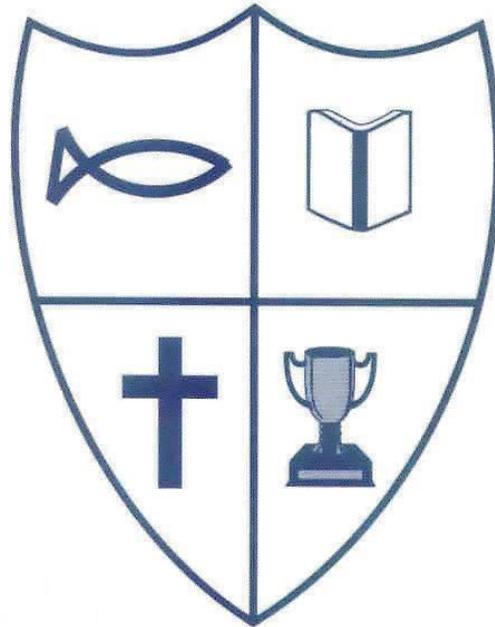


AUGHNACLOY PRIMARY SCHOOL



LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT POLICY

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At Aughnacloy Primary School, as a staff and a community, we are aware of children experiencing loss through death or separation. Although this loss is much the same as that experienced by adults, the expression of feeling is very different. Children have not developed the same conceptual skills as adults and may not easily verbalise their feelings: they often show distress through their behaviour.

This policy has been drawn up to:

- create an awareness of the range of emotions children suffering from loss may be experiencing
- identify ways in which we can help children through the process towards acceptance of loss and
- ensure that this strand of the PD&MU curriculum is taught.

In meeting these aims, the school can help the pupils achieve their social and emotional, physical and academic potential while fulfilling a valuable role in the stability of community life.

CURRICULUM

Through P.D & M.U. activities including discussions, Circle Time, Literature and Role Play, children are educated to know about loss, what feelings they might experience and how they might both cope with personal loss and respond to loss of others.

Supporting Pupils

Pupils will react to bereavement/ loss in a variety of ways; no two reactions are the same. Their own personality, their family support and their life experiences will all impact on their responses.

Adults often wish to shield children from pain and distress. Experience and research have shown, however, that **children are best supported by having the incident acknowledged in an appropriate way rather than ignored.**

It is important to be available and receptive to pupils, to listen to them, to empathise with them and normalise their emotions to enable the development of healthy coping strategies.

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 to understand their own emotions. Staff working directly with pupils can show that they are upset, but not out of control. It is important to maintain a safe, secure and predictable environment for the pupils in their care. Staff should remember that they are modelling a response for children and young people and helping them to develop coping skills.

Never underestimate the positive effect that concern and support from a caring, familiar adult can have on a pupil.

First reactions may be

- Disbelief
- Anger
- Panic
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Crying
- Talking: repeating what they have experienced/heard
- Inability to process information well (and so they may not hear/take in what has happened or what has been said to them)
- Regression: we all regress when we hear bad news. We want to be looked after and protected.
- Sadness
- Withdrawal
- Aggression

Grieving tasks (Worden) include the following:

- Shock, disbelief, numbness

Life has lost its meaning. Shock can take the form of physical pain or numbness, but more often consists of complete apathy and withdrawal or abnormal calm, in some cases with anger.

- Denial - generally occurs within the first 14 days and can last minutes, hours or weeks. No loss is acknowledged.

- Growing Awareness - waves of savage feelings over which there is temporarily no control - tears, anger, guilt, sadness, loneliness, depression (feelings of redundancy, lack of self worth).
- Acceptance - relearning the world and situations.

(More information is available from EA's Critical Incident Team Leaflets, for staff, pupils and parents)

Associated with the above Primary Effects are Secondary Effects which teachers should be aware of:

- Change in behaviour
- Change in peer groups
- Loss of motivation
- Lack of achievement
- Poor Hygiene
- Change in family role
- Effects on relationships

Staff are aware that grief may be delayed or may re-emerge years later. It is important to note that the loss of a parent, whether father or mother and either, carry the equal amount of loss.

Feelings and Needs of bereaved children may vary. Some children see school as a haven of peace and normality in contrast to the trauma at home. Conversely other children may find school is the place to express their feelings.

Be alert to:

- different behaviour
- mood swings
- psychosomatic symptoms - headaches, stomach aches etc.
- insecurity, feeling unwanted
- low self-esteem
- depression
- isolation and withdrawal.

Useful responses from staff

- Acknowledging the event to pupils, in a confidential way, letting them

- know that you are available to help and support them
- Being willing to listen to them, and giving them time
 - Being willing to answer questions (it is not important that staff answer all questions but that they listen to pupils' fears and worries and take their queries seriously)
 - Being genuine and professional
 - Being non-judgemental
 - Giving information to them including the 'normalisation' of their reactions (i.e. their reactions are normal reactions)
 - Encouraging pupils to talk, share their feelings and seek help as appropriate
 - Maintaining a routine in school (flexible, caring and containing)
 - Offering sensitivity, care and empathy

PROCEDURES ON LEARNING OF THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

- 1 The Principal will make contact with the family by telephone/in person to offer condolences and if appropriate, attend the wake.
- 2 Inform all of staff and members of Board of Governors.
- 3 Purchase of card/wreath to be sent on behalf of the school (staff, pupils, parents and Board of Governors).
- 4 Place death notice in local newspaper.
- 5 Liaise with the Critical Incident Team, (Pupil Personal Development Services) (028) 37512333; (028) 37512515.
- 6 The Principal should deal with Media (in consultation with the Communications Advisory Service) if necessary (028) 37415356.
- 7 Arrangements concerning funeral/memorial services made known to all staff/Board of Governors.
- 8 Expression of Feelings e.g. Box of Memories organised by class teacher and sent to family if appropriate.
- 9 Respect anniversary of death in agreement with the child's family.

