



LISTENING EAR
someone to talk to



AMPARO
support following suicide

IN SCHOOL SUPPORT PATHWAY

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Contact:

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Introduction

Following the sudden death of a young person under the age of 18 there is a nationally agreed process in England overseen by a county-wide safeguarding board and its child death overview panel.

The response to the sudden death of a child is rapid – a meeting of the Rapid Response Team or RRT will be called within 72 hours of the death by a named lead already designated. If the young person attended school the head teacher will be informed as soon as possible.

If a number of suicides have occurred an urgent strategy meeting will be arranged involving the RRT and the leads from all relevant agencies.

It is good practice for all schools to have a written policy relating to the actions necessary if a sudden death occurs.

This document is adapted from the policy of a Knowsley based school called Yew Tree Primary written by Ann Farrell Chair of Listening Ear, Halewood.

More detailed information can be found in the following PHE documents:

- **Identifying and responding to suicide clusters and contagion, Sept 2015**
- **Guidance for developing a local suicide prevention action plan, Sept 2014**

IN SCHOOL SUPPORT PATHWAY

LEVEL 1 –

Initial action – **Maintain familiar routines and structures**

Gather the facts – inform the staff.

Relay the facts to the students (small groups only if possible)

Identify pupil groups that may need particular support – peer groups, friendship groups, siblings etc

Identify staff who can offer support – children would rather be supported by someone they know

Identify times and rooms for listening and support – this may be needed for some time

Provide practical and emotional support for staff welfare

Acknowledge different reactions and timescales of response

Consider possible media attention – seek guidance from local authority – ask staff not to use social media to relay messages etc

Discuss attendance at funeral – consider students as well?

Consider memorial events for the future

LEVEL 2 – (ALL OF THE ABOVE)

PUPIL SUPPORT – Individual support via Learning Mentor or Pastoral Staff

Class based work to help children deal with the effects of loss and bereavement

PEER SUPPORT – Small group peer support (May be facilitated by School staff or Area Support Team members)

STAFF SUPPORT – Monitor staff well-being and provide further support if needed.

LEVEL 3 – (ALL OF THE ABOVE)

Source additional support for pupils who continue to experience difficulties from appropriate national and local services. Some examples are:

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

LEVEL 4 – (ALL OF THE ABOVE)

Referral to specialist support services for children and young people who, in spite of additional support continue to experience difficulties. Source appropriate national and local support services.

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Things to consider in the days following the news of the death

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.
It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary.
It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and secretaries/administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.

Consider practical issues like:-

- Putting an obituary in the paper, sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc.
- Who will attend the funeral, making a collection etc.
- Cover for any staff that may be going to the funeral.
- Transport to and from the funeral.
- Informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved.
- Possible closure of the school. If this is the case remember to tell lunchtime supervisors, caretaker etc in advance.

Always remember there will be learning from this experience that can be built into future planning.

Support for children with Special Educational Needs

Although the child with special needs may express their emotions and feelings differently, they may well share the same depth of grief as others.

The following strategies, used with many grieving children, will still apply:

- Being open and honest - using appropriate words such as 'dead' and 'death' and not likening death to sleep
- Being available to listen, to talk or simply spend time with the child
- Talking about the person who has died
- Allowing the child to show grief in whatever way they want - including having fun
- Enabling the child to say goodbye and see the body of the person who died
- Not excluding the child from helpful rituals of death, which will help them understand someone important in their life has died

Children with learning difficulties may find the concept of death and its permanence particularly difficult to grasp and will benefit from simple, practical examples to illustrate the difference between dead and living things - for example, a dead insect.

However, visiting a graveyard can be especially confusing for children with learning difficulties due to the lack of visual evidence as to exactly where the dead body has gone.

Children, especially those with learning difficulties, do not need protection from the feelings and emotions associated with grief but support and help to express them and reassurance that these sometimes powerful and overwhelming emotions are normal and necessary.

Children with learning difficulties may have less vocabulary and tend to express their feelings even more through behaviour rather than words.

