



## Bereavement Policy

**Responsible for policy:**  
Chair of Directors

**CC3: Quality Provision and Performance**



## Contents

Definitions .....	3
1. Responding to a death within the school community.....	4
2. Procedures To Be Followed In The Event Of A Death Within The School Community .....	5
3. Breaking Sad News.....	6
4. Memorials and Funeral Services .....	7
5. Return to School .....	7
6. Managing Anticipated Death and the Terminally Ill .....	7
7. The Place of Death and Bereavement within the Curriculum .....	7
8. Long Term Support for Those Who Grieve .....	7
9. Support for Staff who support Bereaved Pupils And Colleagues .....	8
10. Breaking sad news .....	8
11. Useful terminology .....	9
12. Memorial and funeral services .....	11
13. Links to other policies .....	12
14. Monitoring and Review.....	12

## Definitions

In this Bereavement Policy, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

- i **'The Romero Catholic Academy'** means the Company named at the beginning of this **Bereavement Policy** includes all sites upon which the Company is undertaking, from time to time, being carried out. The Romero Catholic Academy includes; **Corpus Christi, Good Shepherd, Sacred Heart, Blue Sky, SS Peter and Paul, St Gregory, St John Fisher, St Patrick, Cardinal Wiseman, Shared Services Team.**
- ii **'Romero Catholic Academy'** means the Company responsible for the management of the Academy and, for all purposes, means the employer of staff at the Company.
- iii **'Board'** means the board of Directors of the Romero Catholic Academy.
- iv **'Chair'** means the Chair of the Board or the Chair of the Local Governing Body of the Academy appointed from time to time, as appropriate.
- v **'Governance Professional'** means the Governance Professional to the Board or the Governance Professional to the Local Governing Body of the Academy appointed from time to time, as appropriate.
- vi **'Chief Executive Officer or CEO'** means the person responsible for performance of all Academies and Staff within the Multi Academy Company and is accountable to the Board of Directors.
- i **'Diocesan Schools Commission'** means the education service provided by the diocese, which may also be known, or referred to, as the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service.
- ii **'Local Governing Body'** means the governing body of the School.
- iii **'Governing Body Representatives'** means the governors appointed and elected to the Local Governing Body of the School, from time to time.
- iv **'Principal'** means the substantive Principal, who is the person with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the school.
- v **'School'** means the school or college within The Romero Catholic Academy and includes all sites upon which the school undertaking is, from time to time, being carried out.
- vi **'Shared Services Team'** means the staff who work in the central team across the Company (e.g. HR/ Finance)
- vii **'Vice-Chair'** means the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body elected from time to time.
- xvi **'Rainbows'** – is a well-respected national charity having a proven, positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives.

## 1. Responding to a death within the school community

We acknowledge that death, while being the inevitable end of life, is often unexpected and traumatic. Its unpredictability can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole school community.

We acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.

We acknowledge that the communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school website, text, telephone, email, or social media sites.

We will establish a “*School Bereavement Team*” to be chaired if and when necessary, by a ‘*Bereavement Team Leader*’ who will be the most senior appropriate member of staff in each of our schools.

School	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member
<b>Cardinal Wiseman</b>	Ms Burtonwood (Principal)	Miss Jones (Safeguarding Lead)	Mr Scott-Machin (Lay Chaplain)		
<b>Corpus Christi</b>	Mr McConville (Principal)	Mrs Cakebread (Vice Principal)	Mrs Huddleston (Pastoral Lead)	Zoe Stanbridge (Office Manager)	
<b>Good Shepherd</b>	Mr Kirby (Principal)	Mrs Baker (Learning Mentor)	TBC (Assistant Principal - SENCO)		
<b>Sacred Heart</b>	Mr Madia (Executive Principal)	Mrs Ellis (Principal)	Ms Ryan (Pastoral Lead)	Mrs Taggart (Office Manager)	Mrs Harding (Office Manager)
<b>SS Peter &amp; Paul</b>	Mrs Stanton (Principal)	Mrs Garvey (Vice Principal)	Mrs West (Child and Family Liaison Officer)	Mrs Osbourne (Higher Level Teaching Assistant)	Mrs Hurley (School Business Manager)
<b>St Gregory’s</b>	Mrs Scullion (Associate Principal)	Miss Downing (Assistant Principal)	Mrs Sweatman (Learning Mentor)	Miss Mullen (SENDCo)	Mrs Carpenter (Office Manager)
<b>St John Fisher</b>	Mrs Williams (Principal)	Mrs Finn (Vice Principal)	Mrs Galloway (Pastoral Support)		Mrs Pavlou (Office Manager)
<b>St Patrick’s</b>	Mrs Kingham (Principal)	Miss Liggins (Assistant Principal)	Mrs Doherty (Learning Mentor)	Mrs Duckett (Business Mgr)	

