

- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.

Terminally Ill Pupils/Staff

- In the event of a child or member of staff becoming terminally ill, their wishes and those of their parents/guardians/next-of-kin should always be respected.
- Should the child wish to attend school, the class teacher may need to inform the class of the child's condition.
- Occasionally, the child may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying may be the best line of approach. Sometimes there is just no other way

Return to School (see Appendix 3)

- For the bereaved child or member of staff, returning to school may be traumatic. Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases, everyone (teaching, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/guardians of the bereaved pupil agree).
- Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering grief.
- Teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined.
- Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained and the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite.
- Staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement.
- Staff might keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate.

Talking to the Bereaved Pupil

- Try to be available to listen and support if possible, arrange a one-to-one session with the Motional team as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school
- Be calm and show them that you are listening and understanding by occasionally repeating what they have said and by acknowledging their emotions.
- If people feel like crying they should cry – crying is not a sign of weakness, but often a sign of deep feeling.
- Beware of using platitudes e.g. "I know how you feel", (young people may feel offended that you presume how they feel).

Do

- Let the child know you genuinely care
- Make time to be available and listen
- Accept all that the child is saying
- Allow them to express their feelings their way
- Let them know their feelings are normal
- Let them know that it is OK to cry
- Talk honestly and share your feelings
- Be honest
- Have eye contact
- Have appropriate physical contact
- Let them know that it is not their fault
- Be aware of the home situation

Don't

- Stop the child talking
- Tell them how they should or should not feel
- Avoid contact
- Change the subject
- Deny your pain and feelings
- Point out things for which they should be grateful

Appendix 1:

Useful Websites for dealing with loss and bereavement in the school community:

www.winstonswish.org.uk The Compassionate Friends:

www.tcf.org.uk

www.childbereavement.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

Websites updated with Coronavirus specific advice:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-pupils>

Useful telephone numbers and addresses:

- Winston's Wish Family Line - 08088 020 021– 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 <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Useful documents:

Managing grief: A guide for education professionals supporting bereaved pupils:
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/managing-bereavement-a-guide-for-primary-schools>

Appendix 2:

Books dealing with death and loss

As Big As It Gets - Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

Muddles, Puddles, and Sunshine – Diana Crossley We all Grieve (for children with SEND)

Winston's Wish The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

I Miss You - First Look at Death - Pat Thomson

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss Michaelene Mundy

Beyond the Rough Rock - Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide - Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley

The Goodbye Boat - Mary Joslin Extra Special: For When Someone You Love Dies - Anna Payne

Storybooks available in school

Grandpa- John Burningham Always and Forever – Alan Durant

The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

What on Earth Do you Do When Someone Dies? – Trevor Romain

Badger's Parting Gifts - Susan Varley

Saying Goodbye to Daddy – Judith Vigna Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children

Appendix 3:

Support and Further Suggestions for Teachers

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement. It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's development and emotional needs. The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death will disrupt the family for many months; in fact the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the child. To support the child it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- Bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the child, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved child is grieving, as it will be too distressing for them to acknowledge the child's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviours such as headaches, stomach-ache or sickness.
- The bereaved child may regress in behaviour, experience attachment issues, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the child to feel confused and unsafe.
- The child may feel resentment, jealousy or guilt towards the dead person or child. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the child and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a child gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help children to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.
- Teachers should remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family; looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of supporting and talking with their children.
- Teachers may require their own support structures. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining. Advice and support can be given by the Motional team within school.