



## **Barton Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School**

### **BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS POLICY**

#### **Introduction**

One in twenty children will experience the death of a close family member or friend, an event so common it will be familiar to every school. Death is a part of life and the sadness and distress it causes is a part of the process of grief by which we adapt to the loss. For children this process can lead to many difficulties that may affect their emotional wellbeing at school and in later life. Less common but deeply distressing can be the death of a member of the school itself. This policy is designed for members of the school community to use as a reference in the event of an expected or unanticipated death within the school.

#### **Managing the schools immediate response to bereavement**

A death may be expected or unanticipated. It is important to get accurate information to the people who need it, when they need it. Otherwise there will be considerable confusion as well as shock and upset. Death by suicide should be considered and managed no differently from other losses that effect school life and the guidelines suggested apply equally to death by suicide.

#### **Who Needs to be Informed and How?**

##### **Staff**

Ensure that you consider all staff (including support staff, clerical/administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors, care taking/cleaning staff). You need to decide who needs to know, as it is often worse if people hear through rumour. Make sure that staff who are absent are not left out. Staff will need support and to be able to express their feelings. The management of an event may mean that staff have to put their personal feelings aside temporarily but they too will need to grieve especially if they knew the person well or if the event triggers memories of previous losses. Ensure that staff are supported in a way that is appropriate for them. If counselling is available, ensure staff are aware of how they may access this. Working in partnership with local services can be extremely useful in getting support. The Specialist Teaching Team can be contacted via the Link Practitioner to support the school in the event of a critical incident or death of a school member.

##### **Parents**

It may be important to provide a presence before and after school on the playground. (Sample letters to parents are included in APPENDIX 1.)

##### **Pupils**

Before you break the news to the pupils, you need to have prepared a range of possible activities, which may require some equipment. Pupils need to have options as to what they do, but may also require some structure to the session. Judgment to decide how best to respond to their needs will have to be used, but it may not be appropriate to stay in a whole class situation for too long. Spreading the class amongst a range of activities enables the adults to move amongst pupils and to hold conversations with individuals or small groups as appropriate.

It is best not to break the news to pupils in large groups. Check if there is anybody who is not there who needs to know, such as absent pupils. Pupils should be informed about a death in groupings and surroundings that are as familiar and secure for them as possible. If possible, this should happen in their own classroom, in their usual class, with their own class teacher breaking the news. Sharing this kind of news in an assembly or in larger groups may not be helpful: it could potentially lead to a 'mass hysteria' situation. It is helpful to have a second person, such as a teaching assistant or member of the office staff in the room as well as the teacher, so that individuals who need attention can be given time. An atmosphere of 'trust' needs to be created. Having pupils sitting in a circle enables the teacher to see everybody and to make eye contact as appropriate. This can make it easier to judge individuals' reactions and needs. It may be useful to provide opportunities for subsequent discussions in pairs or small groups.

Pupils should be told as soon as possible after the death has occurred to avoid them hearing from other perhaps less appropriate sources, or through rumour. If it is possible to choose, do not break such news at the end of the school day or the end of the week. After lunch may be a good time, as it enables staff to provide opportunities for pupils to respond, but for half a day in the first instance rather than for the whole day.

It is very important to provide accurate and truthful information as far as possible, otherwise confusion can add to the shock and upset. Even if the news is difficult, it is best to give it - children can build up fantasies around a death, which can be worse than the reality and have to be unravelled later on. Inaccurate information can also lead to pupils doubting the information they have and uncertain if they can trust themselves or the adults around them. Obviously the age and understanding of the pupils should be taken into account when deciding how and what information to provide. Try to tell them in a normal tone of voice, using factual terms such as 'dead' or 'died' rather than 'passed away' or 'gone to sleep'. Explain that the person who has died is not coming back.

Once pupils have heard the news, and have had opportunities for questions and answers and for discussion, any of the following may be appropriate activities. It may be useful just to talk about putting together a box to keep special mementoes in. This might include belongings, photographs and so on. It may also include items such as bits of music or poetry. This gives pupils the opportunity to continue talking about the person who has died.

Other ideas:

- Paper and pencils/coloured pencils - children often like to write a letter or poem to the person who has died.
- Drawing and painting materials (including big brushes and paints) - many children like to express their emotions pictorially. Play-doh, plasticine and other modelling materials may be appropriate for the younger children.

### Governors

The Chair of Governors should be informed as soon as is practically possible.

### Others

There may be other members of the community who should be informed/involved, such as our Parish Priest or a Community Police Officer if appropriate and if they are not already aware.

### In the Medium Term

Adults should acknowledge children's grief; it may not be visible as their periods of mourning come in short spans. Try to be there for them when they do need support.