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by trained staff and when appropriate, through the use of age-related structured programmes provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

The Bereavement Team will ensure all staff and governors are aware of our policy and procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed annually or in the event of a death within the school community.

## 2. Procedures To Be Followed In The Event of a Death Within The School Community

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

Should we receive the news of a death, in **ALL** cases the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (*It is essential to have the facts confirmed*)
- Share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff and a member of the Bereavement Team.

The senior member of staff and the members of the Bereavement Team will:

- Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance and examples and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.

### The Sudden Death of a Parent Or Close Relative

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member break the news with the support of an appropriate member of staff. If this is not possible the Bereavement Team Leader will ensure someone suitable to break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

### The Death of A Pupil

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes,

We will:

- Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school; be that a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- Plan and tailor actions and approaches with consideration for the specifics of the circumstance (e.g. multiple deaths or violent incidents).
- Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available.
- Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, email, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances
- Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.

## **The Death of More Than One Pupil**

Should we receive such news, members of the *Bereavement Team* will be called together to be briefed with the salient facts and to decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident.

We will consider:

- Who will contact parents, if necessary?
- Who will meet with parents who arrive at school? Where?
- Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. Members of the Bereavement Team responsible for dealing with the media will prepare all necessary statements. Such statements should deal only with facts in as sympathetic a way as possible. We will agree a format of response to telephone inquiries, including approaches from the media.

## **The Death of A Member of Staff (or member of the MAC such as Director, Governor or Priest)**

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff; supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the appropriate senior member of staff will call together colleagues from the Bereavement Team.

We will use the guidance notes below:-

- a. Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- b. Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff.
- c. Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- d. Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes.
- e. Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- f. Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- g. It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way.
- h. Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death.

### 3. Breaking Sad News

Should we need to break sad news to children or young people we will first refer to the *“Guidelines for Breaking Sad News of a Death to a class or assembly”* detailed in Section 10.

### 4. Memorials and Funeral Services

Should we need to consider our involvement with any funeral services or memorial services or memorials, we will first refer to the *“Guidelines for Memorials and Funeral Services”*

### 5. Return to School

We acknowledge our responsibility to ‘keep a special watch’ on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and for at least a two year period and at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns. Members of our Bereavement Team will advise an appropriate response, depending on the individual’s circumstances.

### 6. Managing Anticipated Death and the Terminally Ill

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil’s sick relative or friend
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family’s wishes)
- Never give false hope to the child or young person
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so

### 7. The Place of Death and Bereavement within the Curriculum

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death. During November each year we will hold a special Mass of remembrance to celebrate the life of those members of our community who have died. A book of remembrance will be available for staff and children to place the names of deceased relatives and friends whom they wish to pray for.

We will ensure we have approval from the family of the deceased to record the deceased name in our school memorial book/memorial garden/memory tree. We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement. Small groups or 1:1 sessions will be arranged when children are in need.

### 8. Long Term Support for Those Who Grieve

We will offer pupils access to a range of age-related peer support programmes available through our trained staff provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB.

## 9. Support for Staff who support Bereaved Pupils And Colleagues

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.



*This policy and procedure is taken from "When Somebody Dies"*

*Rainbows Bereavement Support GB*

[www.rainbowsqb.org](http://www.rainbowsqb.org)

"WHEN SOMEBODY DIES"

## 10. Breaking sad news

### Guidelines for Breaking News of a Death to a Class, or School Assembly

On receiving news of the death of a student or a member of staff please follow the agreed procedures which will include the following points:

- Consult with the bereaved family concerned to ascertain their wishes.
- Those to be informed of a death should be gathered together in an appropriate place. This is best done in familiar groupings by someone they know.
- Whoever is giving the news should prepare themselves with what to say.
- Try to be as composed as possible as this helps to reduce the possible over emotional reaction of some students. Remember, however, it is perfectly human and understandable if you are moved by the events.
- Start by acknowledging that you have some sad news to give them.
- Be honest; give the news stating simple facts which have been checked for accuracy.
- Talk briefly about the person who has died.
- Let the students know of any arrangements already in place or of any arrangements agreed by the family.
- Underline how important their support is at this most difficult time and that it may be appropriate to involve them in a school response e.g. letters, flowers, cards, funeral attendance, memorial etc.
- Keep a watching brief throughout the assembly/meeting and for a period of time afterwards to pick up and support students and staff showing signs of distress.
- Keep in contact with the family suffering the loss. Make a note to remember the anniversary.
- Confirm any agreed arrangements by email or letter to parents and ensure details are posted on the school's website but not before all members of the bereaved family have been informed.

## 11. Useful terminology

**We offer these words below purely as an example. You may like to cut and paste phrases that you find helpful. We recommend that in the event of having to break the news of a death within the community that you take a little while to consider what you will say; how you will say it and how you and colleagues will manage the situation**

Start:

There is no easy way to say this to you and the event that has happened will affect us all in one way or another but I have to tell you...

You may have heard already...

That N... has died ... The information that we have and therefore can tell you about is that...

While we are all deeply shocked at this awful, sad news, before we do anything else and while we are all together to support and help each other, may I suggest that we be still now for one or two minutes to honour and remember N...

Thank you...

N... was a gift to our community here and we are so deeply grateful for the privilege of knowing him/her. In some way we are all better people because of N...

I ask you to close your eyes for a moment and to remember the unique part that N... played in our lives. We think of good times together, training, travelling on school trips, etc. We reflect on her/his many talents and blessings. (Examples: think of her/his delight on the occasion that she sang, that he scored that goal..., that he/she represented the school at...)

We all feel the loss of N... Place a circle of light around N...'s face now and think lots of love and thanks and hope for N...

We do not know much about what happens after death but it is possible that our loving thoughts and wishes and prayers this morning may help N... to a place of great happiness and peace.

There will be many opportunities for us to show our feelings during the next few days. As more details come to us, we will let you know what is happening and how the family would like us to be involved. There will be a variety of ways of honouring N's life and their life amongst us. Your ideas will be most welcome. Talk to ... but talk to any of the staff with your thoughts and feelings. We are all here to help each other; that is what our community is about.

A poet has written these lines to help us at a time like this; you may like it:

Name, may you continue to inspire us:  
to enter each day with a generous heart;  
to serve the call of courage and love,  
until we see your face again  
in that land where there is no more separation,  
where all tears will be wiped from our mind,  
and where we will never lose you again.

Appropriate ending ...perhaps the poem itself; music; a prayer; a moment of silence...

**Some Prayers / Words To Consider**

In addition to the suggested prayers below, please seek advice from local faith leaders and religious ministers. Websites offering prayers and words at times of bereavement may be helpful by searching “School assemblies at times of bereavement”

Some Christian Words and Prayers:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto Name O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him/her. May s/he rest in peace. Amen.

Heavenly Father we are stunned and shocked at the death of Name and as a community we have gathered together to share our sorrow, our bewilderment and our pain. We are all asking the question ‘Why?’ but there seems to be no easy answer.

We pray especially today for her/his friends, her/his classmates, her/his teachers and all who knew her/him.

We remember Name for ..... (List some characteristics or traits of the deceased)

We just don’t understand this Lord, but help us to let go of any anger or any desire for revenge.

