



BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS POLICY

Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen

Adopted by:

Date:

Date of Review:

Next Review:

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1) Introduction :

- 1.1 Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen School is committed to the health and emotional wellbeing of all staff and pupils. We aim to do so in every aspect of school life, and try and provide an ethos, environment and curriculum which supports members of our school community to deal with bereavement and absence of someone close. Bereavement and loss affects everyone at some point, and as a close school community we endeavour to provide the best support to everyone at such times.
- 1.2 This policy provides guidance on how to deal with difficult issues professionally, sensitively and compassionately in these sensitive circumstances. The policy outlines the basic principles and procedures that underpin our approach. Staff training provides an understanding of the complexities associated with bereavement and loss, and will enable the school to meet the needs of those who are bereaved.
- 1.3 It is acknowledged that everyone will experience bereavement and loss differently. The guidelines will therefore need to address and adapt to individual circumstances and the wishes of the individuals concerned.
- 1.4 This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, particularly as a result of sudden, or multiple deaths, or traumatic circumstances.
- 1.5 It is important that pupils are helped to understand bereavement in clear and unambiguous ways, and that they are given the space to address all of the emotions that may accompany bereavement in a safe and supportive environment. As a school, we recognise the importance of long-term support for those who are bereaved, and will endeavor to provide opportunities to remember loved ones where appropriate.
- 1.6 COVID 19 - Covid-19 has meant that the lives of many pupils have changed. The school has been closed for periods, many parents work from home, and families have had to spend time apart when they would like to be together. Media coverage about the virus and its impact has been relentless.
- 1.7 Many pupils will have questions and concerns about the virus, but those who have experienced the death or illness of a loved one or family member may have particular concerns.
- 1.8 Our school is in a position to help pupils to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as supporting those who are personally affected by death. This will, in particular, include supporting pupils, families and staff in times of loss and bereavement, and helping pupils to support their peers, reducing the sense of isolation that can be felt.
- 1.9 By providing a curriculum that recognises and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief, we can improve the ability of pupils and young people to cope with these experiences and deal with them positively.
- 1.10 The policy is for all members of the school community, including agencies that work with our school. All aspects of safeguarding are incorporated into the life of our school and are the responsibility of all staff.

Aims:

Our aim is to:

- Support all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment where everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances;
- Offer an understanding of the impact of loss and grief on pupils' physical and emotional health;
- Gain insight into pupils' / staff's responses to loss and grief and how our school responds to meet the needs of grieving pupils, parents and staff;

- Provide pastoral support for pupils, parents and staff.

2) Roles and Responsibilities:

2.1 Headteacher:

The Headteacher will have overall responsibility for support and contact in the event of death or traumatic loss. If the Head is absent then the Deputy Head for Inclusion and members of the SMT will take responsibility.

The responsibilities are to:

- Implement the policy and reflect on its effectiveness in practice
- Use the expertise within the school and share the responsibilities
- Coordinate the proposed steps to manage events that relate to the school
- Decide who will be responsible for communicating and dealing directly with the family
- Decide who shares the news with the school community and, if necessary, who will communicate with the media
- Establish and coordinate contact with external agencies
- Coordinate and effectively communicate within the school
- Access and co-ordinate training and support for staff

The responsible person will consider the following short-term support arrangements:

- Who should break the news about the death
- What exactly the pupils will be told
- How they will be informed (i.e., in groups or individually)
- When they will be told
- How the information will be communicated to parents and staff
- Consider what questions pupils, staff and parents could ask
- What contact will be made with the family
- Consider any appropriate remembrance activities

2.2 Teachers should:

- Be familiar with the policy
- Teach pupils about loss and bereavement
- Support pupils in the school who have experienced loss and bereavement
- Liaise with the Headteacher / the parents
- Seek support for themselves, if necessary

3) Curriculum

3.1 Pupils are taught about loss, what feelings they might experience and how they could cope with personal loss and react to the loss of others. Our teaching is based on an understanding of the principles stated above and a variety of methods are used to address the needs of our pupils, in an age-appropriate way and depending on their experience. It is possible to work with the ALN and Inclusion Service in Gwynedd and Anglesey to organise specific interventions and activities where necessary.

