

# RAVENSCOTE JUNIOR SCHOOL



## BEREAVEMENT POLICY 2022 - 2024

Date of Approval		Date of Review	
23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2022		20 <sup>th</sup> September 2024	
<b>Signed</b>	Amy Wells <b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Signed</b>	Emily Gibson <b>Chair of Governors</b>

## Ravenscote Junior School

### Bereavement Policy

#### 1. Aims and Ethos

##### Safeguarding Statement

At Ravenscote Junior School we recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all staff and pupils. We make every effort to provide an environment in which children and adults feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident to talk if they are worried, believing they will be effectively listened to.

##### Well-being Statement

At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health and well-being for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

#### 2. Rationale

Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils and staff who are struggling with bereavement; or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

Pupils and staff need to be supported when they experience bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school. This policy will provide **guidelines** to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

#### 3. Objectives

We aim:

- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- To identify key staff within school and the Local Governing Body/EEEA /Academy Trust to support this policy.
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

- To discern what support will be offered to staff/pupils if they have been bereaved.
- To ensure that all staff members are trained and able to recognise common symptoms and behaviours associated with grief.

#### 4. Supporting a bereaved pupil

Most grieving children do not need a 'bereavement expert' they just need people who care. Schools, just by carrying on with their usual day-to-day activities while being aware of bereavement, can do a huge amount to support a grieving pupil (childbereavementuk.org, 2020).

When the school are notified of a child having suffered a bereavement, communication with the family is vital (please see Appendix 1 for a sequence of response to bereavement for schools). The Headteacher or a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team will make contact with the parent/s/carers to access accurate information, understand what the pupil has been told and to reassure those caring for the child. A discussion around what support may be needed for the child in school will also take place. This can be in the form of a safe place for the child to have in school or one to one sessions with trained staff. Appendix 2 provides a checklist of points to consider in order to plan actions for a pupil following a bereavement.

Pupils who are bereaved through suicide, violent death or may have witnessed a death, will be particularly vulnerable. These pupils may experience PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and are likely to need skilled help and support which the school is able to access, but the informal support of familiar adults is still important. These children will be identified by the Headteacher and Lead DSL. Once identified a referral to supporting agencies will be made to offer counselling to these pupils.

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.

#### 5. The death of a pupil or member of staff

##### 5.1 Breaking the news to staff, pupils and families

- News of the death of a pupil or member of staff must be passed to the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team who will immediately try to obtain factual information, avoiding unnecessary rumour or assumption, which could only lead to further distress.
- Where possible the Headteacher will liaise directly with the family and agree exactly what information should be passed on to staff and pupils. All staff will be informed as soon as possible, ideally before the pupils, remembering staff that may not be in school that day.
- The staff team needs to be united and space should be given to anyone who is badly affected by the news.

- Discussions must take place with the affected family and their wishes taken into account before any information is given to the pupils.
- Pupils should however, be told as soon as possible to avoid rumour and uncertainty. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know, probably their class teacher, again remembering the pupils who may not be in that day. A large assembly is not usually ideal, particularly for young children. Opportunity should be given for pupils to ask questions and respond to the news.
- Guidance and support will be offered from the Inclusion team.
- If the family agree, a letter to be sent home to all parents on the same day may be appropriate. Suggested letters are set out in Appendices 3 and 4.
- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.

## **5.2 The first few days**

- As far as is possible, it is best to have as little disruption as we can in the school community.
- The school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
- If it is a teacher who has died, the class should be covered by another teacher from the school whom the children know well and feel comfortable talking to.

## **5.3 Beyond the first few days**

- Following the death of a member of the school community a special assembly or remembrance service may be held as a way of saying 'Goodbye' and as a celebration of their life. This may take many forms, but will always be in accordance with the wishes of the bereaved family.
- If it is appropriate, discussions will take place with the family regarding attendance at the funeral, flowers and donations, being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

## **6. The death of a pupil in school or on a school trip.**

### **6.1 If a pupil dies in school:**

- An ambulance shall be called immediately if not already alerted.
- Once the ambulance team reaches the pupil the pupil becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions
- The Headteacher will ensure that the parents are contacted immediately.

- Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone.
- A member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the pupil's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Headteacher.
- The steps outlined above in this policy should then be employed.
- The school will notify the Local Authority (LA) if there is a death in school, at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be directed through the Headteacher.

## **6.2 If a pupil dies on a school trip**

- The adult with the pupil or the teacher in charge should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher.
- RJS Emergency Plan "Operation Duke" procedures will apply/be followed.
- The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents.
- Once the ambulance team reaches the pupil, the pupil becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.
- The steps outlined above in this policy should then be employed.
- The school will notify the LA, at the earliest opportunity.

## **7. An Expected bereavement / terminal illness**

The death of a terminally ill pupil or member of staff should be planned for with full support being given before the actual event. Open discussion and realistic language should be encouraged. Once the pupil or member of staff dies then it is important that all emotional support is given and the need to mourn is recognised.

## **8. The impact of the death of a pet**

The school should also be aware of the emotional impact the death of a family pet might have on a pupil or a member of staff. Emotional support should be offered and pupils and staff should be encouraged to be honest with their emotions and talk about their memories of their pets. Whilst much of this Policy deals with the death of people we should not underestimate how important the death of a pet can be to pupils and staff.