May our tears be replaced by smiles when we think of Name, giving thanks for her/his life and all that she/he was to us and our school.

Help us now pick up the pieces once again and to carry on in life as we believe Name would wish us to.

Almighty God, you know that it will be very difficult for us at our school without Name.

Bring us the strength and the hope we need to carry on as Name would have wished us to do.

We thank you Lord for the special gifts Name brought to the school and shared with us.

May the Church and the wider community give thanks for the contribution Name made to the life of (village/town name) and may we redouble our efforts to serve each other, in honour of her/his memory.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they loved has died

We hold before God all those who are sad because someone they knew has died

We hold before God each one of us that we may support each other in the days to come.

We hold before God Name who has died. May s/he rest in peace. Amen.

Lord, we look up to you and receive from you

Your blessing

Your strength

Your most holy love.

In the darkest moments of our lives,

Let us remember that you are the light

You are the hope

You are the courage we need.

Lord God, help us find comfort in our sadness,  
Certainty in our doubt  
And the courage to live.  
Make our faith strong  
Through Christ our Lord,  
Amen

Circle us Lord  
Keep hope within;  
Keep fear without.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep peace within,  
Keep darkness out.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep calm within  
Keep turmoil out.  
Circle us Lord,  
Keep love within  
Keep anger away.

## 12. Memorial and funeral services

Funerals and memorial services are a way in which the family, friends and society can say goodbye to someone who has died.

The values of funerals and memorial services are:

- They acknowledge the deceased person and provide an opportunity for the person to be remembered,
- They give the opportunity for the death to be put in a religious context, if that is appropriate for the family and/or for the school community
- They give significance to what has happened,
- They provide a time when the bereaved try to come to terms with what has happened,
- They provide a time to express sorrow. Such an occasion helps in the grieving process and should be encouraged at every opportunity.

If the funeral is that of a parent, then the school may wish to send a representative or representatives in support of the pupil who has lost a parent. Should the school wish to send children then please check with the family of the bereaved and ensure permission has also been given from the parents of those attending.

If the funeral is that of a pupil or member of staff then the numbers of pupils and teachers wishing to attend may be considerable. Again, please check with the family of the bereaved and with the parents of those attending.

The following should always be considered:

- An appropriate member of the school Bereavement Team should always contact the family of the deceased to discuss funeral arrangements and to ascertain the family's wishes regarding representation from the school.
- Such wishes are paramount and should always be respected.
- If the school is to be represented at the funeral by pupils, it would be good if the pupils received support from members of the appropriate members of staff before and after the funeral service.

- Under certain circumstances a form/class close to the bereaved may wish to send messages of sympathy to the bereaved family. These messages may be in the form of poems, cards, flowers etc. The appropriate staff should ensure that all such presents are appropriate.
- Often a memorial service may be held in school. This could be a whole school assembly or within a class situation. The planning of such an occasion, choosing readings, poems, music, hymns, pictures, tributes etc. all assist in the grieving process. It might be appropriate to invite members of the bereaved family to share in such a service. Again, on such an occasion, staff members should be on hand to lend support to the pupils who could be upset when sharing in this part of the grieving process.

***For further guidance and for specific examples of memorial services please see 'Attitudes to Death'; the case studies provided and the list of books and websites.***

### **13. Links to other policies**

This Bereavement Policy is linked to our;

- Supporting Pupils with Mental Health Policy
- Stress and Wellbeing Policy

### **14. Monitoring and Review**

The Board of Directors delegate the implementation of this policy to the Academy Committee of each school. This policy will be reviewed by CC3 Quality Provision, Performance and Standards.

## Appendix 1

Critical Incidents in Schools EPS Guide

### Checklist of points to consider and discuss with CIRT



#### Breaking News – who to consider

- Absent staff/pupils
- Wider community
- Caretaker
- Dining room assistants
- Crossing patrol

#### Contact with Family

- One person nominated as the link person to check with parents/carers that actions are in line with their views/faith, etc.
- Sympathy, up to date information
- Passing on cards/messages

#### Feelings of Pupils/Questions

- (a) - Chairs/table, quiet corner of classroom
  - Pens, paper, blu-tac, pins
  - Allocated space on wall
  - E.g. get well cards
- (b) - Nominated questions/feelings time (E.g. beginning of day, before lunch, after lunch, before home time).
- (c) - Prayers? Wishes?
- (d) - Time out if needed

#### Class teacher Support

- Allow children to cry if needed and you may cry with them
- Be factual
- HT/SMT provide time out if needed/cover

#### Media

- Through LA media department

#### Identify Most Affected Groups

- Those closest to child, member of staff, parent/carer
- Those who have been bereaved recently

#### Funeral

- Attendance
- Representatives
- Agreement/request of family?

#### Personal Effects/Belongings of Pupil or member of staff

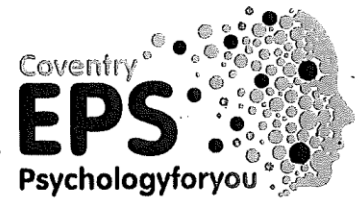
- Later on - contact with family to agree time etc.
- Don't take/remove anything without agreement/discussion with staff/pupils/family

#### Memorial/Remembrance

- As considered appropriate within the particular context of the school, the family and the wider community
  - e.g. book of condolence, tree of remembrance, ceremony, church service, prayers, photo gallery
- Allocated space/place for cards/notes etc.

## Breaking the news

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Tips to think about when preparing to break the news to members of the school community

- in small groups they are familiar with
  - by staff they are familiar with
  - identify those children closest to the person(s) as you may need to break the news with them in smaller groups
  - get together all staff who are to break news...outline procedure
  - tell facts simply and factually and avoid euphemisms
  - e.g. *"You may have seen in the newspaper or heard on the news of an accident near our school. X's mummy was involved and was badly injured and had to go to hospital. This morning she died. This is very sad"*
- pupils may react emotionally or not at all
  - you may react emotionally
  - leave space for reactions and information to be absorbed
  - try and have another member of staff in room
  - identify pupils who have had bereavements or traumas...they may have greater needs
  - allow time and space for feelings and reactions e.g. a particular corner of room
  - close discussion with a positive activity, e.g. a picture, card to bereaved or affected person(s)

## Death of a child: class teacher support



Tips to think about when supporting members of the school community following the death of a child.

- be factual
- be honest and truthful
- if you don't know the answer, say so
- avoid euphemisms and metaphors
- reassure child about the future
- explain it's okay to be sad or feel as they do
- personal possessions of child to be sensitively discussed with family member and nominated member of staff
- Long term memorial?
- immediate forum for children to remember dead classmate
- nominated colleague to go to share own feelings and answer questions
- identify children with recent bereavements
- allocate a place in classroom with paper, pens, etc. to write to dead child, express emotions with pen and paper
- consider activities to explore and help support feelings
- consider time at end of session/day to share feelings and answer questions
- monitor children's changes in behaviour
- remembering in the classroom - display, photos, book/folder, list of dates, e.g. birthday, date of death etc.
- be aware of religious/cultural beliefs

## Death of a member of staff: support and guidance



Tips to think about when supporting members of the school community following the death of a member of staff.

- be factual
- be honest and truthful
- if you don't know the answer, say so
- avoid euphemisms and metaphors
- reassure child about the future
- explain it's okay to be sad or feel as they do
- personal possessions of staff member to be sensitively discussed with members of family and nominated members of staff
- long term memorial
- immediate forum for children to remember staff member
- nominated colleague to share own feelings and answer questions
- identify children and staff with recent bereavements
- allocate a place in classroom with paper, pens, etc. to write to dead person, express emotions with pen and paper
- consider activities to explore and help support feelings
- consider time at end of session/day to share feelings and answer questions
- monitor children's changes in behaviour
- Remembering in the classroom-display, photos, book/folder, list of dates, e.g. birthday, date of death, etc.
- be aware of religious/cultural beliefs

## Children's understanding of death



### Early Years

- Does not understand the permanence and irreversibility of death e.g. cartoon characters.
- Euphemisms, e.g. gone to sleep, will be interpreted literally.
- May see death as a punishment or someone's fault...perhaps their fault.
- May show no response
- May have difficulty in expressing emotion.
- Often equate death with sleep.
- May ask questions e.g. Will you die?
- Need assurance that life is consistent and reliable.
- Very curious about life and death.
- May have little fear unless they have experienced a significant loss or trauma.

### 7-9 years old

- Understand the permanence of death.
- May have powerful feelings of responsibility for the death.
- Developing interests and curiosity in death e.g. ghosts, ghoulish imaginations.
- Language may not be able to express their true feelings – real outbursts of grief, anger, etc.
- Increased separation anxiety – leads to difficulty in concentration, reluctance to attend, withdrawn.
- Begin to fear own mortality.
- May be confused about the term death and euphemisms and metaphors.
- Need to satisfy their own curiosity, uncertainty, insecurity, etc.

### 9-10 years +

- Developing a mature understanding of death.
- Independence v dependence – bereavement can complicate this process.
- Self-esteem may be affected.
- Relationships may be affected.
- Academic pressures – may create pressure and affect performance.
- Starting to develop abstract and symbolic concepts of death.
- Are interested in catastrophic events and hearsay.
- May be asking 'Why does God let bad things happen to nice people', "How long does it take for a body to decompose?"

## Preparing for the pupil's return to school following bereavement or trauma



- talk through strategies of acknowledging the incident and pupil's feelings with classmates beforehand
- informally talk with pupil before being introduced back into group
- acknowledgement of feelings and incident with pupil, e.g. "I was sorry to hear about x" from adults and classmates
- beware of possible concentration difficulties
- integrate curriculum at sensitive pace and with sensitivity
- listen to any requests of pupil
- let them know of allocated person, space, etc. to talk to or withdraw to
- balance of routine and concern
- offer continued support if needed

## After a couple of weeks: signs to look out for



Below are a range of difficulties that a person may experience following an incident. Prolonged periods of difficulties with these areas would suggest that they are not coping adequately with the event.

- Appear unable to relax
- Unable to show interest in activities they were interested in before
- Weight loss
- Become involved with drugs/
- Alcohol/substance/theft (whereas before did not)
- Relationship difficulties
- Frustration
- Lethargy
- Dramatic mood swings
- Withdrawal and social isolation
- Changes in behaviour/appearance
- Always tired
- Sleep disturbance
- Seem more withdrawn
- Anger/uncontrollable anger
- Regular illness
- Anxiety
- Appear sad/depressed all the time
- Concentration difficulties
- Aggressive or violent behaviours
- Regular or frequent absence

## Children's responses to trauma: behavioural changes

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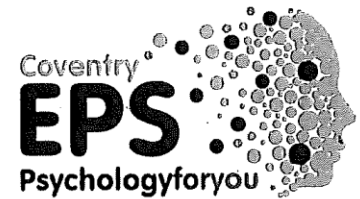


Below are a range of typical difficulties that a child may experience following an incident. Prolonged periods of difficulties with these areas would suggest that they are not coping adequately with the event.

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Frustration
- Withdrawal
- Lethargy
- Tiredness/sleep disturbance
- Hyper vigilance
- Relationship difficulties
- Changed eating patterns
- Concentration difficulties
- Regression in achievement

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## Listening to and talking with the child/young person