The following can be comforting ways to share feelings:

- Looking together at photographs of the person who has died and sharing memories
- Greetings cards sent to, or received by the parent/sibling who has died
- An item of clothing worn by the parent/sibling
- A cushion made from an item of remembered clothing
- Listening to the parent/sibling's favourite music
- A book made about the person who has died
- A candle lit on special days
- A comfort object can be an aid for getting through difficult moments, especially at school, such as a small comforter or a recognisable item of clothing that belonged to the person who has died
- Putting together a memory box of tangible reminders of the person who has died can give great comfort. This should be their personal collection of reminders of who that person was and what they meant to them. It also gives a

child some control back in their lives as they choose what does and what does not go into their box. Children with special needs (they are children first and foremost) are particularly likely to feel the frustration of adults taking over at this time

- There are storybooks available for bereaved children e.g *Badgers Parting Gifts* (Varley 1985) which describes the sadness associated with the death of badger but also of the joy experienced by the other animals when recalling their many memories of times with their friend

GRIEVING IN A DIGITAL AGE

Being aware of death notifications via FaceBook

- Need for *recognition* of how this will increasingly be the rule rather than the exception and *acceptance* of what is
- Need for *reflexive awareness* and *bracketing* of any personal negative reactions this may provoke (e.g., “how terrible to have to learn of the death in *such a way*”) – what informs these?
- Need for awareness of *positives* of learning about a death in this way, e.g., immediate access to community support

Responding to marginalised mourners

- Need for awareness that traditional “inner circle” mourners (e.g., immediate family) may feel excluded – formerly disenfranchised mourners (e.g., friends) may have privileged access to persistent digital self of the dead individual
- Need for awareness that admittance to Facebook (e.g., via friends) may feel distressing or confusing to family members – new understandings or bits of information about their loved one may emerge and need processing

Being sensitive to tension between mourners

- Need for awareness of ways tension can manifest online
- Struggle for “chief mourner” position (e.g., competing “in-memory-of” sites amongst groups of friends or individuals)
- Wrangling over right to manage dead person’s legacy/image – either to edit the biography or...
- ...to remove the Facebook profile altogether.

Being familiar with re-traumatisation through profile removal

- Need for awareness of how mourners may experience profile removal
- May need to assist clients in living with the anxiety of this possibility – or parents with choices about removal

Helping students manage their relationship with profile

- The profile may continue to sit alongside the profiles of living friends
- Ease of access through mobile technologies – benefits and drawbacks
- “Defriending” a deceased loved one may feel complicated and upsetting
- Status updates may continue to appear in news feed on non-memorialised profiles (e.g., so-and-so posted on wall), which some may experience as difficult

Addressing concerns about mourners

- Need to be aware of common concerns:
- In denial?
- Checking the Facebook profile – how often?

- Adding things to the deceased Timeline
- Possible need for psychoeducation

Knowing about (emerging) “norms”

- Understanding what seems to be *typical* in the following areas can help identify and address what may be *atypical*//problematic/complicated grief:
- Belief in communications reaching the deceased
- Visits to profiles – frequent, over long term
- Incorporation of visits and communications into everyday life

Reflecting on personal attitudes

- Research indicates that there are concerns about whether social networking constitutes a “real relationship” or “real communication”
- What effects might such preconceptions have on your ability to understand and to help?
- What are your biases/beliefs/emotions/attitudes around the digital age and social networking?
- How might these affect your work with individuals for whom continuing their bonds on Facebook is important/a significant part of their process?
- What reflexive practices can you engage in to help you to unpack and to monitor these?

Taken from Dr. Elaine Kasket, (C.Psychol.) Regent’s University London

SCHOOL BEREAVEMENT TEMPLATE LETTERS

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/head of year had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

NB. Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, discussion should take place with the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list should be agreed by the parents and school.

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from an illness called XXX. As you may be aware, many children who have XXX get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..'s> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

Example of policy after death for schools

Dealing with Bereavement			
Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor

Educational establishments have a duty to have in place clear support strategies for pupils and school personnel who mourn the death of a family member or the loss of a member of the school community.