Naturally, parents want to protect a child following a death, but exclusion can bring feelings of anger at being left out and ignored. A child's grief can be complicated and sometimes delayed if they haven't been involved in the rituals following the death. Talk about death and the person who has died. Let the children see that it is natural to feel sad and to cry, to feel confused, angry and guilty. Grief is expressed in different ways. Everyone experiences a variety of feelings at different times, varying in length. All feelings are normal during grief. Very raw feelings can make people unpredictable, irrational and confused. Children may not be able to vocalise what they are feeling or experiencing. Listen to what they are really saying, and be aware of their fears. Questions should be answered honestly and truthfully, and in simple terms which are age appropriate. Grief may resurface in later life if incorrect facts are given. Children need reassurance that death cannot be caused by negative thoughts, sayings or bad behaviour. It is important that children are given opportunities to talk about their memories of the person in a positive way.

Children need to feel safe while grieving, and their routines at home and at school should be kept as normal as possible. Some behavioural problems may be experienced, and allowances should be made for them, whilst continuing to make boundaries clear. Most children cope with the death of a relative or close friend and most changes in behaviour gradually disappear. However if they persist or become severe, don't be afraid to seek professional help. The family GP is one route for this. Try to maintain on-going contact between home and school following a bereavement, so that both know that care and support is on-going and not only there immediately after the death. Parents need to keep other relevant services and groups informed such as youth groups.

The death of any child makes parents more aware of their own/other children's vulnerability. It is not unusual for parents to become obsessively protective or to constantly check on the health of their own child.

### Talking To Bereaved Parents

Parents will be grateful for the sympathy of the school staff, and will probably welcome any support and understanding the school can give. They are experiencing tremendous pain and bewilderment themselves in trying to cope with their loss. They may not understand the pain of other children or know how to help them. Show your concern and understanding for their situation. Where possible, offer practical support (e.g. being available to run errands, helping with other children or making suggestions as to where to find such support). Acknowledge what has happened to their child, offer your condolences and share their pain. Be there to listen even if you feel helpless and inadequate ~ they want to share their feelings of grief. Allow them to talk about their child as often as they want; share the special qualities of their child with them. Try not to change the subject when they mention their dead child; it hurts even more when the issue is ignored or avoided. Reassure them if appropriate that everything possible was done for their child and that the best care and attention was given by everyone concerned. It is important to empathise with the family and not to draw parallels with your own experiences. It is insensitive to say that they have other children or could have another child. Children are individuals and cannot replace each other. Other children in the family need time and attention as they are grieving too, and the parents may not be in a position to provide all of the support they need. Try to avoid telling the parents what they should be feeling or doing as grief is personal and everyone is different. It can take a long time, even a number of years to work through the grieving process. They will never 'get over' the death of their child, but will gradually learn to live with their grief with the help and support of family and friends.

### Celebrating a Life - Practical Approaches

When a member of the school community has died, it is important to show that they are not forgotten after the period immediately following the death. Doing something in memory of someone who has died is part of the healing process. Ways of showing that we remember the person, and both happy and sad times when they were alive, need to include the children and can take place with the whole school and in individual classes. Suggestions include:

#### Celebration of life service / assembly

Family members of the person who died can be invited into school to share in a service/assembly in their memory. If possible, they should be consulted about its style and content. It may also be appropriate to invite others in the school community (for example Governors, other parents, LEA representatives). Favourite songs, poems specially written, paintings done in memory of the person and/or a special story could be included. Pupils should be encouraged to take an active part in preparing and presenting the service. The extent to which the service has a religious dimension will also need to be considered.

#### A memory table

A small table could be arranged in the classroom, on which pictures, photographs, flowers, mementoes, poems etc. can be placed. Staff and parents should be encouraged to be involved in this if they wish, but it should be the pupils' decision on how to dismantle it, as this is part of 'moving on'.

#### Memorial

This could be in the form of planting a tree or special plant in memory of the person who has died. Small notes from the children can be buried with the tree when it is planted. This may also form part of a memorial service.

#### A Scrapbook

A book filled with pictures, poems, photographs, letters etc. compiled by the class or school, which could be given to the family of the person who has died. This is a tangible souvenir of the person and his or her time in school.

#### A Collage

This is similar to the scrapbook idea, but comes in the form of a picture, which can be displayed within the school.

### Long Term

Significant anniversaries around the death, birthdays and Christmas may well bring a resurgence of grief. It is worth keeping a record (with parental consent) of these so that adults who come into contact with those most affected can be aware that any changes in behaviour may be due to a 're living' of the experience. A sticker on a pupil's records alerts others to the fact that there has been bereavement and that there is further information inside.

The normal data protection procedures for any information which is held should be followed. This will probably take the form of written consent from parents for the school to hold the information. Further information could include:

- name and relationship to the pupil of the person who has died.
- the cause and date of the death.

It may be useful to make a note of any significant events around the death.

- who else is at home.
- the name and age of any siblings.

