****

**Gwladys Street Community Primary & Nursery School**

**Safeguarding Bereavement Policy**

Gwladys Street CP & Nursery School

Completed by: C Baker O’Neill

Date Issued: 4th March 2021

Approved by Governors:

Review Date: 5th March 2022

**Introduction**

The main aim of this policy is to provide a framework for all Gwladys Street CP & Nursery School staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance on how to deal sensitively and compassionately in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

We aim to meet the needs of all children and staff within our community. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is ‘different’, our school aims to be a place that both the child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together; with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

Within school we work in partnership with parents/carers. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. We promote an open-door policy and encourage parents/carers to talk to us regularly and keep us informed of any important situations or incidents in our pupils’ lives. Parents/Carers are encouraged to make Staff aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving home, etc.) If there has been a bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs, etc.) will be sought. This will help support Staff to ensure nothing is discussed which may confuse or upset the child or family. All conversations will be recorded on CPOMs and the appropriate staff members included. Children dealing with bereavement will be discussed by the Inclusion Team to identify the support that will be put in place – this will be done in line with the family’s wishes and the class teacher will be involved.

***Family bereavement for a pupil:***

The family should be contacted for appropriate support. The family should be asked what the child already knows and how they have been involved. It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family. The importance of working together will be explained, assessing any changes in behaviour (i.e. eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn).

Involve school support or outside agencies as appropriate e.g. Inclusion Team, School Nurse.

***Death of a child or member of staff:***

Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school. Counselling should be made available, if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this). The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial service should it be appropriate and they wish to do so. Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period. Anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support. Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased’s family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers. After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.

***Terminally Ill Pupils/Staff****:*

In the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/carers/next-of-kin should always be respected. Should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child’s condition if agreement has been sought and is appropriate. Occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their circumstances themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach. Risk assessments will be in place and agreed.

***Return to School****:*

For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic. Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teachers, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/carers of the bereaved pupil agree). Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief. Teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate and supportive. Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a caring, nurturing safe environment. Staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can result in a revival of feelings of bereavement. Staff may monitor those particularly affected by the death of a close associate and the inclusion team will identify the appropriate support to put in place when needed.

Talking to the Bereaved Pupil: Inclusion Team will be available to listen and support if required, arrange a one-to-one session with SLT or DSL as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school. Staff must remain calm and show the child that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions. School will provide a safe private space if a child is upset.

At Gwladys Street CP & Nursery School, we have a dedicated Inclusion Team that provide a wide range of support for any child who needs it. Parents/Carers can also request support by speaking to their child’s class teacher or calling the school office and asking to speak to a member of the Inclusion team or DSL.

Parents and Carers often see the role of School Staff as those who can offer support and answer questions. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement. It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children’s developmental and emotional needs.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to Parents and Carers. A death will disrupt the family for many months. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child, it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school. Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to acknowledge the child’s pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviours such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness. The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, becoming clingy, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused. The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the person who has died. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and Carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled. Parents and Carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial. Staff should remember that Parents and Carers will often use them as role models, Counsellors or extended family; looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children. Staff may require their own support structures also and request support from Inclusion Team and/or SLT.

Gwladys Street Primary & Nursery School is an openly inclusive school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment, where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities.

At Gwladys Street we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We have strength in supporting our children socially, emotionally and holistically.

Gwladys Primary & Nursery School believe in adopting a holistic approach to the support and care of their pupils. Death is not seen as an illness – it is normal and an inevitable part of human existence. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people, not just the family concerned. It is inevitable that at some point Gwladys Street will have to deal with the death of a member of its community.

To this end, we recognise that work needs to be carried out to ensure that families, children and young people are given:

* The opportunities to develop skills to cope with loss and grief.
* Have access to appropriate information and support when needed.

**Aims**

The Safeguarding Bereavement 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 emotional health and well-being of our school community.

The support includes the opportunity for them:

* To express their feelings in a safe environment.
* To be given space and time to come to terms with their loss.
* Access to specialist advice if necessary.

It is recognised that the situation for the child, young person and/or family will be monitored over time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our community as a place where children and young people can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead. This, in turn, will contribute to our learning community.

**Objectives**

The core intentions of the policy are:

* To support children and/or staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.
* To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
* To identify key staff within school and LEA and clarify the pathway of support.

The Children’s Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain children’s emotional well-being.

**The role of the Governing Body**

* To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed.

**Responsibilities**

* The management of bereavement is a whole school issue, but there needs to be clear lines of accountability to ensure our aims are fulfilled.

**The role of the Head Teacher/Senior Leadership Team**

* To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
* To respond to media enquiries.
* To be the first point of contact for family/child concerned.
* To keep the governing body informed.
* To identify appropriate support within the school community for the individual concerned.
* To offer support as appropriate to pupils in the wider school community.

**The role of the LEA**

* To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

**The Schools Religious Contact Member/School Improvement Liverpool**

To advise the Senior Leadership Team and to offer support as required.

**The role of Inclusion Team**

* To have bereavement support training to support children and staff.
* To support children who have experienced loss and bereavement within their family surrounding.
* To support children who have experienced loss and bereavement within the school community.

**Procedures**

* Contact with the deceased’s family should be established by the Head Teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
* Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared to share information in age appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
* Children who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
* A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom and how it should be distributed.
* The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and well-being of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
* Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
* In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
* If appropriate, a press statement will be prepared by Head Teacher and a strategy for dealing with the media agreed with the family.
* School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life, so information should be recorded and shared with the relevant people, particularly at transition points.
* The management of a bereavement situation will be a central role for the members of the Senior Leadership and Inclusion Team.
* Use will be made of the Liverpool ‘Whole School Approach to supporting loss, separation and bereavement policy’.
* The Local Authority and other agencies will be informed and involved as appropriate.
* The basic information will be recorded.
* The mechanism for reviewing the situation should be agreed with the appropriate staff.

Support will be provided for Staff and children:

* Staff will be informed and decisions taken concerning the best way to inform pupils and for internal mechanisms for support to be organised and employed.

Pupils will be informed in the agreed manner.

* Children will be given the opportunity to express their feelings in a safe environment.
* Children will be given space and time to come to terms with their loss.
* Access to specialist advice if necessary.
* It is recognised that the situation for the child, young person and/or family will be monitored over time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our community as a place where children and young people can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead. This, in turn, will contribute to our learning community.

**Places of Support for Reference:**

* [www.winstonswish.org](https://www.winstonswish.org/)
* <https://www.lovejasmine.org.uk>
* <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/your-guide-to-support/guide-to-camhs>
* [www.aldercentre.org.uk](http://www.aldercentre.org.uk)
* [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Senior Leadership Team.

**Suggested templates for letter to Parents/Carers.**

Before sending a letter home to parents regarding the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child’s parents/carers.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parent/carer and school.

**Sample letter on death of a pupil, which can be amended to suit the individual circumstances:**

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name if agreed>, a pupil in <Year>.

As you may be aware, many children who have <Diagnosis> get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that as a school we are willing to try to answer their questions, but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial event in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name’s> life.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

**Sample letter to bereaved Parents/Carers:**

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of <Name> death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his/her friends and class. He/She was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan <Name> funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of <Name> that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on our school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Head Teacher

**Sample letter on death of a staff member:**

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am sorry to have to inform you that a much loved member of our staff <Name> has died.

The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents/carers who are saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways and may dip in and out of sadness, ask questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at:

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the day of the funeral as staff will, of course wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher