



SEPARATION, LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT POLICY

At Four Oaks Primary School, we believe in adopting a holistic approach to the support and care of our pupils. When something significant happens in a family, the entire family is affected. Even though death, divorce, criminality or other loss or issues appear to be grown-up problems, they have an enormous effect on the children who are touched by such experiences. If a parent dies, a divorce happens or a painful loss occurs, not only do the parents grieve but the children grieve too.

Death is a normal and inevitable part of human existence. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people and not just the family concerned. We recognise that work needs to be carried out to ensure that parents, carers and children are given access to appropriate information and support when needed. There is no single suitable approach for provision and services will always need to be organised in the light of needs, priorities and resources.

The Education Act 1996, emphasises the importance of promoting the personal, social, moral and spiritual development of children and young people as part of their education. It also stresses the need for schools to address bereavement as well as other losses such as divorce and separation. We recognise that we need to be proactive in preparing children for loss and grief and be reactive in supporting them too.

THE AIM

The main aim of this policy is to ensure that all pupils and all members of staff faced with bereavement or any type of loss, are provided with support. This policy will refer to all circumstances as 'loss'.

This policy is intended to reflect our positive ethos and contribute to the caring community we wish to nurture. It is hoped it will contribute considerably to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of our school community. This support includes the opportunity for them to:

- Express their feelings in a safe environment.
- Be given space and time to come to terms with their loss.
- Have access to specialist advice if necessary.

It is recognised that the situation for the child and/or family will be monitored over time. It is our hope that anyone faced with 'loss' will regard our community as a safe space where children can grow and face the challenges. This in turn will contribute to our learning community.

PROCEDURES

Once a situation occurs concerning a 'loss', the following steps will be taken:

- Contact will be made with the family to offer support.
- Relevant staff will be informed and decisions taken in order for internal support mechanisms to be organised and employed. This may include no immediate action.
- The mechanisms for reviewing the situation shall be agreed with the appropriate staff.

As each situation is unique, it is important to be open to using a variety of approaches and to recognise that no single response will fit all circumstances. The following points have been recognised as useful guiding principles by Barnardos:

- See the child as an individual and recognise that imprisonment may have an impact on the child in different ways.
- Understand that the child is entitled to privacy and it is important not to put the child in a situation where they have to tell their friends about their parent/relative if they do not want to.
- Be sensitive to the child's needs, views and choices.

Addressing the needs of children affected by the imprisonment of a parent or family member involves action at different levels and we will liaise with staff and parents/carers in order to fulfil this.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The management of 'loss' is a whole school issue to ensure our aims are fulfilled.

The Governors will ensure the policy is implemented.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will:

- Identify appropriate support within the school community for the individual concerned.
- Gather appropriate information of children suffering a death, separation or criminality.
- Consult with outside agencies e.g. Oakleaf Bereavement Service and Bobby Colleran Trust, to provide appropriate support for children to express their feelings and build self-esteem.

TRAINING

Staff will have the opportunity to undertake relevant training in the management of bereavement and other 'loss'. This will involve general awareness-raising for all staff and more specialised training for those with a specific responsibility.

REVIEW

This policy is reviewed every three years.

Spring term 2023 to Spring term 2026