- the pupil's reaction to the death.
- the family religion.

Transitions between schools can be eased with this information readily available especially if a sibling is due to start school, the family decides to relocate or the pupil is at the end of Key Stage

#### Ideas and Further Practical Approaches To Celebrating A Life

- An award

This could be presented at the end of each term in memory of the person who has died. This could be an award in a subject or area in which the person was particularly interested or skilled. Otherwise this could be awarded to someone who has shown particular qualities such as sensitivity, exceptional kindness or bravery.

- A Plaque

This can be placed in a new building or annex or even an existing areas, which had special significance for the member of the school community who has died.

#### **Procedure In The Event Of A Death In The School Community**

The school will act in the planned and agreed manner set out below. All members of staff will be aware of what is expected of them and will be able to carry out their role in a manner, which is consistent with the values of our school.

- Dissemination of Information

The Headteacher will be responsible for putting a plan of action into motion following a death. Information about a death may come in an obvious way, e.g. a letter or less directly. In either case, the recipient should pass it to the Headteacher as soon as possible. Once the information is received, the Headteacher will contact all the members of staff available on the premises to inform them, and the school secretary will contact all other staff members not present.

- Immediate action

Arrangements to allow staff, pupils and others to express their feelings will be put on the school notice board in the staff room. If required quiet areas will be set aside for groups to, share feelings or individuals to talk one to one and lists of support contacts made available. If the death is of a member of the school community, the Headteacher will be responsible for dealing with any of their belongings and office staff will make sure appropriate written information is amended (lists, registers etc.)

- Further action

The school will do its utmost to allow staff or pupils to attend a funeral. If this becomes impractical due to large numbers, or lack of teaching cover, a school service will be held for the whole community at the same time as the funeral. In PHSE and Religious Education lessons and Acts of Collective worship we aim to ensure that our pupils have the attitudes, skills and knowledge they will need to cope with a death. In these sessions the staff could help pupils find an acceptable way to remember the life of someone who has died.

The Headteacher will co-ordinate the school's response and will be vital in creating the most appropriate atmosphere. The Headteacher as far as possible will tell the staff, simultaneously. A list of staff will be used to ensure that all staff have been informed. This will not be left to chance. Pupils will be told in school face to face. A letter will tell parents on the same day. Absentees will be noted so that they are also informed. The secretary will be responsible for charting absentees and ensure that the information has been communicated. The school will have a range of strategies, which it may adopt after a

significant loss. Decisions about these will be made in consultation with the family/families involved. An individual teacher or small group of teachers will be identified as the family's point of contact. This group will ensure that contact with the parents does not end abruptly.

### Parents

In acknowledging the role of the school in dealing with bereavement, the school must not undermine the place of parents in this. Parents are the most important people in helping their children to overcome bereavement. The school will support parents in this by:

- Sharing with parents the intentions of the school to act in a particular way in the event of a death. Offering guidance to parents on how they might act and information about other services available to them.
- Keeping parents fully informed about the actions of the school throughout the immediate period of grieving.
- Inviting parents to attend any school response to the death e.g. a memorial service.

### Outcomes

It is hoped that this considered approach will have the following outcomes.

Staff will:

- Have the opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenging role they face.
- Be given time and space to work through their own feelings.
- Become aware of the skills needed and be offered training to develop them.

Pupils will:

- Be offered support by sensitive, trained staff.
- Grow as a result of this experience and be more able to come to terms with their feelings. Develop a sense of perspective about their own lives and the fears this might engender.

The school will:

- Have clear expectations about the way to act, not simply react.
- Promote a sense of unity and identity in the whole community.

The family will:

- Have real support to draw on.
- Be given an opportunity to reinforce positive feelings alongside their feelings of loss.

The parents will;

- Be drawn into closer partnership with the school.
- Be given guidance on how to support their children.
- Have time to prepare their own responses to bereavement.

Reviewed by FGB on ~~14<sup>th</sup> February 2024~~ **26<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

## APPENDIX 1 Sample Letters To Parents

Different schools have used these letters at different stages. They are intended as a guide for whoever may be sitting down to write a letter at a very difficult time. Phrases or complete letters may be helpful or you may find different words to suit your needs.

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that during the night our teacher died. She had become increasingly poorly over the last few days and in the end died peacefully, with her family at her side. We have told the children during the day, some of whom are experiencing some distress.

On behalf of the school community I have expressed our sympathy to her family. I am sure that in the weeks to come we will be finding our own way to celebrate the life that she had with us here at Our School.

Dear Parents,

It is with much sadness that I am writing to inform you of the death of our pupil. Our pupil died unexpectedly during the early hours of the morning. I am sure you will wish to join us in expressing condolences to his/her family at his time.

