



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

An Daras Trust

Bereavement Policy

The An Daras Multi Academy Trust (ADMAT) Company

An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee

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Bereavement Policy

Rationale

We understand that members of the school community face bereavement at different times. When the loss is of a member of our school community – such as a child or staff member – it can be particularly difficult. Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school.

At the time of writing the nation is engaged in a period of social distancing. This means that only a small minority of pupils and staff are physically on school sites and so a nuanced approach is required.

This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after 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 circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

Our schools are committed to the emotional health and well-being of staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one.

Following a Bereavement

We believe that children and adults alike have the right to;

- Be given space and time to grieve
- Talk with the most appropriate person
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.

We recognise that;

- Grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real
- During social distancing extra care needs to be taken over communication
- Differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value
- The death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching consequences and contacts.

Bereavement Management In School

A universally accepted procedure outline will not enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its

own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. One of our main concerns must be the immediate family of the deceased and we are committed to providing any practical, emotional and ongoing support they require.

Transition

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or new school. Liaise closely with any schools where siblings may attend.

Death of a Pupil

During this time when most children are not attending schools, families are likely to contact whoever they know best in the school community. In that instance the member of staff who takes the call or finds out through other means should immediately contact the Head of School or Head Teacher and they will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of information.

Sharing Information

It is important to agree with the parent before the school can take on the role of informing concerned parties, within, or outside, the school community. There can be no definite list of people to contact and, therefore it will be different for each child. The school should ensure local clergy are informed and that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner. The school needs to ensure it does not add to sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

The following people should be considered;

- All school staff
- Previous school staff who may have worked closely with the child
- Social work team if applicable
- Trust CEO
- Other professionals who may have worked with the child i.e. Speech and Language therapists, school nurse
- Other parents – if pupils have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their pupils
- Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but whom the family may not have informed.

The Head of School or Head Teacher may want to be assisted by a member of the local clergy or by a Trauma Informed School (TIS) trained staff member in determining the appropriate wording to parents with advice as to how they might want to discuss death with their child.

The Funeral

In usual circumstances the family would be asked what involvement they would like the school to have in the funeral. [The school is encouraged to engage with this process in a sensitive and flexible manner to support the family as best they can.](#)

If parents wish to visit the school at any time post funeral this will be agreed. Research has shown this can be helpful for long term grieving.

Memory Assemblies

It may be appropriate, at a later date and with the return to normal practice, for there to be some act of remembrance and celebration of the child's life. This should depend on the wishes of the family and is best decided by the Head of School or Head Teacher.

Responding to the Media

Some deaths particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances attract media attention. All members of staff are asked not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Head of School or Head Teacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assurance from the Trust and its advisors.

On-going Support

For staff;

Following bereavement, it is expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection. The following support may be helpful;

- Virtual or home contact with other school staff
- Virtual or phone contact with local clergy
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement outside of school
- Access to the Trust's confidential external staff well-being counselling service – contact the Trust Operations Officer for details.

For pupils;

At this time the burden of support will be from the immediate family. However, teaching staff or Trauma Informed School (TIS) staff should make themselves available to talk on the phone to pupils who are particularly struggling and require extra support.

For the family;

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support.
- Send a letter of condolence from the school. See Appendix E for guidance
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the child who has died (this can include school work books if required)
- Hold a collection for flowers or a donation as appropriate
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school in the future
- Agree to arrangements for parents to revisit the school at a later time if requested (Note: The first visit to the school will be difficult for the parents and should be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on-going links.

Death of A Staff Member

All the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member.

Responsibilities

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in the event of a death or traumatic loss is the Head of School or Head Teacher. In the event that this person is absent then the next senior member of staff or TIS trained staff member will take the responsibility.

The responsibilities of this designated person are;

- Implementing this policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies
- Cross phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools affected
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

Appendix A – List of current on-line Resources and Information

Anyone who has experienced a bereavement can contact the **Cornwall Bereavement Network** website which lists links to different bereavement services in Cornwall.

The **CV19 Bereavement Helpline** on 01726 829874 is open from 10am-6pm. It provides initial support for those who are bereaved, or who have a loved one who is seriously ill and can also signpost callers to further support as needed.

The **Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust Bereavement Service** provides a dedicated bereavement service to support the family and next of kin of patients who have passed away in hospital. They can be contacted on 01872 252713 between 9am-4pm Monday to Friday.

www.pehaligonsfriends.org.uk – Cornish bereavement charity supporting children, young people, parents and carers throughout the county.

www.winstonswish.org.uk – A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved.

www.chums.info – A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss.

www.childbereavement.org.uk - A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss.

www.juliesplace.com – A support service for bereaved siblings.

Appendix B – Books on Bereavement suitable for Children

Granpa – John Burningham (Puffin 1998/ISBN 0099-43408-3)

When Dinosaurs Die – L&M Brown (Little, Brown 1996/ISBN 0-316-10197-7)

Remembering Grandad - S&K Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)

Fred – Posy Simmonds (Cape, 1987/ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)

Grandad I'll Always Remember You – De Bode/Broere (Evans 1997/ISBN 0237-51755-8)

Lifetimes – B. Malonie/R. Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997/ISBN 1-85561-760-9)

Badgers Parting Gifts – Susan Varley (Collins Paperback 1992)

We Love them – Martin Waddell (Walker Books, 1990/ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)

Grandmas Bill – Martin Waddell (McDonald Young Books, ISBN 0-75000-0307-3)

I'll Always Love You - H. Wilhelm (H&S 1985)

A Birthday Present for Daniel – Julie Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)

Appendix C - Letter of Condolence – Suggested format

It is tragically the case that in the present CV19 crisis some of our school leaders might have to write a letter of condolence in respect to the death of a child, parents or colleague.

It is very difficult to construct any sort of template for this because by their nature, they always need to be highly personal.

Above all, they have to be sincere and this must be evident. What is written will therefore depend on the circumstances and the relationship the writer had with the deceased.

Please try to bear in mind the following points;

- You are writing both as an individual and on behalf of the school. This needs to be clear so perhaps *'I was so sorry to hear of the death of XXXXX and all of us here at XXXXX School would like to express to you our sincerest condolences at this sad time....'*
- It is often comforting for someone to receive a highly personal statement of what the writer most remembers about the deceased so perhaps *'My abiding memory of XXXXX will be the way in which she would often delight us all by....'*
- In the current CV19 situation it is highly unlikely that there will be a funeral at which the school could be represented. However, it might be appropriate to say if there is to be a memorial service of any kind in the future that representatives of the school would very much like to attend and so perhaps *'If you decide to hold a memorial service when circumstances have again become more normal, the school would feel very privileged to attend and be represented by....'*
- Include in your letter offers of how the school might support the family of the deceased. Please see the Bereavement Policy for suggestions about this. The writer of the letter will have to make some judgements about what might be appropriate and so perhaps *'if you would like to attend/see/etc at XXXXX School you may be fully assured that we will be very glad to make arrangements to support your wishes....'*
- Make it clear how this support can be accessed and so perhaps *'If any of my suggestions would bring you comfort, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will make the required arrangements'*.