3.2 The teaching methods adopted in the classroom will include:

- A variety of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama
- Using supporting resources such as stories, photographs, music and keepsakes
- Giving clear, true and accurate information, without trying to soften the blow with ambiguous language that is not accurate
- Practicing the collaborative social skills that will be required to help to deal with the feelings of loss

- Giving relevant and appropriate advice and support
- Providing continuity and progression by visiting and revisiting issues as pupils develop and as their needs and understanding change
- Considering the attitudes and values of pupils

4) Procedures

4.1 CHECKLIST WHEN DEALING WITH THE DEATH OF A PUPILS, STAFF OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Number	Order of Actions	✓
1	Headteacher to receive factual information about the death.	
2	Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team to notify the Local Authority Head of Education.	
3	Headteacher to give guidance to the staff and share factual information.	
4	If the Police are involved in the death, the Headteacher will follow their guidance about releasing information.	
5	Headteacher / Head of Year to contact the family to offer their condolences and to consider the family's wishes about what information they would like the school to share.	
6	Share factual information with the pupils in year/class/registration groups AND/OR send a letter home to parents if necessary. It should be noted that it is likely that some pupils will have information as a result of social media.	
7	Set up a school support system e.g., quiet room, condolence book/candle lighting/cards and letters from staff and pupils. Ask the pupils for their ideas. See the useful websites above.	
8	Identify pupils and staff who need help. Liaise with other agencies for support as above. Implementation of the school's support system.	
9	Decide on the school's arrangements for the day of the funeral as appropriate (or funerals if there is more than one death) OR organise a service at the school.	
10	School staff to promote/lead discussion about the event during the days/weeks that follow. Target pupils who have been most affected by the incident.	
11	Consider holding a school-wide commemoration service and/or choose another form of commemoration e.g., planting a tree/installing a bench/prize cup or donation to a charity of the family's choice. It is very important to consider the wishes of the family.	
12	Headteacher to ensure continued support for all those involved/affected as necessary. This may be over a period of months/years. Be aware of significant dates.	

4.2) The funeral

Our school will:

- Ascertain the wishes of the family and/ or how they want the school to be involved
- Identify which staff and pupils might want to attend and the practical arrangements such as staff and transport
- Send flowers / cards, if appropriate
- Consider the cultural and religious implications, if appropriate
- Enable the individual / individuals who had the closest relationship with the pupil to attend the funeral, or a member of staff who has worked closely with the pupil in class

5) Support for bereaved pupils:

SUPPORT FOR BEREAVED PUPILS AT OUR SCHOOL:

Number	Order of Actions	√
1	Designate a member of staff who will support the pupil when he/she returns to school.	
2	Plan a support system with the pupil e.g., time out, quiet room, access to means of telephoning home.	
3	Organise support from external agencies, if necessary (for the pupil and the staff) as above.	
4	Appoint a member of staff to monitor the grieving pupil during his /her school career, noting significant dates such the anniversary of the death, Mother's/Father's Day. Remember to pass this information on to any subsequent school.	
5	Continue to contact the support agencies - even months/years after the death, if necessary.	

- 5.1 Not all pupils and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners; they often need familiar people who already care for them. Pupils will respond to bereavement / loss in many ways; no two cases are the same. Personality, family support and life experiences will all affect pupils' responses.
- 5.2 Adults often wish to shield pupils from pain and distress. Experience and research have shown, however, that the best way to support pupils is by acknowledging the incident in an appropriate way, rather than ignoring the situation.
- 5.3 It is important to be available and ready to see pupils, to listen to them, to show empathy and normalise their emotions, thereby enabling the development of healthy coping strategies.
- 5.4 It is normal for adults to be upset and it can be appropriate for children and young people to be aware of this because it can help them understand their own emotions. Staff who work directly with pupils can show that they are upset, in a moderate way. It is important to maintain a safe, predictable environment for the pupils under their care. Staff should remember that they are modeling a response to children and young people and helping them to develop coping strategies.
- 5.5 The positive impact that the concern and support of a caring, familiar adult can have on a student should not be underestimated.

