

The Friars Primary School
Cannon Street
Salford
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Bereavement Policy



Happiness – Achievement – Respect – Determination

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Introduction

'Every 22 minutes a parent of a child dies that's around 23,600 bereaved children each year. Almost one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend, teacher or other significant person in their life'.

(Child Bereavement UK, 2017)

It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time any school will have to deal with a death that impacts the whole school community. Death is something that we do not like to think about, however given the exceptional circumstances which we are now facing as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, it may be something we could be forced to prepare for.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that as staff at The Friars Primary School, we are understanding, prepared and support pupils in recognising that bereavement is a normal and natural part of life which needs to be discussed openly and in within safe parameters.

Aims of this Policy

- To identify key staff within the school who will act as bereavement leads.
- To buy, prepare and identify key resources that may be required.
- To create a plan which identifies wider support networks within the LA, which in turn will identify additional support services that will enable the school community to work together.
- To provide a clear framework and guidance for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, which explains how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to the death, by providing a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after a bereavement.
- To meet the needs of all children and staff where possible.
- Help create a safe place that both the child and family can rely on, and access much needed support when required.

- For children to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support provided by specifically appointed staff.

Guidelines for Staff and Governors

A death can affect the school community in different ways and often depends on:

- The role the deceased person had within school
- How well known they were in the local community
- Circumstances surrounding the death, particularly suicide or violent deaths

Children and young people have a healthy curiosity, and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

The following guidelines may help when informing staff and governors of a death within the school community:

- The Friars Primary School has nominated Bereavement Leads in all phases across the school. These leads will be fully trained and on hand to support both staff and pupils when/if the need arises:
Headteacher - Michael Earnshaw - Safeguarding Lead
Deputy Headteacher - Adam Curtis – KS2 Phase Lead
Teacher – Jill Wood – KS1 Phase Lead
Children & Families Officer – Alison Rowland – EYFS Lead
- Where possible, discussions should take place with the bereaved family and their wishes taken into account before any decisions are made in relation to how and what to tell the staff and wider school community.
- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable. Identify absent staff.
- If a death has occurred in a holiday period make sure that all staff are informed.
- Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.

- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
- To enable absent staff to feel part of a caring team, arrangements should be made to inform them over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical. Consider the relationship between the absent colleague and deceased.
- For a death that may attract media coverage (e.g. if the member of staff was a well-known personality or died tragically), identify a nominated spokesperson (e.g. Head Teacher, Chair of Governors) to provide a 'news statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion. Liaison with the individual's family is essential, prior to reporting information to the media, in order to respect their privacy and wishes.
- Establish good lines of communication with all relevant parties, this will always include family and staff, in other cases it may involve communication with emergency services, health, the Educational Psychology service, Social Care, and other support services.
- Provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. This person could advise the family of support services available if required.
- Bereavement Leads to prepare a letter to parents and carers, example letters are at the end of this document.
- Provide staff with a script about what has happened so that consistent information is given to all of the pupils. Include where possible some answers to difficult questions that staff may be asked by the children, to prevent them needing to think of appropriate responses on the spot.
- Encourage everyone to consider how to meet their own support needs and take care of themselves, this may be from friends, family, support services and/or buddying up with other members of staff.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Winston's Wish Freephone National Helpline (08088 020 021) should you want to check out ideas throughout the day.

Guidelines for Informing Students of a Death Within the School Community.

People often think that children do not grieve, but even very young children will want to know what happened, how it happened, why it happened and perhaps most importantly of all, what happens

next? Please see further in the document child developmental age as linked to their understanding of bereavement.

The following guidelines will help staff to inform children of the death:

- Identify children who are most likely to be impacted by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased or are already bereaved.
- Where possible inform pupils in small identified groups, should there be large numbers and this is done so by a familiar adult.
- It is always a shock when a death occurs in a school even if it may have been anticipated.

Children expect to live forever, and so any bereavement may have a great impact upon them. Experience has shown that it is more beneficial if all pupils are informed, rather than the truth withheld. Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children. For example:

"I've got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. Mrs Smith, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that Mrs Smith died yesterday in hospital".

"Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday Stephen, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died".

Refer to the person's name naturally, *"Mrs Smith died from cancer"*.

- Staff should be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
- Try to identify any key answers that you may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness, or dates which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing class or schools.
- Children and young people will appreciate time to verbalise their feelings and fears. Allow space for "If only's..." to be acknowledged.
- Discussion – allow pupils to share their own experiences of death, eg. "When my pet/my gran died" etc.
- Be honest about your own feelings and experiences, and talk openly about the relationship that you had with the person.

- Answer pupil's questions factually. Avoid using euphemisms like 'passed away', or 'lost' etc. Use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion for children.
- Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.
- Acknowledge some days will be harder than others
- Do not expect individuals to immediately return to routine lessons; allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical outlet.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion, where possible, thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity for the individual.
- End the discussion on a positive note - not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better. Consider a prayer or collective thought to remember the deceased and their family. Perhaps co-ordinate an assembly to end the discussion collectively.
- Pupils may benefit from doing an activity to express their thoughts and feelings? (See Bereavement Lessons Pack)

In the days after the death

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Bereavement Leads with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, will have scheduled availability.
- It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.
- Support will be provided, particularly for those who worked closely with the person who has died and also training/support for the admin team who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- The Bereavement Leads, in conjunction with the nominated key adults, will have the responsibility for liaising with the individual's family, ascertaining their wishes and feelings about the incident and providing support with any funeral arrangement deemed necessary.

- Plan and arrange how the school will collectively acknowledge the loss and remember the person, for instance with an assembly, memory book, and maybe in time a permanent memorial (garden, tree, bench, award...). Winston's Wish Guide to supporting grieving children and young people in education has some notes on school assemblies.

Bereavement Flowchart:

School are informed of a bereavement



Identify the relevant communication pathway and as a Bereavement Team the tasks required.



Select a key adult to contact family – phone call/send card/letter of condolence. Consider recommending contacting Winston’s Wish (08088 020 021) or Child Bereavement UK (0800 02 888 40)



Key adult from the setting to discuss with the family and child or young person who they want their story shared with and support available to them.



Inform others – staff, families, children and young people of the setting as agreed with the bereaved family, child and young person.



Key adult to be point of contact for family – discuss funeral arrangements/return to school.



Key adult to arrange to see child or young person at home or in the setting to assess their needs and level of support required at this time.



Key adult to liaise with child or young person and support their return to the setting.



Significant dates and events for the child or young person are recorded and shared with all staff for future reference (birthdays, anniversaries).



Bereavement Lead/DSL continues to assess the needs of the child or young person. Observation, discussion with significant people, including the child or young person regarding their concerns or worries, and outside agencies if required.



Ensure friendships are secure as peer support can be very important



Continue regular contact with the family – show you still care about them and their child or young person.

Supporting Pupils Upon return to School

When the child or young person returns to the setting, they may want to get straight back into friends, work and routine. They may have experienced a disruption to their usual routine, had additional visitors to their house or felt anxious or worried, therefore returning to school may be their break from that.

A return to school plan should be in place before they return and it will aim to support the individual by:

- Identifying a point of contact or key worker for them (key adult or Bereavement Lead in their phase).
- Ensure **regular** contact is made (this may be daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family). This helps you understand how they are coping, what support they may need now and in the future, to discuss concerns and worries and develop future coping strategies.
- If they stay at home, remember them. Have cards and messages sent to them from appropriate people. Activities such as these will give the other children the opportunity to discuss their own concerns or experiences and help them to feel they are doing something positive to support them. This death may remind others of their own experiences or trigger old memories to resurface, so be prepared to support them also.
- Before the pupil returns staff will be aware of the bereavement and the possible affect this may have had upon them, their behaviour and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be provided.
- Remember, bereaved children and young people have 'physical' illness, such as headaches, tummy aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, feeling tired, disorganised anger and frustration. These will have an impact on work load and learning. Monitor how things are going on their return and maintain communication with all staff and parents/carers involved.
- Maintain normal rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important for the children and young people within the setting and the child or young person who has experienced the bereavement. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure. Remember the impact of bereavement on the whole family when giving sanctions and the impact the sanctions may have on the whole family.
- Consider 'time out' strategies that suit the child or young person and the setting. Time out cards, signals or signs can help them to exit the room quickly if they are feeling vulnerable or emotional. Make sure they have a safe place to exit to.
- Remember, there is no set pattern or time limit to grief – it is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one. At different ages and during new or transitional times they may have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a re-visit of what had happened previously to develop a better understanding and acceptance.

