

# Redhill Primary Academy



## Bereavement and Critical Incident Policy

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Fiona'.

**Mrs Fiona Seddon, Chair of Governors**

Reviewed: February 2024

## What is a 'critical incident'?

A critical incident is one which has the potential to cause disruption and distress to a school and wider community when members of the school community are affected by a significant loss, event or on-going situation.

Every critical incident in the school community, expected or sudden, presents real challenges. This guidance is intended to help the school community to respond appropriately and sensitively at this challenging time.

Examples may include:

- The death of a member of staff or a pupil attending the school.
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff members.

### **When the whole school may be affected by the death of a pupil or member of staff.**

#### **IMMEDIATE RESPONSE FOLLOWING THE DEATH:**

- Gather the facts, not hearsay, in order to plan an appropriate response.
- The Head Teacher should contact the family of the person who has died and seek permission to inform pupils and parents.
- Inform the local authority, staff and governors.
- Inform pupils of the death in classes/tutor groups, or if necessary, in assembly. Smaller groups are preferable and the younger the children, the smaller the groups should be.
- Prepare a brief personal tribute about the person who has died to pass to Corporate Communications (Public Relations) who can liaise with the Press on behalf of the school.
- Prepare a letter for parents informing them of the death. The letter should be sent on the day the pupils are informed so that parents can support their children.

#### Useful contacts:

- The Educational Psychology Service 01952 385216
- Corporate Communications (Public Relations Team) (01952) 382402
- Chair of Governors - Beth Tutchener-Ellis - [Beth.Tutchener-ellis@RedhillPrimary.co.uk](mailto:Beth.Tutchener-ellis@RedhillPrimary.co.uk)

It is important to be open and honest with all members of the community. Remember that grief is painful but normal and healthy. Children need to be allowed to grieve just as much as adults. **They are unlikely to need "experts" counselling them.** Rather they need **familiar and trusted adults** who can be sensitive to their feelings and offer a listening ear.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- Head Teacher to visit the family

- Consider arranging a meeting for staff so that they can be advised on how best to support pupils and one another. The Educational Psychology Service can facilitate this.

#### Support offered by Educational Psychology Services

- Immediate response.
  - Consultation with SLT focusing on practical next steps and organisational support.
  - Identification of those at-risk using Circles of Vulnerability.
  - Guidance on referrals to the appropriate support services for those who may experience longer-term difficulties.
  - Advice to school staff and parents on appropriate ways of understanding and managing children and young people's reactions.
  - Involvement in team meetings if required.
- Ensure that pupils have the opportunity to talk about the death with familiar, trusted adults with whom they have daily contact. For younger children this may be done, e.g., in circle time. For older students, a room could be made available for those particularly affected perhaps supported by staff who know them.
  - Consider whether further support may be required for pupils and/or staff who have directly witnessed an incident.
  - Maintain contact with the family prior to the funeral and for some time afterwards, depending on individual needs.

#### FURTHER STEPS

- Establish the family's wishes regarding funeral arrangements and find out if the family would like staff and individual pupils to attend.
- In consultation with the family, decide if the school should have a memorial service and/or a more lasting memorial such as a sensory garden, a cup or trophy, a tree or a painting.

#### When an individual pupil is affected by a bereavement which may not impact on the whole school.

- Gather the facts and liaise with the family to find out what the pupil understands.
- Let the pupil know, in a sympathetic manner, that you are aware that someone close to them has died.
- Dedicate a member of staff to make daily contact with the pupil, whilst allowing the pupil to seek support elsewhere.
- Maintain routines but adjust expectations.

More specific support and advice is available from :

**Winston's Wish** [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) 08452 030405 e-mail [ask@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org.uk)

**Hope House Children's Hospice** tel. 01691 672618 e-mail [kay@hopehouse.org.uk](mailto:kay@hopehouse.org.uk)

**CRUSE** [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk) CRUSE Youth Helpline 0808 808 1677 Mon-Fri 9.30 - 5pm

**The Samaritans** [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) tel. 08457 909090 e-mail [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

<http://www.samaritans.org.uk>

Pupils are likely to cope better with bereavement if they have had natural opportunities to think about death within different areas of the curriculum such as in stories and role play, Drama, English, PSHE, RE and Assemblies. There are also specific resources which focus on bereavement that we have at our disposal in school. We also have two trained bereavement counsellors who can offer bespoke sessions with children on a 1:1 basis.

Recommendations of additional and current resources can be obtained from [www.telford.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.telford.gov.uk/libraries)