6) Primary Impacts:

6.1 The first reactions to bereavement or loss can be:

- Disbelief
- Anger
- Panic
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Crying
- Speaking: repeating what they have experienced / heard
- Inability to process information well (and therefore they do not hear / accept what has happened or what has been said to them)
- Regression: we all regress when we hear bad news. We want to be cared for and be protected
- Sadness
- Withdrawal
- Aggression

7) Secondary Impact

7.1 Linked to the above Primary behaviour there are Secondary Impacts that teachers should be aware of:

- Change in behaviour
- Change in peer groups
- Loss of motivation
- Lack of achievement
- Poor hygiene
- Change in role within the family
- Impact on relationships

7.2 Staff are aware that grief may be delayed or may re-emerge years later. The feelings and needs of bereaved pupils can vary. Some pupils see the school as a haven of normality in contrast to the trauma at home. On the contrary, other pupils may see school as the place to express their feelings.

7.3 Staff should be alert to:

- Changes in behaviour
- Change in mood
- Low self-esteem
- Psychosomatic symptoms - headaches, stomach aches
- Insecurity, feeling unwanted, friendship difficulties
- Depression
- Isolation and withdrawal

8) Useful Responses by Staff:

8.1 There are a number of useful responses by staff to address issues of bereavement:

- Acknowledge the incident to pupils privately, letting them know that you are available to help and support them
- Be prepared to listen and give them time
- Be prepared to answer questions (it is not important for staff to be able to answer all questions but more important for them to listen to pupils' fears and concerns and take their enquiries seriously)
- Be authentic and professional
- Be non-judgmental
- Give them information including 'normalising' their reactions (i.e., their reactions are normal reactions)
- Encourage pupils to speak, share their feelings and seek help as appropriate

- Maintain order in the school (flexible, caring and inclusive)
- Be sensitive, caring and empathetic

9) **School Offer:**

Our school will offer:

- A normal routine, which can have a stabilising effect
- Provide a haven, away from intense emotional atmospheres
- A neutral space and people to share their feelings without worrying about upsetting someone they love
- Time for the pupils to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe place outside the home environment)
- Regular communication with the home, providing reassurance about behaviour and general well-being, ensuring that the pupil or young person copes with his/her grief
- Access to appropriate resources through the class / link teacher or link head
- Time for pupils to prepare and discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved pupil or young person returns to school
- Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be linked to the death
- A contact person to support the pupils when necessary
- A suitable place in the school for pupils who need some space if they are too upset to stay in the classroom and people they can go to for support.

9.1 **Support for Staff:**

Our school will:

- Support bereaved staff and recognise that they may be struggling with their own reactions and emotions when supporting pupils
- Plan for informal mutual support to enable staff to have the opportunity to share feelings and reactions
- Allow time for people to attend the funeral, if appropriate
- Offer general training to all staff
- Be aware of all the supporting information and resources that are available

9.2 **Support for Parents / Carers:**

Our school will:

- Communicate with the immediately family and offer support
- Send a condolence letter / card
- Share information with appropriate people depending on the wishes of the family
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any of the personal belongings of the person who has died
- Send a representative to the funeral if appropriate
- Arrange a collection / flowers to be sent as appropriate
- Invite parents / carers to any commemorative events held by the school

9.3 **Recognition:**

Our school will provide opportunities to commemorate the loss for parents / carers, staff and pupils:

- Hold a service of celebration / other memorial activity in accordance with the wishes of the family
- Offer support to individuals who wish to talk about their experiences
- Offer support to pupils who need to explore and learn to understand their emotions
- Give pupils opportunities to talk within a group about their experiences

9.4 Procedures in relation to the death of a member of staff:

Our school will:

- Provide information to Governors, Staff, Pupils and Parents;
- Give information to staff who are absent;
- The headteacher to issue a press release, if necessary;
- Organise staff / pupil condolences;
- SMT members to organise support for individuals / groups of staff;
- Liaise with Local Authority Services who can support pupils and staff.