## **9. Covid-19 pandemic specific considerations**

People are more likely to have experienced bereavement through the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Being bereaved can be an extremely lonely time and talking with those we rely on

and trust most is one of the most helpful ways to cope. Grief is further impacted by the current national health context and self-isolation/social distancing; this could make the feelings more intense. Please see Appendix 1 for a sequence of response to bereavement for school settings. Signposting is vital throughout this time that children are not in consistent contact with the school. Please see the resources section for guidance. The school should however maintain regular contact with the family and offer support as needed and possible during isolation and social distancing.

## 10. Resources

The following resources are available:

### 10.1 National resources – for children

- Anna Freud Centre Youth Wellbeing Directory Website: [annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-wellbeing/](http://annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-wellbeing/) A list of local services for young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Child Bereavement UK: 0800 02 888 40. Website [childbereavementuk.org](http://childbereavementuk.org). E-mail [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org). 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays). Information and helpline providing confidential support and guidance to children, adults and professionals affected by bereavement.
- Childhood Bereavement Network. Website: [childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/covid19.aspx](http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/covid19.aspx) Childhood Bereavement Network supports professionals working with bereaved children and young people with information updates, key resources and networking opportunities.
- Cruse Bereavement Care. Telephone: 0808 808 1677. Website: [cruse.org.uk](http://cruse.org.uk) A free helpline supporting anyone who has been bereaved by death, open Monday to Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), and 8pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. This service is confidential, offering a 1-1 service to clients in their own homes and promotes the wellbeing of bereaved people.
- Grief Encounter. Telephone: 0808 802 0111 Website: [griefencounter.org.uk](http://griefencounter.org.uk). Email: [griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk). Support for children and families who have been bereaved via phone, online chat and email. You can also take part in group activities with likeminded families at their fun days, grief groups and remembrance days. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am-9pm.
- Hope Again Telephone: 0808 808 1677. Website: [hopeagain.org.uk](http://hopeagain.org.uk). This youth bereavement service, run by Cruse, is free and confidential. It is available Monday to Friday, 9:30am - 5pm and is just for children and young people who have been affected by death. Support includes a helpline, website and peer support.
- Kooth. Website: [kooth.com](http://kooth.com) Free, safe and anonymous online counselling support for young people aged between 10 and 25. Available Monday to Friday 12pm-10pm and Saturday to Sunday 6pm-10pm.

- National Support Childline. Telephone: 0800 1111. Website: [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk). A free and confidential, 24-hour helpline for children and young people in distress or danger. Trained volunteer counsellors' comfort, advise and protect children and young people who may feel they have nowhere else to turn.
- Samaritans. Telephone: 116 123. Website: [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org). Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) Post: Chris, Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, STIRLING FK8 2SA A registered charity aimed at providing support to anyone in emotional distress, who is struggling to cope or at risk of suicide. They operate across the United Kingdom and Ireland and are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year by telephone, email or post.
- Winston's Wish Telephone: 08088 020 02. Website: [winstonswish.org](http://winstonswish.org). A national helpline for anyone caring for a child coping with the serious illness or death of a family member. They are a leading childhood bereavement charity and the largest provider of services to bereaved children, young people and their families in the UK.
- Young Minds Crisis. Messenger Text: Text YM to 85258 24-hour text support for young people experiencing a mental health crisis; texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

## 10.2 Local resources

- Jigsaw. Telephone: 01342 313895. Website [www.jigsawsoutheast.or.uk](http://www.jigsawsoutheast.or.uk). A service that supports children through the loss of a loved one.
- Seeds of Hope Children's Garden. Telephone: 01483 547880. Website [www.seedsofhopechildrensgarden.co.uk](http://www.seedsofhopechildrensgarden.co.uk). E-mail: [seedsofhopechildrensgarden@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:seedsofhopechildrensgarden@yahoo.co.uk). The Seeds of Hope Children's Garden is a vibrant living space designed to help children and young people explore feelings of loss with the support of their families, teachers, and carers.

## 10.3 Books

- *Always and forever* by Alan Durant. A book explaining the feelings following a death to a child and that the person is still there in their hearts and memories.
- *Lifetimes* by Bryan Mellonie. A sensitive book in explaining to children that death is a part of life.
- *Love will never die* by Clare Shaw. A rhyming book that addresses the mixed feelings a bereaved child might go through. It offers support and understanding alongside interactive areas where a child can express themselves through writing and drawing.
- *Remembering* by Dianne Leutner. Part book, part scrapbook, created to help keep a child's memories alive after the loss of someone special and to give children a place to return whenever they wish.
- *Someone I know has died* by Trish Williams. Innovative activity book with interactive features written for bereaved children to do by themselves or with an adult.

- *When dinosaurs die - A guide to understanding death* By Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown. To help primary aged children understand what death means, and how best to cope with their feelings.
- *What does dead mean?* By Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas. A book for young children to help explain death and dying, based on the many questions children ask. It offers practical help for children, as well as guidance for parents and carers when a child is bereaved.