVE normally then things WILL be normal.
Lack of concentration	Too much internal 'noise' to stay on task. The effort to 'solve' their problem leaves no reserves for work
Illness	Clinical studies have identified that a higher incidence of illness is experienced after a significant loss, particularly a death. Psychosomatic illness is not imaginary - it is a physical manifestation of emotional and psychological disturbance.
Non-attendance	May be due to genuine illness. Also, the child may feel they need to be at home to 'keep watch'.
Obsessionality	This is an unconscious adaptive coping strategy which is adopted in the struggle to avoid the pain of the loss
Unkempt appearance	In older children this can indicate depression, apathy, lack of self-worth

Appendix 4 - RAMSEY & DE GROOT'S

"NINE COMPONENTS OF GRIEF"

1. SHOCK: Usually the first response, most often described as a feeling of 'numbness'. However, feelings can include pain or calm, apathy, de-personalisation and de-realisation. It is as if the feelings are so strong that they are 'turned off' and this can last from a few seconds to several weeks.

2. DISORGANISATION: The bereaved person may be unable to do the simplest thing, or alternatively, may be able to organize the entire funeral…… and then collapses

3. DENIAL: Usually an early feature of grief, but this defense against feeling too much pain at once may recur at any time throughout the entire process.

4. DEPRESSION: Emerges as the denial breaks down and can also occur throughout the entire grieving process, but it tends to become less frequent and intense. Two forms of this are (i) desolate pining, active feelings of yearning and longing and emptiness, interspersed with waves of intense psychic pain, and (ii) despair, a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness, and the blackness of the realisation of powerlessness to bring back the dead.

5. GUILT: Can be both real and imagined, for actual neglect of the deceased whilst still alive, or for angry thoughts or feelings.

6. ANXIETY: May take the form of fear of losing control of one's feelings, of going mad, or more general apprehension about the future (changed roles, increased responsibility, financial worries, etc).

7. AGGRESSION: Can range from irritability towards family and friends to outburst of anger towards God and fate, the medical profession, the clergy or even the person who has died.

8. RESOLUTION: As the emotions die down, and acceptance of the death emerges, a taking leave of the dead and an acceptance that life must go on evolves.

9. RE-INTEGRATION: Acceptance is put into practice and the bereaved recognises their life in which the dead person has no place. However, pining and despair and other components may reappear on occasions, eg anniversaries, birthdays

APPENDIX 5: MODEL OF SUPPORT FOR GRIEF AND LOSS

William Warden provides an overall model for supporting any person experiencing the unmanageable symptoms of grief & loss, irrespective of their age (Ref: 'Grief Counselling *& Grief* Therapy'):

1. Actualise the loss:

- Use honest words to factually refer to the loss - dead, died, divorced, very ill, will not come back, etc
- Never use euphemisms when talking about death, e.g. gone to sleep, become a star
- Use the past tense when referring to death
- Be honest - if you don't know, say so, but you may be able to find out

2. Explore feelings & emotions:

Let the child tell their 'story' first

- How did that make you feel?
- Am I picking up that you feel angry (hurt, depressed, etc)?
- I can imagine how you are feeling
- Is there anyone else you can share this with?
- Does your mum / dad know how you feel?
- Have you looked at this another way, perhaps .....?
- I don't know the answer to that, but I may be able to find out

3. Readjust to the environment:

- How has the child's life changed due to the loss?
- *Are* they coping in practical terms - family routines, finance, transport, social?
- In the case of absence of a person - what role did that person play in the child's life - have these roles been taken over by someone else?
- What is worse in the child's life and what is better?

4. Reinvesting in life:

- Signs of acceptance and moving forward
- More stability within the family setting
- Is the child looking towards future plans?
- Do you see your friends often?
- What do you do with your time after school?
- You used to be very interested in ..... do you still do that?
- There is a school trip to .....coming up soon, are you looking forward to it?

APPENDIX 6 FURTHER ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Supporting Children in School

Support may include:

- maintaining familiar routines
- providing reassurance and consistency
- regular check-ins with a trusted adult
- opportunities to talk when the child chooses
- allowing time-out if needed
- memory activities if appropriate
- flexible expectations around work and concentration
- monitoring wellbeing over time.

Children should never be pressured to talk about their bereavement.

Counselling

Counselling is not usually the first response

Evidence indicates that most bereaved children do not require immediate counselling.

In the early stages following a bereavement, children generally benefit most from:

- loving and supportive relationships
- predictable routines
- opportunities to play
- being listened to by trusted adults
- honest, age-appropriate communication
- feeling safe and included.

Introducing formal counselling too soon is not advised. It is recommended that this doesn't take place until a year has passed after the loss or bereavement.

Instead, the school will:

- observe the child's adjustment over time
- provide pastoral support
- review needs regularly with parents/carers
- signpost families to bereavement organisations.

Referral for counselling or specialist therapeutic support will be considered where:

- grief reactions are severe or prolonged
- there are safeguarding concerns
- there is significant impact on education or daily functioning
- there are traumatic circumstances surrounding the death
- advice from external professionals recommends therapeutic intervention.

Bereavement Resources

The school will maintain a bereavement resource collection available to staff and families. These could include social stories and a collection of books and resources.

Recommended children's books include:

EYFS and Key Stage 1

- *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst
- *Badger's Parting Gifts* by Susan Varley
- *The Memory Tree* by Britta Teckentrup
- *The Goodbye Book* by Todd Parr
- *Water Bugs and Dragonflies* by Doris Stickney
- *Muddles puddles and sunshine by* Diana Crossley

Recommended Organisations

The school will signpost families to specialist bereavement organisations where appropriate, including:

- Winston's Wish – practical advice, bereavement information, activities and support for grieving children and young people.
- Child Bereavement UK – information, guidance and specialist support.
- Local authority educational psychology and mental health services where appropriate.