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you of the death of a pupil from our school. We learned this morning that our pupil has died after (a short illness/tragic accident or other appropriate phrase ). Mr and Mrs have told me that our pupil died peacefully in hospital last night. The pupils in school were told by their teachers this morning and lessons were suspended to allow them time for their individual and shared sorrow. It is our intention, with Mr and Mrs... 's permission, to hold a Celebration of Life service on the same day as the funeral will be taking place, in order for the whole school to be part of this time. You are more than welcome to join us at this service. I enclose a book list with one or two suggestions that might help you to help your child with their grief.

Dear Parents

On behalf of all the staff I would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone for the support, sympathy and concern we received throughout last week. The letters, words and flowers helped ease our sadness. Our hearts go to Mr and Mrs. and their family. They will need our support for many months to come. I know that despite their pain and sorrow they were greatly comforted by the love and genuine compassion shown by the whole school and the local community. The special assembly and funeral service gave tangible evidence of this compassion. The remembrance table will remain in the hall for at least another week. Please do continue to add to it, or visit at any time. Its presence has been a tremendous release and comfort for many of us.

I am concerned that the impact this tragedy has had on all of us will still result in many different reactions for some considerable time. You and your children may need some extra counselling in the future and so I thought it would be beneficial to list some addresses and telephone numbers of professional organisations, which may be able to help. Please do not hesitate to talk to me, or any member of the staff, if you are concerned about your child. Thankfully what we experienced as a school is extremely rare. I have no doubt that the experience has drawn us closer and has created new bonds but it will also leave a lasting heartache. Together I know we will ensure that it is also a positive experience, which will enable us, the children and adults to be more sensitive and compassionate human beings

## APPENDIX 2 Stages of Grief

Grief is a normal, essential response to the death of a loved one. It can be short lived or last a long time depending on the personality involved, the closeness of the relationship, the circumstances of the death and previous losses suffered. Death of a husband, wife or child is likely to be the most difficult.

In many cases, this grief can take the form of several clearly defined stages. Very often a bereaved person can only resume a normal emotional life after working through these stages. However there is not always a neat progression from one stage to the next. A person can seem to progress and then regress to a previous stage. This can be particularly evident if the person is subject to multiple losses or other situations of loss such as a relationship breakdown.

### SHOCK and DISBELIEF

This happens when our model of the world is upset. One not only loses the person but life also can feel that it has lost its meaning. Shock can take the form of physical pain or numbness, but more often consists of complete apathy and withdrawal or abnormal calm, in some cases even anger. Numbness can act as a defence so we are able to cope with the immediate jobs and needs.

### DENIAL

This generally occurs within the first 14 days and can last minutes, hours or weeks. In this stage the bereaved person behaves as if the dead person is still there, no loss is acknowledged. The dead person's place is laid at meal times, for example or a spouse may make arrangements for them both to go somewhere together.

### GROWING AWARENESS

Many feel at this stage that they are abnormal because they have never before experienced the waves of savage feelings that surge through them and over which they temporarily have no control e.g. tears, anger, guilt, sadness and loneliness. Some or all of the following emotions may be experienced:

- a) Yearning and pining – The urge to go over the death, trying to find a reason for the death, visiting where it happened.
- b) Anger- This can be against any or all of the following; the medical services, the person who caused the death in the case of an accident, God for letting it happen, the deceased for leaving them.
- c) Depression -The bereaved person begins to feel the despair, the emptiness, the pain of the loss. It is often accompanied by feelings of redundancy, lack of self worth, and point to anything. If a person can cry, it usually helps to relieve the stress.
- d) Guilt -This emotion is felt for the real or imagined negligence or harm inflicted on the person who has just died and feel they could have loved them better. The bereaved can also feel guilty about their own feelings and inability to enjoy life.
- e) Anxiety -In extreme cases anxiety can even become panic -as the full realisation of the loss begins to come through. There is anxiety about the changes and new responsibilities that are taking place and the loneliness looming ahead. There may even be thoughts of suicide.

### ACCEPTANCE

This varies enormously from person to person. It used to be a common belief that this generally occurred in the second year after the death has been relived at the first anniversary, however more recent research points us to a process which may take considerably longer but is still within the realms of the 'normal' grieving process. When reached, the bereaved person is able to accept the death and relearn the world and new situations with its possibilities and changes without the deceased person.

### APPENDIX 3 Children's Reactions To Death

It must be stressed that these stages are only intended as guidelines and children may not fit neatly into these categories. Bereavement in childhood may advance the child's understanding of death and its consequences. It may therefore happen that a child will exhibit features described as occurring at another stage in development regardless of his or her age.