The trauma of any such events can over a period of time affect attitude, performance and the ability to cope with life in general. Governors and school personnel have a duty to mobilise the support of the whole school community in order to work together, to support each other and to honour the memory of the person that has passed away.

The appropriate school personnel should undertake training in bereavement counselling and this should be available for both pupils and school personnel.

The school community should have a commitment to promote equality. Therefore, an equality impact assessment should be undertaken in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Policy Aims

- To provide support strategies for both pupils and school personnel who mourn the death of a family member or the loss of a member of the school community.
- To work with other schools to share good practice in order to improve this policy.

Procedure

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has:

- Delegated powers and responsibilities to the Head teacher to ensure all school personnel and stakeholders are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all equalities legislation;
- To nominate a designated Equalities governor to ensure that appropriate action will be taken to deal with all prejudice related incidents or incidents which are a breach of this policy;
- Responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy;
- Responsibility for ensuring this policy and all policies are maintained and updated regularly;
- Responsibilities for ensuring all policies are made available to parents;

- The responsibility of involving the School Council in the development, approval, implementation and review of this policy;
- To nominate a link governor to visit the school regularly, to liaise with the Head teacher and the coordinator and to report back to the Governing Body;
- Responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy

Role of the Head teacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Head teacher and the Senior Leadership Team should:

- Ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Organise and have in place a Bereavement Support Team to deal with the death of any member of the school community;
- Offer the school's condolences;
- Coordinate all information from the family taking into account their wishes;
- Inform the Bereavement Support Team and remind them of their role;
- Inform all school personnel and the support provided;
- Inform all pupils and the support provided ;
- Inform parents of the death, any other details such as funeral arrangements and possible school closure
- Provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;
- Provide guidance, support and training to all staff;
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy;
- Annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy

Role of the Bereavement Support Team

The Bereavement Support Team should:

- Consist of the Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, trained members of the school personnel as counsellors in bereavement and a school governor;
- Be available to pupils and school personnel;
- Lead the development of this policy throughout the school;
- Work closely with the Head teacher and the nominated governor;
- Keep up to date with new developments and resources;
- Review and monitor;
- Annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy

Dealing with the death of a member of the school community

The Head teacher should:

- Offer the school's condolences;
- Coordinate all information from the family taking into account their wishes;
- Inform the Bereavement Support Team and remind them of their role;
- Inform all school personnel and the support provided;
- Inform all pupils and the support provided ;
- Inform parents of the death, any other details such as funeral arrangements and possible school closure

Dealing with a pupil suffering the loss of a family member

The Head teacher should:

- Offer the school's condolences;
- Coordinate all information from the family taking into account their wishes;
- Offer support from the Family Liaison Officer;
- Work with the family to assess any change in behaviour of the pupil during this traumatic time

The Bereavement Support Team will support a child by:

- Providing time to listen to the child and letting the child talk
- Forming a trusting, caring and supportive relationship
- Being sensitive when the child is preoccupied, silent or tearful
- Providing practical support
- Asking them what support they need
- Providing a place of privacy to grieve
- Making them feel valued and normal
- Being sensitive the child's beliefs

Dealing with a member of school personnel suffering a bereavement

The Head teacher will:

- Contact the bereaved member of school personnel and offer the school's condolences and support from the Bereavement Support Team;
- Coordinate all information from the family taking into account their wishes;
- Provide information on their bereavement leave entitlement

Role of School Personnel

School personnel will:

- Comply with all aspects of this policy;
- Listen to and monitor the behaviour and progress of bereaved students;
- Listen to and monitor the behaviour of their colleagues
- Implement the school's equalities policy and schemes;
- Report and deal with all incidents of discrimination;
- Attend appropriate training sessions;
- Report any concerns they have on any aspect of the school community

Role of Pupils

Pupils will be aware of the support strategies in place.

