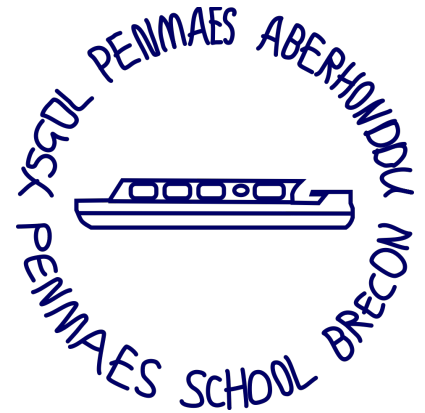




Ysgol Penmaes





Bereavement and Loss Policy

This policy has been developed based on the model policy written by Powys Educational Psychology Service.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as detailed in the school's policy review cycle. It may also be necessary to review and amend it sooner to reflect both local and national changes.

Ratified by Governing Body	Signature	Date
Headteacher: Angharad Bryn-Jones		19.4.23
Chair of Governors: Clancy Brett		19.4.23
Next review date: April 2024		

Introduction

All schools will have to deal with bereavement at some time. One in 29 school age pupils will have experienced the death of a parent or sibling, and many more will have experienced bereavement of wider family/friends.

The death of a pupil, member of staff or someone from the school community can be extremely difficult to cope with. Every death and every person's reaction to it is unique to their situation. It will be affected by the relationship with the person, the circumstances of the death, their sources of resilience, the development of the child or young person, and many other factors. How we support bereavement can have a significant impact on how people are able to manage during this difficult time and in the future.

This policy has been developed to support the school community when a pupil, staff member, governor or other prominent member of the local community has died, including family members of pupils.

The Local Authority also has a separate 'Sudden Bereavement as a Critical Incident' policy. A critical incident is a tragic and unexpected event affecting a number of people. They are outside the normal range of expected human experience. Critical incidents have the potential to overwhelm usual responses and are always unpredictable, for example:

- The death or serious injury of a child or staff member as a result of an accident or act of deliberate violence which occurs within the school context
- The unexplained death (suspected suicide) of a child or young person
- Damage to the school as a result of natural or man-made disasters
- An accident on a school excursion
- The effects of terrorism, war or natural disaster

In the event of a Critical Incident the school will immediately inform the Director of Education—Lynette Lovell on 01686 614047, lynette.lovell@powys.gov.uk
The Director of Education will inform the Principal of the Educational Psychology Service, Alun Flynn, on 01686 614044 who will be able to provide advice and support.

Ysgol Penmaes' policy enables the school to:

- Understand what action to take immediately and in the longer term
- Provide a framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement
- Support pupils and/or members of staff before (i.e. in instances of life-shortening illness), during and after bereavement, and in the longer term
- To identify key staff and their roles, within school and the governing body/Local Authority
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all
- Make appropriate plans, produce guidelines and draft letters
- Collect resources for support

Initial Actions Following News of a Bereavement

1. Most senior members of staff (head teacher if available) will speak to the family. School will ask their permission to tell the school community (parents, pupils, staff and governors). Some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. The school can help to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community. Ask the family if they wish school staff to share the news of the bereavement with other children and if there is any information that the family would especially like to be passed on (or possibly restricted). Express condolences and offer support. Check important details/facts if appropriate. Be available to the family; keep in touch. Ask the child or young person/family what help/support they would like.

2. If Police are involved, school will need to follow their guidance on release of information.

3. In the case of an unexpected death, the police will initiate and co-ordinate the Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood (PRUDIC). This will involve police and safeguarding teams from both Children's Services and the local health board

4. Inform Local Authority. Telephone or email the Director of Education, Lynette Lovell lynette.lovell@powys.gov.uk if it is the death of a child or a member of staff. Mark the email URGENT. Or contact the helpdesk on 01597 826422.

5. Contact local services for support and advice

a. Alun Flynn, Principal Educational Psychologist 01686 614044 or email alun.flyn@powys.gov.uk who can give advice on how to support children and young people using psychological first aid

b. Cruse are often able to provide support to schools, contact the Powys branch on 01686 610220

6. Identify high risk or vulnerable staff. This may include staff who were particularly close to the person who died, who have experienced other significant loss/bereavement, or who may not have adequate support structures

7. Inform school staff and governors. If this occurs during school hours it may be necessary to arrange for pupils to be looked after by a senior member of staff who has been informed, so that the head can speak to the rest of the staff. If the news occurs outside of school hours you will need to consider how to ensure that all staff members are contacted and they have adequate support.

Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and governors:

- Arrange a staff meeting as soon as possible
- Do not be afraid or surprised to show emotion, this is a human reaction.
- Impart factual information, never make assumptions or repeat rumour
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, be aware that people react in different ways,
- Be aware of staff relationships with the person
- Ensure that someone is responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the meeting i.e. part time, peripatetic, lunchtime supervisors. What is the best way; home visit, telephone
- Agree what information is to be given to all staff, parents/carers and pupils to ensure consistency

Members of the Senior Leadership Team- headteacher, deputy or assistant headteacher will:

- Identify a member of staff to liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements
- will provide a letter for parents/carers which should be sent the same day (sample letters are available from the LA)
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to catch-up with staff and have a chance to debrief on their day
- Identify sources of advice and support for staff
- Set up support structure for pupils i.e. quiet room, with tissues, pens, paper, water, teddies, blankets, cushions, bereavement stories etc made available. Provide paper and pens for them to write or draw their thoughts and memories, and provide some ideas
- Identify high risk or vulnerable pupils. This may include children who were particularly close to the person, as well as those who may have had disruptions in their relationship with the person who has died. It may include pupils who have experienced bereavement and loss (this often includes children who are looked after or adopted). Some of these pupils may need to be informed separately from their class and provided with additional support.
- prepare a script in advance
- Send letter out to parents/carers on the same day

- Initiate remembrance book or make art materials available for children to draw or write their memories and messages.

Any requests for information during such a time from the press will always be directed to Powys Communications Department

Supporting Staff with Loss and Bereavement

This can be a very difficult time for school staff and can be upsetting and emotionally draining for all. Some school staff will not feel able to provide support for pupils due to their own circumstances or grief, or their past experiences of bereavement and loss.

All staff need to understand that it is important to:

- Take time for yourself to grieve
- Talk to people about your feelings and memories and talk about the person who has died
- Look after your own physical well-being, making sure you are eating, drinking, and sleeping/resting
- Try to maintain normal routines – these provide an important sense of security for children and adults
- Allow pupils to see your grief and be open about your feelings, whilst being careful not to overwhelm them. Children learn how to deal with grief from those around them, and they need to know that it is good to express emotions

See Appendix 6 for strategies that help us to cope during times of stress

Supporting Children with Loss and Bereavement

Members of staff may be unsure about how or if to approach the subject with the pupil. It is better to say something than nothing at all. It is ok to say 'I heard about your grandfather, I'm sorry he died'.

Children have a different understanding of death at different developmental stages, and information should be given to them at the level that they will understand. It is important to use concrete words like 'death' and avoid using terms like 'losing' someone, or that the person has 'passed away', as this can be confusing for children.

Every child will respond differently to loss and bereavement. A child will have had their own individual view of what has happened and a unique relationship with the person that has died. Loss and bereavement will bring with it a range of emotions which may include shock and disbelief, anger, sadness, guilt, fear, confusion amongst many other emotions, and these may change on a daily basis. They may be expressed through physical elements, such as appetite, sleep disruption, headache/stomach ache, restlessness and ability to concentrate. Children may express their grief through behaviour such as avoiding the subject, distracting themselves, withdrawal, acting out, loss of interest in hobbies, tearfulness, mood swings and also no obvious reactions. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but there are healthy ways to manage grieving.

The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher and any support staff will support children with loss and bereavement in the following way:

Normalise emotions/reactions to the event. When we experience a trauma such as losing someone suddenly and unexpectedly, the way our body and minds react can feel quite out of our control, and this in itself can be frightening.

Reassure them that their feelings are normal. People grieve in different ways. Tell them that it's ok to feel different to how they feel usually. Reassure them that they will feel better with time

Create an atmosphere where pupils feel comfortable to talk about their feelings. Talking

things through with a trusted adult will help them to understand their feelings

Reassure pupils that it is ok to have fun still, and to be happy. Emphasise that the person who died would want them to still be happy. It is important to do things that make us smile when we are sad, this is how we look after ourselves and we should not feel guilty or bad for doing this

If they want to talk, give them some time and space to do so, when they can have your full attention, without distractions

Children may feel that life as they knew it has changed completely and feel a loss of control. This uncertainty, referred to as 'loss of continuity' can be extremely anxiety provoking. It is consequently very important to restore some 'normality' and continuity back into their lives.

Children may be experiencing separation anxiety and may worry when they are away from loved ones, therefore may need additional reassurance. The full range of Thrive/Nurture/Trauma Informed schools activities may be used as appropriate.

Therapeutic stories

Sharing stories about loss and bereavement can help adults to open conversations with children of all ages, and to help them to understand their loss and to accept that their feelings are normal.

You can watch together an example of a therapeutic story about loss called The Small Creature by the British Heart Foundation.

