

## **Supporting children/young people and families through bereavement**

At The Whitstable School we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. We provide opportunities within our setting for children/young people to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences.

Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. There is no right or wrong reaction to death. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help support anyone in the way that best meets their needs.

At The Whitstable School we aim to achieve the following:

- To deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To meet the needs of all its children/young people and staff and provide much needed support.
- To work with outside agencies as appropriate.
- For staff to be aware of the needs of the children/young people, as well as their own.
- For children/young people to express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies with the support of sensitive staff.
- To provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To provide emotional and practical support for families where appropriate.

## **How The Whitstable School can support children/young people and their families during a bereavement**

When The Whitstable School is informed of a bereavement that is linked to a school student eg. a family member, a close family friend, a pet:-

- We will ask you how the school can be involved to support the child/young person and family.
- We will explain how The Whitstable School can provide resources to support the child/young person.
- We will monitor any changes in the child/young person's behaviour and share any information with you.

## **How The Whitstable School provides support when there is a death in the school community**

### **Telling staff**

- Where possible discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school.
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible.

- Senior leadership team will be prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is a perfectly natural response.
- Members of the Senior Leadership team will be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child/young person if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Advice for families will also be provided of support services available to them.
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available for anyone who requires it.

### **Telling students**

- Children/young people in the same class should be told, in small groups with adults they know.
- A letter should go to the family within school the same day if possible.
- Staff will be provided with guidelines of how to inform children/young people.
- Children/young people will be given time and space as required to talk and reflect.
- Staff will be as honest as possible about their own feelings and experiences and talk about their relationship with the person.
- Resources to support children/young people will be available for classes to access.

The family, students and staff will be given an opportunity to celebrate the life of the child/young person/teacher with a special assembly held in school at an appropriate time.