Role of the School Council

The School Council will be involved in:

- Determining this policy with the Governing Body;
- Discussing improvements to this policy during the school year;
- Organising surveys to gauge the thoughts of all pupils;
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy with the Governing Body

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- Be aware of and comply with this policy;
- Be asked to take part periodic surveys conducted by the school

Raising Awareness of this Policy

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- The School Handbook/Prospectus
- The school website
- The Staff Handbook
- Meetings with parents such as introductory, transition, parent-teacher consultations and periodic curriculum workshops
- School events
- Meetings with school personnel
- Communications with home such as weekly newsletters and of end of half term newsletters
- Reports such annual report to parents and Head teacher reports to the Governing Body
- Information displays in the main school entrance

Training

The Head teacher should organise appropriate periodic training for the Bereavement Support Team and school personnel in bereavement support.

All school personnel should have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.

Periodic training should be organised for all school personnel so that they are kept up to date with new information and guide lines concerning equal opportunities.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010: all have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed: it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any person and it helps to promote equality.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The practical application of this policy should be reviewed annually or when the need arises by the coordinator, the Head teacher and the nominated governor.

A statement of the policy's effectiveness and the necessary recommendations for improvement should be presented to the Governing Body for further discussion and endorsement. (See Policy Evaluation)

Headteacher:		Date:	
Chair of Governing Body:		Date:	

Bereavement Guidelines And Policy

Date Last Reviewed:

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Guidelines

The main aim of the policy is to ensure that all pupils and all members of staff faced with bereavement are provided with support.

This support includes the opportunity for them

- To express their feelings in a safe environment,
- To be given space and time to come to terms with their loss and access to specialist advice if necessary.
- It is recognised that the situation for the child, young person and/or family will be monitored over time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our community as a place where children and young people can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead. This, in turn, will contribute to reflective learning within the school community.

Therefore the general aims of these guidelines are:

- For everyone to have a clear understanding of what bereavement means and to be aware of the different stages of bereavement.
- To help children and adults cope with bereavement as well as possible.
- To appreciate that everyone will react differently to bereavement.
- To understand that the breakup of a family through separation or divorce is a traumatic bereavement for a child.
- To have in place a course of action agreed upon by staff and the governing body, which is understood by everyone who comes into contact with the children.

Reactions to grief:

- Open distress
- Tears
- Panic
- Withdrawal
- Aggression
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Refusal to co-operate
- Any other signs of stress / change of mood, which may be expressed in unexpected ways, e.g. nervous giggling, stoical bravery, untypical aggression, becoming the class clown, or even total denial.

THESE ARE ALL NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

Use of words:

When talking to a bereaved child about death, the words we use are very important. If death has been referred to as “falling asleep” it is logical for children to become fearful of sleeping or of going to bed. “Loss” implies that something is lost and could be found again.

Please note research has found that children as young as seven can grasp the concept of never returning.

Do not say to a bereaved child –

- “I know how you feel” – you don’t.
- “You’ll get over it” – they won’t, they will learn that life goes on but that it will be different.

Do say

- I care. I’m here, anytime, anywhere. I will cry with you if need be – I will talk about your mum, dad, Nan etc., and we will laugh about your happy memories.
- I won’t mind how long you grieve for – grieving is so natural and acceptable.
- I don’t know how you feel but with sharing perhaps I will learn a little of what you are going through. Perhaps you will feel comfortable talking to me – do you want to give it a try?

Definition of Death:

This may be of use with some children.

Death is a natural part of life. All living things – plants, animals and people, are special parts of the natural world. Nature usually gives us long, healthy lives, but not always. Like all other living things though, people grow old and reach the end of their life. This is called death or dying.

Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and Governors

(E.Riding Bereavement Policy Schools)

- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible.
- Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways. Be cognisant of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died.
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or e-mail etc.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
 - a) support members of staff
 - b) support groups of children

- The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.
- Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary).
- Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take 'phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a "protected" telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information. Telephone line providers may provide an additional line if the situation requires one.
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day.
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation. Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.
- Ensure staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.
- Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement.