Age of child	Concept of death	Common reactions	Guidelines for helping the Child
0-2 years	No concept of death. Awareness of separation by absence. Regression to an earlier stage of development. Feeding/sleeping/toileting difficulties.	Lengthy separation may lead to despair and detachment Stranger anxiety.	Keep parents involved. Help the parents deal with the crisis so they can comfort the child. Meet the child's physical needs - food, rest, warmth and comforting. Follow normal routines. Meet stimulation as appropriate.
2-5 years	Death seen as non-permanent, reversible. May feel responsible for the death by thoughts or behaviour.	Fears of abandonment and separation, intrusive procedures and mutilation. Crying, kicking, biting, holding on when separated from familiar people. Dislike of change in routine. Sleep problems, nightmares, and bedwetting. Regression in behaviour	Keep parents involved. Help the parents deal with the crisis so they can comfort the child. Have favourite toy/blanket available for child. Lots of positive reinforcement.

5-8 years	Beginning to understand permanence. Knows that death is not caused by thoughts or actions. Interested in death rituals.	Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression. May act out behavioural difficulties at home/school. May become a 'perfect' child. Regression may accompany stress. Range of mood swings and emotions. Play, stories, drawings may reveal feelings and fears.	Play, stories and drawing will often reveal a child's inner feelings and fear. The child wants to understand what is happening -give honest, concrete explanations. Continue contact with as many activities and for as long as possible. Allow short-term regression and dependence on parents.
9-12 years	Death seen as final, inevitable and universal. Awareness of own death. Death often associated with violence. Role play connected with death and funeral scenes.	May exhibit some psychosomatic symptoms and or depression. Able to rationalise death and loss and accept it in a positive way. Able to work out possible implications for the future. Normal behaviour with occasional changes.	

## APPENDIX 4 Supporting Staff

Dealing with grief in children is emotionally demanding for anybody. Helping children work through the emotions of grief and so adapt to the loss will place stress on the staff in the following ways:

- They may well be grieving themselves, especially if they knew the deceased. The loss may re-awaken previous losses or bereavement.
- They may not feel comfortable with talking about emotions.
- The emotional demands are stressful and in themselves, may be sufficient for staff to need support. However, if they have additional pressures this may exacerbate the stress.
- If staff are managing a situation they may not give full attention to their own needs and feelings.
- There may be a strong identification with the child or family.

Staff often find it difficult to ask for extra support for themselves. Some fear it may be perceived as a sign of weakness or not coping. Support should be offered as a matter of course to all of those dealing with bereavement.

Ongoing monitoring for signs of continued anxiety, guilt, feelings of helplessness or any changes, can show if staff need more support. It is useful to recognise and acknowledge the difficulties of working with bereavement, to ensure staff look after their own needs and do not feel guilty about finding activities which, they enjoy and are relaxing.

One of the most effective ways of helping is taking time to talk things through as much as possible with individuals and in staff groups. Other strategies may include a staff session on stress management techniques or bringing people in who are experienced in working in this area and are able to talk about coping strategies.

### Employee Assistance Programme

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have partnered with Health Assured to provide all employees with access to a 24 hour confidential Employee Assistant Programme, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There is unlimited access to employee support via the EAP Free Help Line 0800 030 5182. Where initial support leads to structured counselling sessions, either by telephone or face-to-face, employees can have up to 6 sessions. The strictest of confidence is guaranteed and Health Assured work to a robust, professional code of conduct in line with The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) code of ethics. You will have access to qualified, experienced counsellor who can help you to cope with both the emotional and practical issues you may be facing. [www.healthassuredeap.co.uk](http://www.healthassuredeap.co.uk)

### Cambridgeshire Workplace Chaplaincy

Cambridgeshire Workplace Chaplaincy looks after the spiritual needs of anyone in a work setting (including those in self-employment) who may find the presence of a chaplain helpful. The ministers are available to people of any faith or none. For more information contact [www.cambsworkplacechaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.cambsworkplacechaplaincy.org.uk)

### Education Support Partnership

Education Support Partnership is a 24-hour confidential counselling service, offering support and advice on any problem. The phone line is available free to all teachers and

## APPENDIX 5 Bereavement In Differing Cultural Groups

Issues of ethnic and cultural identity are extremely important to consider when a child is bereaved. Families may need access to support from members of their own religious community. The grieving process is largely determined by family, community, national or ethnic origin. It is important not to make assumptions or ignore these issues in an attempt to disguise a lack of knowledge about other communities and different customs. Do not be afraid to admit you may not know or fully understand the values and customs of other communities.

This section seeks to explain beliefs and customs in some major faith communities. Those which school staffs are most likely to meet are covered here, but there are other communities not detailed. Further information can be obtained through our LA Link Advisor,

### Faith Perspectives and Customs Associated with Death

#### Christianity

Christians believe in life after death, which they base on the resurrection of Jesus and his promise of eternal life. Different Christian denominations have their own form of ceremony although the basic beliefs and practices are held in common. The bodies may be cremated or buried. If a person has an association with a particular church, the family and congregation may hold a funeral service there before going to the cemetery or crematorium. The funeral service may have a 'celebration of life' approach, which can be flexible in content or follow a set pattern. In addition some churches hold memorial services sometime after the funeral. In the Church of England it is common practice to remember those who have died in an annual 'All Saints' Service. In Catholic churches people say mass on behalf of those who have died, and may light candles and pray for their souls to help them in progress towards heaven. The Church of England liturgy also includes prayers for those who have died, but Free Church Christians (e.g. Methodists, Baptists, United Reformed Church) do not pray for the dead, since they believe what happens to them after death has already been determined by their life and faith.

