



EMERSON VALLEY SCHOOL

BEREAVEMENT POLICY



VERSION

Date	Author(s)	Notes on Revision/s	Approved by
May 2017	Hayley Davis / Jacqui Avola	Policy written following advice from <i>Harry's Rainbow</i>	
September 2020	I. Mortimer	Policy updated to reflect change in staffing	
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1 INTRODUCTION

At Emerson Valley School we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times and that when the loss is of a member of our school community – such as a child or staff member, it can be particularly difficult. Children need to be supported in the best way we can when they experience family bereavement and other significant losses in their lives during their time at school.

At Emerson Valley School our main aim is to be as supportive as we can to both children and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and to be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. Every circumstance in which this occurs is different and this policy has been put together to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

Emerson Valley School is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and children, to which we are dedicated to the continual development of a 'healthy school'. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an environment that supports and prepares pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one.

We believe that children and adults have the right to:

- be given space and time to grieve
- be given support as appropriate and tailored to the needs of the child

We recognise that:

- grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker
- different religions and cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and that all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value within the school environment

2 THE MANAGEMENT OF BEREAVEMENT IN SCHOOL

Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any such family that may need practical, emotional and ongoing support.

2.1 Supporting children dealing with the death of a parent or sibling

As a school, we will tailor our support to the needs of any child who has experienced a bereavement. However, this policy specifically relates to the loss of a parent or carer or the loss of a sibling.

If a member of staff becomes aware of the death of a child's parent / carer or sibling it is their responsibility to pass this information onto the appropriate Learning Mentor, Mrs Durrant if the child is in years 3 and 4, or Mrs Pitcher if the child is in years 5 or 6. The Learning Mentor is then responsible for making a phone call home to the parent / carer of the child. It is at the discretion of the Learning Mentor how soon after the death that this phone call happens. The purpose of the phone call is to pass on the school's condolences and to have a conversation about the support that can be offered to the family and child.



The Learning Mentor may seek advice and support from *Harry's Rainbow*, a charity aimed at helping children and their families dealing with bereavement, in order that our support for the child and family is tailored to their specific needs. Resources may also be provided by *Harry's Rainbow* to enable the Learning Mentor to work with the child in school.

Support in school may take on different forms depending on the needs of the child and the wishes of their parent / carer. This could include check-ins with the Learning Mentor, 1:1 sessions or small group working depending on the circumstances. We recognise that all families deal with bereavement in different ways, therefore 1:1 work aimed at specifically talking about and trying to address the family bereavement will only take place with the permission of the child's parent or carer.

It is important that we agree, with the parent / carer, before sharing information about the bereaved child with other members of staff or pupils. This list is not definitive, but the following groups of people should be considered:

- Current school staff
- Any external professionals involved with the child / family, including Children's Social Care, the SEN or School Nursing Team
- Other children
- Other parents, particularly if the children have been informed

2.2 The Death of a child that attends Emerson Valley School

The Learning Mentors, Mrs Pitcher and Mrs Durrant, in conjunction with Head of school Corrina Warren, have responsibility for support and liaison in the event of the death of a child that is on roll. The Learning Mentors will liaise with the parent(s) / carer(s) of the child in order that the family are supported. Parent(s) / carer(s) will be told that they are welcome into the school as this can be an important part of the grieving process. It will then be down to the family to decide if they wish to maintain ongoing links with the school.

Each and every situation will be different but the following will need to be considered:

- How children on roll are going to be supported through this bereavement
- If / how other parents are to be notified
- How other staff are going to be supported through this bereavement
- Whether the Chair of the Governing Board will seek permission from the Local Authority to close the school for the day of the funeral to allow all staff to attend

It may be appropriate to hold a memorial assembly for the child in school. Staff will aim to show children that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that remembering them can be an effective way of dealing with this loss.

2.3 The Death of a Member of Emerson Valley Staff

The Learning Mentors, Mrs Pitcher and Mrs Durrant, in conjunction with Head of School, Corrina Warren, have responsibility for support and liaison in the event of the death of a member of school staff. They will liaise with the Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Board to tailor the support based on the needs of the school. Each and every situation will be different but the following will need to be considered:

- How children are going to be supported through this bereavement
- How parents are to be notified
- How other staff are going to be supported through this bereavement
- Whether the Chair of the Governing Board will seek permission from the Local Authority to close the school for the day of the funeral to allow all staff to attend



2.4 Responding to Media

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Executive Headteacher who, in liaison with the Chair of the Governing Board, will make a considered response after seeking advice from the Local Authority Press Officer.

3 POLICY REVIEW

This Policy has been written with the understanding that it is reviewed every 3 years. However, the policy may need reviewing sooner should there be changes to the way that the school manages bereavement, or if there are key changes in staff.