How we can help the child/children with death and grief

Death of an immediate family member:

Being realistic and honest is the best any teacher or adult can do for a child. No child is taken in by pretend cheerfulness. Be aware of and respect the wishes and beliefs of the family.

Encourage children to express their feelings. Do not tell a child how to feel.

Help children use up their feelings in a positive way.

Children learn to mourn by observing others. They need to be warned about different adult reactions and receiving mixed messages.

Emotional pain is catching – be prepared.

Try not to single out a grieving child for special attention. They need to feel part of the class and it helps if you expect them to continue to perform, though obviously at a different level.

Death of a pupil:

Whilst the issues raised will all apply, the following points should also be noted:

Where a pupil has died, the effected class will grieve far longer than the rest of the school. Those who had a close relationship with the deceased will need extra care.

The child's workspace should be left as it is for a while, and should be referred to.

This allows grief to continue in the hearts and minds of the children. The deceased made a contribution to the class and continues to be part of it because of his/her death.

Death of a member of staff:

Children generally believe that teachers / support staff leave the school for other posts or to retire. For most, it is quite inconceivable that they might die whilst still being employed by the school. We as adults have an inbuilt resistance to accepting death, especially if it is someone of our own age or younger. When such an event occurs it is usually extremely traumatic, especially for members of staff forced to deal with their own grief as well as comforting the children. Planning how we as a school would manage such an event is very important.

Multiple losses in the school:

Where several children and/or staff die in one accident, staff, pupils, parents, governors, outside agencies and the press, all become entwined. Areas of responsibility need to be very clear. It is essential to gather together all of the facts and details of the accident, and then determine the likely impact on the whole school. This then has to be dealt with appropriately. In the case of multiple deaths, additional support and resources may well be required. Additional staff may also be needed. In such instances, effective communication channels are essential.

Preparing for a pupil to return to school:

For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school will be traumatic. It is essential to pave the way for their return. It is important that everyone in school is aware of what has happened. If everybody knows, and the bereaved person is aware of this, then it should make the situation more bearable. It is also important for everyone to be aware so they can appreciate and make allowances for uncharacteristic behaviour. If a member of staff discovers a pupil in a distressed state, they will at least be prepared in their own minds as how best to deal with it.

School as a safe haven:

Whilst it is only natural to show compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief, it is important not to forget that for the bereaved, school, with its routines and rituals, can provide a respite. Death brings unpredictability, fear and uncertainty. For the bereaved, family life at this traumatic time can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, and the future uncertain.

Ongoing Remembrance:

It is important to remember that anniversaries often spark a revival of feelings associated with the initial bereavement. The family and close friends will remember the deceased person's birthday, as they will the anniversary of the death. Siblings in school will be particularly vulnerable at these difficult times. Staff should be made aware of such dates in order that they may react with the necessary sensitivity and respect.

Children's Understanding and Reactions to Bereavement:

One of the most painful stresses with which a child has to cope is the loss of a parent, a close family member or a friend. Children grieve, they experience pain and sadness but they eventually need to detach their feelings from the deceased just as adults do.

Research shows that children do understand death from an early age. This develops from a belief in the reversibility of death in the pre-school years, to a gradual understanding of death's finality and irreversibility. Children's understanding of death develops alongside their cognitive development; it may occur at different speeds, but the sequence appears to be the same in the majority of children.

Children of junior school age

During this time children begin to understand the permanence and irreversibility of death. They know the person is gone and will not return. They understand that death means the cessation of all bodily functions and can be as a result of external causes,

such as accidents or an inner process such as illness. Although interested in finding out and understanding the real process involved in death, they may still at times use magical thinking. For example, although they know the body of the person has been cremated they may still believe they can converse with the dead person and insist that he/she can see, hear and influence them. Adults in the home can exacerbate this by using the deceased person as a threat or way of controlling a child, especially if they are finding it difficult to discipline them effectively, due to their own grief. This can frighten and add to the child's feeling of guilt and inadequacy, thus preventing them fully accepting both the reality and the emotional impact of their loss.