#### Buddhism

In common with most Eastern religions, Buddhism holds to the concept of rebirth. Buddhists believe that when a person dies, the Karma (the accumulated effect of a person's actions) that a person has developed in this life carries on having its effects. Buddhist funerals are dignified but not sad events. The body is usually cremated and the ashes scattered or buried. A tree may be planted where the person's remains are scattered. When someone dies, the relatives often give gifts to monks. They ask that the merit they gain from doing this should be shared with the person who has died. Buddhists always look after graves very carefully. The tree being planted shows the earth bringing forth new life. This is because of the belief that humans are a part of a cycle of life and death. Buddhists do not believe in God, so any act of remembrance should make no reference to a deity.

#### Hinduism

Hindus believe in reincarnation. The basis of this is the belief that it is the ultimate desire of each soul to return to the Supreme Spirit some day. To do so it must be clean and the purification needed is hard to achieve in one lifetime. So each soul has to be born over

and over again, gradually improving itself each lifetime until it is finally ready to return to its creator. If possible it is useful to ask the family about the procedures they wish to follow, or consult the temple. If this is not possible the following should be observed in the event of a sudden death:

Do not remove jewellery, sacred threads and other religious objects. Cover the body with a plain sheet without any religious markings. Avoid washing the body, as this is part of the funeral rites carried out by relatives. Post-mortem examinations are not prohibited by Hindu belief but the idea may be distasteful to many Hindus. All adult Hindus must be cremated, not buried, but infants and young children may be buried and it is useful for this to be done as soon as possible, preferably the same day. Traditionally, the eldest son has the responsibility for making the funeral arrangements. White clothing is worn as a sign of mourning.

### Islam

The Islamic faith places a great deal of significance on death and the funeral rites of deceased Muslims. Muslims believe the soul leaves at the point of death and that the body does not belong to the individual but to God. A dying patient may want to sit with his/her face towards Mecca. Another Muslim usually a relative, may whisper the call to prayer in the dying parson's ear. Muslims prefer the body to be buried within 24 hours of death. Islamic law decrees that a body must not be interfered with once the soul has departed. On no account must a Muslim be cremated, as this would prevent the soul from reaching heaven. Most mosques have mortuary facilities. Usually after the release, the body is taken to the Mosque for ritual washing and prayers. Traditionally Muslims are not buried in coffins, the bodies being wrapped in clothes, sometimes in a white garment previously worn on pilgrimage. In Britain, however it is more usual for the body to be placed in a (flimsy) coffin before being returned home for viewing followed by immediate burial. The head of the dead person will be turned to face Mecca. Women do not attend the burial service. Men wear white clothing as a sign of mourning and purity.

### Judaism

The Jewish Scriptures make little reference to the afterlife; the Talmud warns against speculation on the grounds that 'no eye has seen it'. Jewish people believe that God will reward them by allowing them to enter into his presence or punish them by making them go through a cleansing process first. All Jews hope to have the strength to be able to say the last prayer (Shema) before they die. The last rites and funeral arrangements are carried out by the Chevra Kaddisha (holy society). Their responsibilities include washing the corpse and preparing it for burial. Jewish law does not permit cremation. Note that it is considered disrespectful to delay a burial, which should take place within 24 hours of death, other than in exceptional circumstances. Men are usually buried in the prayer shawl (Tallit) in a simple unpolished coffin. It is also considered disrespectful to leave the dead person alone and someone will stay with them until the funeral. The eyes should be closed at or soon after death. The immediate family will contact a Jewish undertaker. Jewish custom recognises for periods of mourning:

The time between death and funeral when the mourner is released from all other obligations

- The week after the funeral when the mourner stays at home, receiving fellow synagogue members to pray
- The first month allows for a gradual return to normal life
- A further period of mourning continues for the next 11 months, each morning male mourners recite the Kaddish (a prayer praising God)

### Secular Humanism

Secular humanists value human life and personality, but do not believe in God or in an afterlife. Humanist funerals remember and honour the person who died, whilst facing the finality of death with courage.

### Sikhism

Considerations similar to those for Hindus apply. Sikh dead are cremated rather than buried and the ceremony should take place as soon as practicable. Sensitivity and respect for the wishes of the deceased's relatives as far as possible should be practiced as always. Special regard should be given to jewellery and clothing as some may have special significance. The long hair is kept up in a knot at the top of the head and is covered by a turban, which has also become a religious symbol. The uncut hair should be left intact. White is the colour for mourning.