- This is better done by a person that the child/young person is familiar and comfortable with, e.g. class teacher. This can be done with individuals, small or larger groups, e.g. whole class.
- Let the child/group know that there will be time for talking, listening and sharing. Explain when this is likely to be.
- It may be useful to discuss, in advance, questions the children are likely to ask and how these might best be answered.
- Starting the discussion – you may want to start with what the children have been doing recently to ease them in.
- Drawing the discussion to an end – this should be at an appropriate moment when the adult judges best, e.g.
- “We’ve talked about these things for quite a while now. I think that’s enough for today. We may think about things tonight and we can talk again tomorrow”.
- Find time to listen seriously – when the child is ready or name a time and place when you would like to find a quiet time to talk, listen and share feelings.
- Let the child know it is healthy to want to talk, share, explore feelings.
- Let the child know it is fine to cry or be upset or to have feelings they cannot explain or may not have had before.
- A teacher/parent is a role model for the child. The child may need to take his/her cue from you as to how it is appropriate to behave. So, by crying because you are genuinely upset gives the child permission to behave similarly.
- Believe what the child says about his/her feelings, thoughts and reasons.
- Know that children, like adults, need to grasp the issues and explore until they feel satisfied.
- A child may need to tell his story over and over again.
- Pupils may want to talk about nightmares, dreams or even thoughts they have had. Comment that it is ok to have these thoughts, but do point out that other children may be dealing with things in a different way, in case the pupils believe they should have nightmares.
- Let the child know it can be helpful to cry by herself or with others.
- Know that the child may react unusually to some other events or triggers, e.g. by being more sensitive, or an object, event or person may remind child of the trauma.
- Provide a quiet and private place for the child to use as and when needed.
- Respect a child’s privacy. Do not force him to talk at times he would prefer not to.
- Help the child realise that grief is a normal process.

## Stages of loss



These stages do not describe sequential steps in a series which must be followed. They are phases that may or may not be encountered in the same or in a different order in the grieving process, or which may be encountered more than once.

- Stage 1. **Denial** The inability to believe that the death of someone close to you has really happened. Rarely an actual denial that the person has died but an inability to take in the full reality of the death.
- Stage 2. **Anger** This can be directed either inwardly at oneself or outwardly towards others. Can be the result of guilt or regret at having or not having done something, or it can be focussed on social, medical or even cosmic powers, or at the deceased person.
- Stage 3. **Bargaining** This refers to feelings of regret expressed by 'what if' and 'if only' thoughts in which the death could have been prevented. These thoughts are related to doubts about what could have or should have been done in order to prevent the death and to have spared the bereaved person the grief that he or she is suffering.
- Stage 4. **Depression** This refers to being overwhelmed by the reality of the situation as well as the resulting withdrawal and shutting down. Symptoms include diminished motivation, interest and energy along with dejected moods. This depression following bereavement is considered to be natural within grieving and not a clinical problem. It normally dissipates eventually without requiring professional psychological intervention or antidepressant drugs.
- Stage 5. **Acceptance** This refers to acknowledging the loss and its repercussions on the bereaved. It does not necessarily mean that people are okay with the reality of their loss, but rather that they have learned to live with it.

It can be considered that the first four of the five Stages of Loss are those phases that people pass through in order to reach the stage of accepting their loss. Denial, anger, bargaining and depression can be seen as a means to the end of achieving this acceptance, and completing the grieving process.

## Examples of letters for parents/carers



Dear Parents/Carers

You may have heard of the incident which happened **XXX** in which one of our pupils, **XXX**, was involved. **XXX** is in hospital and, unfortunately, he/she is critically ill. We are all shocked and saddened and send our sympathies to **XXX**'s family at this time.

*I have enclosed a leaflet from the Educational Psychology Service 'What Can We Say to our Children?' as guidance in supporting your children at this difficult time.*

I hope this information is helpful to you and we all hope (and pray – as appropriate) that **XXX** recovers soon.

Dear Parents/Carers

It is with great sadness that I share the news that one of our parents, **(NAME)** suddenly passed away yesterday morning after a short illness. We have shared this sad news with the children and they may require your support and understanding.

During this difficult time, I ask that you keep her husband **(NAME)** and their two children **(NAME)** and **(NAME)** in your prayers. We also pray for the wider family of **(NAME)** as her three sisters are parents of children at this school and her nieces and nephews **(NAME)** are in different classes throughout the year groups.

If you would like to contribute to a collection to support the family, please see **(NAME)** on the playground, who is organising this for us.

## Examples of letters for parents/carers



Dear Parents/Carers

As many of you will know one of our families in the school community has suffered a very sad bereavement.