These children begin to be aware of other's feelings and can show empathy to those also affected by the loss. Sometimes their concern for a remaining parent can prevent them from showing their own grief and they take on an adult pseudo role, which can prevent them from mourning themselves.

Grief Reactions:

Junior school age children may show some of the grief reactions of much younger children, such as bed-wetting. They may also suffer with eating or sleeping problems. They can become irritable and show aggression towards other children and adults, or may simply become clingy and show separation anxiety. Some of these behaviours can be aggravated by their fear for the physical safety of the remaining family members. This may result in the child not wanting to leave the family home. It is also common for these children to develop psychosomatic illnesses, headaches, sickness and diarrhoea. These problems can disrupt their school attendance, resulting in a fall in academic learning. Due to peer pressure, children may be less able to express their feelings. It is very important for them to appear the same as the others, signalling the message that they are not grieving and therefore do not require support. Unless the process of grieving is completed however, they may have difficulties in developing future relationships, leading to potential emotional and social problems in later life.

Children need both the opportunities to be able to express their grief without fear of being ridiculed by their peers, and the chance to forget at times and get on with their normal daily activities.

A teacher dealing with children of junior school age should remember that many children might have difficulty in being able to verbally express their feelings adequately. It is therefore not uncommon to observe behavioural outbursts, fighting with other children, tantrums or hysterical crying. This tends to happen more at playtime and in situations that are less structured and controlled. This needs to be dealt with in a sensitive but firm way, thus providing both the bereaved and the other pupils with a sense of security in the fairness, consistency and stability of school discipline.

Teachers should also be aware that although instinctively they may wish to give special attention to a bereaved child, this can cause resentment among their peers, potentially leaving them more vulnerable.

Self-care for those working with the bereaved:

It's easy to overlook the stresses and anxieties placed on those dealing with the bereaved. In many instances these can be quite exacting and yet because our

sympathy and attention naturally rests with those grieving we can easily forget the emotional weight resting on the shoulders of those offering support.

The following points are worth bearing in mind.

- Anticipate possible reactions you may experience with grief and loss. Each one of us is likely to react differently depending on our age, personality, cultural and religious backgrounds. If you are ever unsure about how you should react to others' grief, honesty is always the best line of approach.
- Try to accept that you may experience emotional reactions yourself. Such an event might trigger thoughts of your own past grief experiences. You may find yourself doubting your own abilities. It is not unusual to experience existential thoughts and find yourself querying life's injustices, questioning perhaps your own beliefs.
- Panic attacks and worries about death – your own, or perhaps that of your family – may also become a preoccupation.
- Try to accept that giving such support can affect you in ways perhaps you had not considered. Normally these reactions will subside after a few days or weeks but if they persist do not be afraid to ask for professional support.
- Never take on too much. If you find that you are having difficulty in managing to cope, look to other support – a partner, friend or colleague.

It is important to remember that you alone cannot carry other people's grief.

KEY POINTS FOR SUPPORTING THE BEREAVED

- **Offer support, but don't be obtrusive.**
- **Share grief.**
- **Allow discussion.**
- **Allow expression.**
- **Talk openly but honestly about the person who has died.**
- **Be aware of other people's beliefs and values.**
- **Reassure those who feel that they are in some way to blame.**
- **Be honest with explanations.**
- **Be compassionate but firm.**
- **Be prepared to ask for extra help if needed.**
- **Expect regression.**
- **Never avoid the bereaved.**
- **Never pretend life will be the same.**
- **Never put a time limit on how long you expect the grieving period to last.**
- **Be honest at all times.**

School Policy

The role of the Head teacher/Deputy

In the event of the death of a pupil, a member of staff or a multiple loss within the school, the Head would obviously take control of the situation and ensure that the following points are remembered.

Inform **all** members of staff, including teaching, non-teaching, dinner ladies, kitchen staff, and site manager. If it is felt necessary (possibly because it is the weekend or holiday time) this should be by telephone. Otherwise an immediate staff meeting at the earliest possible time, perhaps with the support of the SMT or Leadership Team.