### Travellers

In Traveller communities, traditions and customs associated with bereavement and grieving will vary from family to family. Unless the family is well known to you, no assumptions should be made about practice. Travellers may belong to anyone of a number of different churches; Church of England, Roman Catholic, Free Churches or Evangelical and Charismatic Churches.

Funerals are particularly important social events, reinforcing family ties. Word of a death spreads quickly through a closely inter-related community and over great distances. Family and friends travel considerable distances to pay their respects and to 'follow' the deceased. Children could be absented from school for some time to attend funerals. After a funeral the families often remain in the vicinity with family members for some period of time. Families nearly always bury their dead. For many families it is very important to be present in hospital, or wherever, at the moment of death. Keeping vigil next to the coffin is common practice. The day before the funeral the coffin is left open for viewing. Children are generally not excluded from the funeral. Many large floral tributes and sometimes hundreds of mourners, often accompany the funeral. Those that cannot be placed on the coffin travel in an open-back lorry in the funeral procession and it is considered an honour for the owner to be able to do this. Displays are commissioned as replicas of favourite objects of the dead person. There is much pride expressed in the floral displays and it is rare for families to request a donation to a charity rather than flowers. Traditionally, when mourning, close family members wear black for twelve months from the day of the funeral. Again traditionally, trailers of the deceased were burned after the funeral, with many of their contents still inside, but not the body. Graveyards are visited regularly and wreaths are laid at Christmas and at anniversaries for years to come. In some families the dead are referred to as 'my poor' plus the person's name and the present tense for many years after death. Photographs of the dead family members are highly valued. Recent arrivals of Roma and other Travellers from Europe, some of whom may be Moslems, will bring their own traditions with them adding to the diversity of the practice. For

### APPENDIX 6 Meeting The Needs of Bereaved Children

Worden (1996) conducted a two year study of bereaved children which has detailed some of the needs of bereaved children:

#### Accurate Information

Children need to have an age appropriate understanding about the causes of death. In the absence of this information they are likely to make things up, to fill in the gaps in their knowledge or even to believe that they were in some way responsible. Make sure the child does not have any misconceptions.

#### Continued Involvement and Inclusion in Daily Activities

However deep the despair or tragic the loss, life still needs to continue and the child's involvement in a school that carries on in a familiar way is of great help. Getting a child

back to school reasonably soon after the loss and getting their full involvement in the academic and social life of the school can be important. How long this takes will depend on the child.

#### Have Fears and Anxieties Addressed

Sometimes children will have fears about what will happen to them or surviving members of the family. These may be realistic or reflect imagined worries. However the child needs to have these fears listened to and addressed. By giving accurate and age appropriate information, however difficult, the child becomes more able to cope. Children are often able to deal with very difficult situations if they are trusted with the truth and are given support to deal with it. Children may have awkward questions that adults struggle to find the answers for. These questions should be answered as fully as possible and with respect for the child's curiosity. If you do not know the answer then do not be afraid to say so. You can then endeavour to help the child find out how they may get an answer.

#### Do Not Presume You Know What The Child is Feeling

Take time to inquire and listen to their answers. We may think we know what the child is feeling but this may be based on our own experience or assumptions. It can be useful to ask; 'I don't know what it is like for you. Can you tell me how you are feeling?'

#### Reassurance That They Are Not To Blame

Younger children especially may feel that they are in some way responsible for the death. Whether this fear is openly expressed or not it can be useful to reassure the child that there was nothing that they did that could have caused the death. Giving the opportunity to talk also offers the child the opportunity to test out their ideas.

#### Modelling Appropriate Grief Behaviours

Children can learn about how to make sense of their feelings by watching how others react. Teachers are extremely important in showing how to adapt. They can also do this by sharing their own experiences of loss and talking about their feelings of both happy and sad memories. Raising the subject shows that it is appropriate to remember the dead. These simple techniques can make a tremendous difference.

#### Offering Opportunities To Remember

However long after the loss, it is still helpful to give opportunities for the child to reminisce. As the child grows older, and can think about a lost parent in more sophisticated ways, remembering gives the opportunity to stay connected with that parent and to answer new questions as they arise. To have the chance to do this outside the family is useful. Inquiring about mementoes, how the person is remembered, especially around anniversaries and other special days, gives the chance for the child to think about the importance of remembering.

#### Validation of Feelings

Grief brings up complex and conflicting feelings. Again, careful talking and listening gives the child a way to work through this process. It is very easy to not accept the feelings of sadness in a child. For instance, by offering reassurance that things will get better. However too much reassurance may not allow a child to express their feelings. It is however, by such expression of feelings, which may be done through talking, crying, drawing, or playing that allows a child to move on.