PROCEDURES ON LEARNING OF THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

- 1 Provide information to *Governors, Teachers, Staff, Pupils and Parents.*
- 2 Provide information to absent staff.
- 3 Principal makes news statement if necessary.
- 4 Arrange for staff/pupil condolences.
- 5 *Teacher in Charge of Pastoral Care (Mrs Moore arranges for support for individual/group members of staff. Contact Pupil Personal Development Services (028) 37512333; (028) 37512515*
- 6 Principal makes arrangements for
 - Expression of feelings
 - Personal belongings
 - Card/wreath
 - Death notice in local newspaper
 - Services
 - Funeral
 - Commemoration

PROCEDURES ON LEARNING OF THE DEATH OF A PARENT

- 1 Convey information to staff, pupils.
- 2 Make arrangements for expression of sympathy.
 - Personal Visit
 - Sympathy Card
 - Attend Funeral
- 3 Procedures on child returning to school.

Refer to Critical Incident / Crisis Management Policy.

What Are The Needs Of A Bereaved Child?

- Friendship
- Support
- Understanding
- To talk and be listened to
- Reassurance
- Increase in self-esteem
- An alleviation of isolation
- Routine
- Time to express feelings if they wish to
- Space

How Can The School Help?

- 1 Recognise the signs and symptoms of grief in individuals.
- 2 Offer individual/group support activities.
- 3 Provide a positive caring atmosphere.
- 4 Pupils and staff display understanding and sincerity.
- 5 Provide time and space for expression of feelings and allow time for natural grieving to occur.
- 6 Through the Curriculum, talk openly about Loss and Bereavement and establish that grief is natural.
- 7 Prevent development of 'abnormality'.
- 8 Create links with family and maintain effective communication.

- 9 Where necessary, involve outside agencies.

PROCEDURES ON LEARNING OF A CHILD AFFECTED BY THEIR PARENTS' SEPARATION/DIVORCE

It takes a long time for children to adjust to their parents' separation/divorce, and it is not usually a smooth road, but the more opportunities children have to express and understand their feelings, the easier this transition will be.

However, some pupils may not wish to talk and this must be respected too.

Remember;

"Family breakdown is not an event but a process. The process may take years to settle down."

(An Eye to Their Future, resource pack, for working with the impact of family breakdown).

1. Be sensitive towards the child and their parents. Acknowledge the pupil's loss privately and assure them of your support and availability.
2. Inform the necessary staff in a confidential manner
3. Address issues of loss through P.D & M.U/circle time
4. Make arrangements to ensure both parents are kept up to date with their child's progress if possible.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- 1 Provide time, space and activities, routine for the children.
- 2 Observe child.
- 3 Encourage expressions of grief in class/curriculum.
- 4 Encourage expressions of grief in private.
- 5 Be genuine and show empathy with child.

6 Use self-disclosure if appropriate.

Useful skills when listening to Pupils.

- Attentive Listening - non verbal
- Attentive Listening
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Some pupils may require a more specialist intervention straight away or where there are continuing signs of distress or behaviour which cause concern such as;

- Persistent anxieties about their own death.
- Destructive outbursts.
- Compulsive care giving.
- Euphoria.
- Accident-proneness
- Unwillingness to speak about deceased person.
- Expression of only positive/negative feelings about the deceased person.
- Inability or unwillingness to form new relationships.
- Daydreaming.
- Stealing.
- School phobia.

Early contact with their parents/guardians should be sought in order to discuss further if there are concerns, through the Principal/ Teacher in Charge of Pastoral Care.

Staff should:

- 1 Consult with Teacher in Charge of Pastoral Care (Mrs Moore)

- 2 Teacher in Charge should talk with parents.
- 3 Seek advice and support from Pupil Personal Development Services, Education Welfare Services, Behaviour Support Team and Educational Psychology.

The Pupil Personal Development Services Team is able to offer individual and / or group support for pupils who experience distress as result of loss and bereavement. This can be accessed by the school with parental consent.

There are also other local community and statutory services available to families also.

Professional Development of Staff

Staff will be updated on training as required.

Monitoring and review of policy

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years and following any incident, to assess its suitability in responding and that it is "fit for purpose".

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

FORM IS1

**PUPIL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
REFERRAL FOR INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**

Name of Pupil: _____ DoB: _____ Year Group: _

Address: _____

Name of Parent: _____ Contact Number Details: _____

School Attended: _____ School Tel/Email: _____

Reason for referral:

- Transition/Change Bullying Concerns Loss/Bereavement
 Critical Incident Follow up Personal Development Issues

Background Information:

Expected outcomes of Intervention:

Action taken by school/service to date:

Other Board Services/Agencies already contacted/involved (please specify, detailing timeframes):

Parental Consent given? Yes
(Mandatory)

SEN issues? Yes No
LAC? Yes No

Parental Signature: _____

Date: _____

Prior consultation with AAO: Yes No

Signed: _____ Designation: _____ Date: _____

Please note that completing a referral form does not guarantee that support will be provided. A member of the team will contact you within two working weeks of receipt of the referral to discuss the most appropriate course of action.