Arrangements will be made in relation to the following:

- Expression of feelings;
- Personal property;
- Card / wreath;
- A death notice in a local newspaper;
- Services;
- Funeral;
- Commemoration.

9.5 Procedures in relation to the death of a Parent / Carer:

Our school will:

- Communicate information to staff, pupils
- Make arrangements for expressions of sympathy
- Personal visit
- Condolence card
- Attend the funeral

9.6 Procedures to support the pupil to return to the school:

What are the bereavement needs of the pupil?

- Friendship
- Support
- Understanding
- Speaking and listening
- Assurances
- Boosting self-esteem
- Alleviate isolation
- Routine
- Suitable space
- Time to express feelings, if they wish to do so

9.7 Long Term Illness:

Our school will:

- Designate one person to contact the family and ascertain their wishes for staff to visit them
- Ensure that they get the latest information about any developments without causing the family distress
- Inform staff of the family's wishes
- Support the school community by providing accurate information and support

10) Procedures for supporting pupils when parents / carers separate / divorce:

It takes a long time for pupils to adapt to the separation / divorce of their parents and this can be a difficult time, but the more opportunities children have to express and understand their feelings, the easier this transition will be. Some pupils may not wish to discuss this however, and this must also be respected.

- Be sensitive towards the pupil and parents
- Acknowledge the pupil's loss privately and assure him/her of your support and availability
- Inform relevant staff in a confidential manner
- Ensure arrangements are made to ensure that both parents/guardians get the latest information about their child's progress, if possible
- Address issues of loss through PSE activities and pastoral intervention.

11) Confidentiality:

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the process of dealing with any incident or disclosure, pupils will need to be aware that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in certain circumstances. This will help to maintain the trust of pupils and parents/carers and will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information should only be disclosed internally or externally after giving careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals. When the pupil returns to school it is important to discuss with them if they want certain people they come into contact with to be notified, such as leaders of after school clubs.

12) Inclusion and Equality:

Our school recognises that there are a range of cultural and religious customs and procedures relating to death and that there may be different expectations on pupils and the bereaved family. We will try to provide a range of different approaches in relation to death and loss. Pupils and staff should be made aware that there are a range of different reactions to bereavement and that we appreciate and respect all of these.

13) Responding to requests from the media:

Some incidents and deaths, especially those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, can attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to journalists and to direct all enquiries to the headteacher, who will respond carefully after seeking assistance from the Education Authority's Communications Office. Advice will also be given to pupils.

14) Staff Support and Training:

It is important that all staff feel confident in providing support to pupils and mutual support to each other. Bereavement awareness training will be provided to all staff. We will ensure that staff members update their skills and knowledge as necessary.

15) Monitoring and Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually, to take into account any developments or changes in the Statutory Guidelines and after an event. Any changes made will be shared with the staff and the Governing Body.

16) Links to Policies Others:

Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Attendance Policy, Health and Safety Policy.

17) Information and Support

Contacts / Agencies :

Contact :	Number phone :	Email : _
Chief Education Officer	01286 679467	garemjackson@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
Education Welfare Chief Officer	01286 679007	meinirbolton@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
Education Psychology Service	01286 679007	ionarees@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
Local Authority Counselling for Staff	01286 679007	dorawendijones@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
Gwynedd Council Press office	01286 679 310	siongwynfrynwilliams@gwynedd.gov.uk

Useful websites:

- County Library – library@gwynedd.gov.uk (various books about death for different ages)
- www.Winstonswish.org.uk material to support teachers and schools with practical advice.
- www.childbereavement.org.uk
- www.cruse.org.uk/wales
- [Seasons for growth](#)