Many parents have already expressed a wish to support the family and express their sympathy. The family have asked for no flowers, but if you would like to make a donation please could you hand this into school for my attention, I will then pass on to the family.

The family have asked me to pass on thanks for best wishes and messages of sympathy already received. All friends will be welcome at the funeral, details will be in the local paper.



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## Who else can help?

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### **Daisy's Dream**

Employ Family Workers who are professionally qualified and specifically trained in helping children and young people who have been bereaved at any age in any way. A Family Worker will work in school either directly with a bereaved pupil or will help and advice school staff who are already supporting a child within the school.

Tel no. 0118 934 2604 or e-mail [info@daisysdream.org.uk](mailto:info@daisysdream.org.uk)

### **Cruse**

A national charity offering help to all who are bereaved. Some areas have specially trained counsellors supporting children.

Tel no. 020 8939 9530

### **Child Bereavement Trust**

Offer training for professionals who care for grieving families.

Tel no. 0800 0288840

### **Winston's Wish**

A Gloucester based charity that supports bereaved children. They have a good range of publications and resources for bereaved children. New resources include situations where a parent/carer has a long term illness.

Tel no. 01242 515157

### **SAMM** (Support After Murder and Manslaughter)

Tel no. 0121 4511618

### **SOBS** (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)

Tel no. 0300 111 5065

### **RISE - Formerly Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

Tel no. 0300 200 2021



## Bibliography

### FOR CHILDREN UNDER 7 YEARS

#### Non-Fiction Books

- 'Remembering Mum' by G Perkins and L Morris. Publishers: A & C Black, 1991.
- 'Someone Special has Died' written and published by The Department of Social Work, St Christopher's Hospice, 1989.
- 'Ewen's Little Brother' by S Lamont. Publishers: Victoria Publications, 1989.

#### Fiction Books

- 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by E Carle. Publishers: Picture Puffin, 1974.
- 'Fred' by Posy Simmonds. Publishers: Picture Puffin, 1989.
- 'Grandpa's Slide Show' by D Gould. Publishers: Puffin 1990.
- 'Water Bugs and Dragonflies' by D Stickney. Publishers: Mowbray, 1984.
- 'When Uncle Bob Dies' by Althea. Publishers: Dinosaur, 1982.
- 'Grandpa' by J Burningham. Publishers: Picture Puffin, 1988.
- 'Badger's Parting Gifts' by S Varley. Publishers: Anderson, 1985.
- 'The Snowman' by R Briggs. Publishers: Picture Puffin, 1980.
- 'I'll Always Love You' by H Wilhelm. Publishers: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985.
- 'The Velveteen Rabbit' by M Williams. Publishers: Heineman, 1991.

### FOR CHILDREN 7-11 YEARS

#### Non-Fiction Books

- 'Lifetimes' by B Mellonie & R Ingpen. Publishers: Paper Tiger, 1993.
- 'Death' by K Bryant-Mole. Publishers: Wayland 1992.
- 'How It Feels When A Parent Dies' by J Kremenz. Publishers: Gollancz, 1991.
- 'Good Grief (1): Talking and Learning about Loss and Death' by Barbara Ward and Hamie Houghton. Publishers: B Ward & Associates, 1992.
- 'Good Grief (2): Exploring Feelings and Death with Under 11's. Publishers: B Ward & Associates, 1992.
- 'When Someone Very Special Dies: Children can learn to cope with grief' by Marge Heegaard.

#### Fiction Books

- 'Charlotte's Web' by E B White. Publishers: Puffin, 1962.
- 'A Taste of Blackberries' by D Buchanan-Smith. Publishers: Penguin, 1986.
- 'Mama's Going To Buy You A Mocking Bird' by J Little. Publishers: Puffin, 1985.
- 'Walkabout' by J Vance Marshall. Publishers: Puffin 1959
- 'Why The Whales Came' by M Mopurgo. Publishers: Madarin, 1987.
- 'Bridge to Terabithia' by K Paterson. Publishers: Puffin, 1980.
- The Narnia Books by C S Lewis. Publishers: Picture Lions, 1950's.