#### Help With Overwhelming Feelings

Sometimes a child may not want to express strong feelings of sadness, anger or guilt. Often writing, play or arts activities may present opportunities for these feelings to come out. If they can do so in an environment that is safe for them and others this can help make these feelings more manageable.

#### Continued Monitoring

Often a child will appear to be coping well. They may wish to keep their grief hidden from their friends, family and even themselves. Problems may appear several years later. Do not presume that if everything looks to be fine, then attention can be relaxed. Constant monitoring is needed.

Allow Expression of Feeling Through Play, Drawing, Music or Written Forms

All of the arts allowing for emotional expression can provide opportunities for the child to express and work through the complex emotions they feel and gain new understandings. At the basis of many art forms, especially drama is play. This can be a very powerful way of enabling a child to gain insight into what has happened and what feelings they and others have.

Worden, .T. W. (1996). Children and Grief. When a parent dies. Guildford Press.

## APPENDIX 7 Resources

The Personal Social and Health Education base at Stanton House, Stanton Way, Huntingdon, has a database of resources on all aspects of PSHE including Bereavement, for children and young people from 4 -18 further information about this database can be accessed by phoning the base on 01480 376256

### Stars Children's Bereavement Support Services

Stars offers specialist bereavement support and counselling for young people, aged 0-25years within Cambridgeshire, who are finding it difficult to cope with the loss of someone significant in their life. It also provides support for young people and their family when someone close to them is dying. The counselling service is completely confidential, professionally regulated and free of charge to the young person. For more information contact Stars <https://talktostars.org.uk/what-we-do/about-stars/> CPDC, Foster Road, Trumpington, Cambridge. CB2 9NL Tel 01223 863511

### Giving Sorrow Words Managing Bereavement in Schools

#### Video and Book

This is a training resource for adults working in schools concerned about the impact of death on children and young people of all ages. It can be used as part of a structured in service training programme, or by a teacher who needs immediate ideas. It gives practical advice from professionals and also uses drama to illustrate ways schools can make a difference. The main areas covered are:

- How bereavement may affect children and the consequences for schools. The major challenges of the grieving process are explored.
- Breaking the news of a death of a member of the school.
- A child returning to school following a family bereavement.
- Exploring the long-term effects of loss.
- When specialist help is needed.

By Steven Killick and Stuart Lindeman ISBN 1 873942 72 9  
Lucky Duck Publishing E-Mail: [publishing@luckyduck.co.uk](mailto:publishing@luckyduck.co.uk)

### Forgotten Mourners

This book gives clear, concise guidance on how children grieve. The simple, clear language and key points at the end of each chapter make this book easy to read and understand. It offers practical suggestions for working with children in a supportive context that will facilitate their mourning. It is a useful guide for all who work with grieving children.

By M Pennells and Smith ISBN 1 853022640 Kingsley

### Badger's Parting Gifts

This fictional book can be used by older children to explore the issues around death or can be read to younger children as a focus for discussion.

Badger dies at the start of the book and the gifts he leaves are the memories which each of his friends holds on to after his death. The book makes the point that using these gifts or memories they will be able to help each other to cope with their loss. By Susan Varley ISBN 1 85681 1646 Random Century

### What Do we think about Death?

This is a factual book for children in Key Stages 1 & 2 although some children in Key Stage 2 might find it a bit basic. It is illustrated with up to date photographs, explaining the biological process of life and death, responses to death and can be used to either introduce the subject of death or to help and support children who have been bereaved.

The approach is secular allowing parents or teachers to introduce spiritual aspects according to the child's religious belief. By K Bryant -Mole ISBN 0750 222085

Beginnings and Endings with Lifetimes in Between

This beautifully illustrated book takes the simple theme of 'a lifetime' and using the example of plants, animals and people, explores it in very straight forward ways, each time concluding that as life begins at a point in time, so it ends at a point in time. This book could be used at any age but particularly younger children to (as the title suggests) talk about the beginning of life, the end of life but also the lifetime in between.

By Bryan Mellonie and Robert Inkpen ISBN 1-85561- 760-9

## APPENDIX 8 GUIDANCE

The following points should be considered when talking to any person or group of people who have been affected by the death of a person close to them.

<p><b>DO</b></p> <p>Let your genuine concern and caring show. Say you are sorry about what has happened and about their pain. Allow them to express as much grief as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share. Encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose 'shoulds' on themselves. Talk about special and endearing qualities of the person who has died. Reassure them that the care given to the person who has died was the best.</p>	<p><b>DON'T</b></p> <p>Let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out to a bereaved person. Avoid them because you are uncomfortable (being avoided adds to an already painful experience.) Change the subject when they mention the person who has died. Avoid mentioning the dead person's name for fear of reminding them of their pain. Point out that they have others who they love or love them (people cannot replace each other.)</p>
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