



Freegrounds Infant School **Bereavement Policy**

1. Rationale

Freegrounds Infant School is committed to offering equal opportunities for all, regardless of race, religion, gender, ability or disability. Freegrounds Infant School is a Rights Respecting school. Children and adults work together to recognise and act upon the rights of the child within our school, our local community and the wider world. We believe that by understanding their own rights children learn to respect and value the rights of others. This policy exemplifies these rights and our practice aims to ensure that the following rights are adhered to:

Article 3 The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 28 Every child has the right to an education.

Article 29 Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

2. Introduction

It is almost inevitable that at some time all schools will have to deal with a death that affects the school community. Every year 20,000 children under the age of 16 years will be bereaved of a parent and many more will experience the death of someone else special in their life. In addition to these individual children, schools may also experience the death of a child at the school or a staff member.

As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children may see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and may look to trusted staff members for help.

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

3. Aims

- For everyone to have a clear understanding of what bereavement means and to be aware of the different stages of bereavement.
- To help children and adults cope with bereavement as well as possible.
- To appreciate that everyone will react differently to bereavement.
- To have in place a course of action agreed upon by staff and the governing body, which is understood by everyone who comes into contact with the children.

4. The role of the Headteacher

In the event of the death of a child, a member of staff, or a multiple loss within the school, the Head (or the most senior member of staff available) would take control of the situation and ensure that the following relevant points are remembered:

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head Teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others.

- Inform all members of staff, including teaching, non-teaching, dinner ladies, kitchen staff, and site manager.
- Arrange a set time, agreed by all staff, for teachers to inform their class what has happened. It is very important to agree on exactly what is to be said. As much Teaching Assistant support as possible will need to be distributed throughout the school. Time must be allowed for different reactions to be accommodated.
- Any children absent from school must be informed by a telephone call, on that day.
- Inform governors.
- Inform parents of children at the school usually following discussion with the immediate family and in line with their wishes.
- Lead a specially prepared assembly, after the children and staff have all been told.
- Arrange for extra pastoral care / counselling, if it is felt necessary.
- Deal with the media, if necessary. It is imperative that only the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors performs this role.
- In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for staff and pupils to attend the funeral will be decided and communicated.

5. Death of an immediate family member

In the event of the death of an immediate family member it is important to remember:

- That being realistic and honest is the best any teacher or adult can do for a child.
- To be aware of and respect the wishes and beliefs of the family at all times.
- To encourage children to express their feelings. Do not tell a child how to feel.
- To try not to single out a grieving child for special attention

6. Death of a member of staff

When such an event occurs it is usually extremely traumatic, especially for members of staff forced to deal with their own grief as well as comforting the children. Staff will be directed to relevant support agencies and other professional support if needed.

7. Multiple loss in the school

Where several children and/or staff die in one accident, staff, children, parents, governors, outside agencies and the press, all become entwined. Areas of responsibility need to be very clear. It is essential to gather together all of the facts and details of the accident, and then determine the likely impact on the whole school. In the case of multiple deaths, additional support and resources may well be required and support from County will be sought. Additional staff may also be needed. In such instances, effective communication channels are essential.

8. Preparing for a child to return to school

For the bereaved child returning to school will be difficult. Arrangements for returning should be made between the school and the family taking into consideration the needs of the bereaved child. A phased or gradual return or a full return may need to be considered. It is important for staff to be aware so they can appreciate and make allowances for uncharacteristic behaviour.

It is important to remember that anniversaries often spark a revival of feelings associated with the initial bereavement. The family and close friends will remember the deceased person's birthday, as they will the anniversary of the death. Siblings in school will be particularly vulnerable at these difficult times. Staff should be made aware of such dates in order that they may react with the necessary sensitivity and respect. School

should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

9. Support for those working with the bereaved child

For staff working with bereaved children and for those members of staff offering support the following points need to be considered:

- Anticipate possible reactions you may experience with grief and loss. Each one of us is likely to react differently depending on our age, personality, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- If you are ever unsure about how you should react to others' grief, honesty is always the best line of approach.
- Try to accept that you may experience emotional reactions yourself.
- Try to accept that giving such support can affect you in ways perhaps you had not considered and staff will be encouraged to seek and ask for professional support.

10. Links

www.simonsays.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org

www.cruse.org.uk/

Policy created by Julie Watkins December 2013

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Version control:	V2 February 2025 Change of date for when policy was reviewed and next review. Change of date in footer.
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