Books for Children and Adults to Read Together

- The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back by Margot Sunderland and Nicky Armstrong (Therapeutic story)
- Someone Has Died Suddenly by Mary Williams. (www.suddendeath.org)
- Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine (Activity book) by Diana Crossley

Welsh language books

- Taid by John Burningham
- Hyd ac Ym Byth by Debi Gliori

Books for Younger Children (Nursery and Foundation Phase)

- Goodbye Mousie by Robie H Harris
- Dear Grandma Bunny (A Miffy Book) by Dick Bruna
- Badgers Parting Gifts by Susan Varley
- Always and Forever by Debi Gliori and Alan Durant
- Are You Sad, Little Bear? A Book About Learning to Say Goodbye by Rachel Rivett
- When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death by Laurie Krasny Brown

Books for KS2 children

- Milly's Bug Nut by Jill Janney
- Why Mum? By Catherine Thornton (book about serious illness)
- Saying Goodbye to Daddy by Judith Vigna

Books for KS2 and KS3

- The Cat Mummy by Jacqueline Wilson
- Sad Book by Michael Rosen
- What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? Trevor Romain

Books for KS3 and KS4

- Double Act by Jacqueline Wilson

- Ways to Live Forever by Sally Nicholls
- The Charlie Barber Treatment by Carole Lloyd
- The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society by Alan Gibbons
- Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone you Love by Earl Grollman

If school is aware that a Death is Expected

Coping with the expected death of a child

You may know in advance that a child is terminally ill. In this situation, the wishes of the parent(s) will dictate the degree to which school can prepare for their child's death. Some parents find the school a very helpful, supportive place to be, and want as much contact as possible for themselves and their child. Some wish to take an active part in any preparations that may be appropriate. It is very important that the parents' wishes are sought and respected. There may also be a need to obtain permission from other parents if the preparations go beyond general curriculum-based activities.

Seriously ill and dying children often cope best with their condition by living as fully as they can. The school may represent one of the few areas where the child feels a sense of control and accomplishment. The sick child is often an expert on his or her condition and can help other children to understand in ways not open to adults.

Children and young people may find it hard to talk to their friends about the illness. School staff may be able to help the child or young person to talk to their friends and provide help to answer the other children's questions.

Coping with the expected death of a member of staff

Much of the above information may also be appropriate if it is known that a member of staff is terminally ill. Clearly, the wishes of the individual and his or her family will be paramount in planning how the children and young people will be prepared for the event.

Coping with the expected death of a child's parent or someone close to the child

Preparing children for such an event should be the responsibility of all those who have an influential role in the child's life, including teachers and support staff at school. Providing the child with a sense of security at home and at school is imperative.

A family may contact school to share information where it is known that a close family member of a child has a terminal illness. In such circumstances, relevant information should be circulated amongst school staff so that there is a shared understanding of why the child may be experiencing difficulties that have not previously been an issue. For example, if the child starts having trouble with concentration, remaining on task in class or with behaviour more generally, teachers and support staff need to know the reason so that their problems are understood and addressed in context. It may be helpful for one teacher or trusted adult within the school to spend some extra time with the child, especially since life at home may be chaotic.

Other Considerations

Cultural issues

When working with children and young people from different ethnic backgrounds, it is important to be aware of the cultural context and beliefs. Families who cannot communicate well in English may need an interpreter. It is not appropriate to use children or young people as interpreters in this situation.

Children with Additional Learning Needs

Children with Additional Learning Needs may have little sense of the permanence of death; in some cases, they may never come to a full understanding as we would see it. However, it is important to support them to learn about death so that they are prepared, are not excluded, and their feelings taken into consideration. Talking about death and loss is important to the grieving and the learning process will lead to increased understanding and acceptance. It will also be

important for adults to be more sensitive to changes in behaviour that may indicate changes in emotional well-being where children are unable to communicate this themselves.

Vulnerable families

Most children and their families will be able to cope with the death of a close family member, especially if families can talk about what is happening, about their thoughts and feelings, and about the person who has died. For different reasons not all children will have this experience within their family. For example:

- Children Looked After
 - Children from families with a limited support network
 - Children whose parent/s experience mental health difficulties in such circumstances
- school may be a particularly valuable source of support to the bereaved child

Ongoing Support for Pupils and Staff

- Identify a quiet/time out place where people can go if necessary
- Timetables may require a little flexibility
- Try to engender awareness of when people need help and support
- Ascertain, through nominated staff, any family wishes about the school's involvement in
- the funeral, if any
- If the child or young person wants the other children to know, consideration could be
- given to sending the child a class card, or personal messages
- Allocate a staff member to actively support the child's return to school. Find out what
- support the pupil needs i.e. time out/ quiet room/ access to telephone to phone home,
- put this in place before they return to school
- Continue to access support agencies if required (for staff and/ or pupils).
- Allocate a staff member to monitor the bereaved child throughout school life. Note
- anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day etc. Pass this information onto any new
- school on transition.