Arrange a set time, agreed by all staff, for teachers to inform their class what has happened. It is very important to agree on exactly what is to be said.

Make as much TA support as possible to be distributed throughout the school. Time must be allowed for different reactions to be accommodated.

Consider whether absent pupils need to be informed.

Inform governors.

Organise supply cover – again seeking help from the Infant School if necessary.

Write a newsletter to parents – should be on the first day. Give the basic facts, as would have been given to the children and alert parents to the possible distress their children will be feeling.

Deal with the media, if necessary. It is imperative that only the Head teacher/Deputy performs this role.

Remain in discreet contact with the deceased family, to ensure their wishes are respected.

Keep all staff, ex-members of staff and anyone else closely involved with the school, fully informed of any funeral arrangements / memorial service.

In the immediate future – remember to fully inform any supply staff, students on teaching practice and any parent helpers, of the situation.

Keep all staff up to date with any further information – regular, or if necessary even daily staff meetings may be held.

If need be to contact the school's religious contact member in order that they advise the senior management and to offer support as required

Lead a specially prepared assembly, after the children and staff have all been told.

Arrange for extra pastoral care / counselling, if it is felt necessary. Be responsible for arranging a memorial service or setting up of a permanent memorial – planting a tree, special award, seat/bench. This will encourage forward thinking.

Procedure to be followed in the event of the death of a current pupil and/or the death of a pupil's immediate family member.

Head teacher to inform class teacher and support staff immediately.

Head teacher to arrange an immediate staff meeting for all teaching and nonteaching staff – **everyone** must be included.

Facts must be made as clear as possible and it should be decided at his meeting, exactly what all the children will be told.

Class to be told as soon as possible, by own class teacher.

Teacher to be responsible for telling any children who are absent.

Rest of school to be told by their own class teacher at an agreed time.

This should be before any breaks or play times, which can be re-arranged if necessary.

Additional procedure to be followed in the event of the death of a member of staff

Head teacher to arrange an immediate staff meeting for all members of staff.

It is vital that everyone is present at this meeting.

An early morning assembly is a good time for this, enlisting the help of Deputy.

As above, the facts must be made clear and it should be decided at this meeting exactly what the children are to be told, and when.

Obviously some members of staff will be more distressed than others and some may not be able to return to class immediately. It will be the responsibility of the

Head teacher to make any arrangements to allow the staff some time to themselves, should they need it.

BEREAVEMENT

- B** Bereavement support. Bereaved children are entitled to receive the support they need.
- E** Expressing feelings and thoughts. Bereaved children should feel comfortable expressing all feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety and to be helped to find appropriate ways to do this.
- R** Remembering the person who has died. Bereaved children have a right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives if they wish to do so. This may involve re-living memories (both the good and the difficult) so that the person becomes a comfortable part of the child's continuing life story.
- E** Education and information. Bereaved children are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will happen next.
- A** Appropriate and positive response from our school. Bereaved children can benefit from receiving help and understanding from their teachers and peers.
- V** Voicing important decisions. Bereaved children should be asked if they wish to be involved in important decisions that have an impact on their lives (such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries).
- E** Everyone being involved. Bereaved children should receive support which includes their parent(s) or carers and siblings and which respects each child's confidentiality.
- M** Meeting others. Bereaved children can benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
- E** Established routines. Bereaved children should be able to choose to continue previously enjoyed activities and interests.
- N** No to blame. Bereaved children should be helped to understand they are not responsible and not to blame for the death.
- T** Telling their story. Bereaved children have a right to tell their story in a variety of ways and for those stories to be heard, read or seen by those important to them.

From Winston's Wish Website

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Useful telephone numbers and addresses:

- Winston's Wish Family Line - 0845 2030405 – national helpline offering guidance, information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including professionals and family members
- Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services
- CRUSE Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- PHE Identifying and responding to suicide clusters and contagion, Sept 2015 p40-45 , advice for coping with sudden death of a young person.
- PHE resources list as above p46-49