- It is not unusual for bereaved pupils to take time off school during the early stages of their bereavement. For some, the need to be with their families will be strong, and indeed they may suffer from separation anxiety when the time comes for a return to school. For others the familiarity, stability and routines of school life may prompt an early return. The time away from school will vary from pupil to pupil but when they do return, they may have a number of concerns – you will only know what these are and how they might be resolved if you ask. Some of the more common concerns might be:
 - **How will staff and peers react**– who has been told, what do they know, what will be said, how much will I have to say to people?

You can help by - meeting with them to welcome them back, acknowledge the death and talk through their concerns. Saying something simple like *“I am sorry to hear that your dad died – sometimes it helps to talk about it and if so, who would you like to be there for you?”* is usually much appreciated by them. If possible offer them choices about how things should be handled and what support would be helpful. Let staff and classmates know how they want to be received and supported.

- **Fear of sudden emotional outbursts** – anger, distress, panic...

You can help by - normalising grief reactions and giving them choices about what strategies will help them to cope in the classroom e.g. able to leave lessons without fuss – “exit card” system, where they can go, who they can talk to.

- **Fear when they realise they may not remember what the deceased person looks like**

A laminated photo of the deceased person may give enormous comfort when the visual image begins to disappear. A special teddy or other memento will often give great comfort in times of distress and upset. They may also want to show this when talking about the person who died. It should be stressed that whatever helps the child within reason should be encouraged.

- **Fear of being behind with work and unable to catch up**

You can help by - clarifying with other staff what is essential to accomplish and what can be left, and offering appropriate help to achieve what needs to be done.

- **Inability to concentrate and feel motivated or sit still**

You can help by - Reassuring them that this lack of motivation and concentration is normal and will pass. Offer shorter more manageable tasks, write down the task, give encouragement for achievements, and minimising difficulties can often help.

- **Family grief impacting on normal family functioning**

Disrupted routines, sporadic meals, chaotic bedtimes are possible reasons why they may be inadequately prepared for school, does not have the necessary equipment, and may be tired or hungry.

You can help by - Talking with them to ascertain where areas of difficulty lie and try and work out strategies with them and their family to help keep things on an even keel in school. Identify their strengths and help them build on them.

- **Unable to meet homework/project deadlines because of altered responsibilities within the family and home**

You can help by - helping them work out and meet priorities. Be flexible where possible and offer additional support where needed.

- **Forthcoming examinations**

You can help by - Explaining the process of notifying examination boards and the possible outcomes.

Ongoing Support

- Make a note of significant dates which might affect the pupil, e.g. date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries. Make sure other members of staff are aware of these and the possible impact these may have. Don't be afraid to acknowledge these potentially difficult times with them e.g. *"I know Christmas is coming up and it might feel a very different and difficult time for you all this year without your Dad – so don't forget, if it helps to talk you can always come and see me"*.
- Consider possible reactions to class/assembly topics. Discuss how these difficulties might best be managed with them e.g. if making Mother's day cards do ask them if they wish to be included in the activity too, very often the answer is 'yes' as they still have a parent, they just can no longer see them, but still want to remember them.
- Look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground – bereaved children/young people are often seen as vulnerable and may become a target.
- Consider using books/activities to help explore feelings and ideas about death as part of the normal school curriculum.
- Be alert to changes in behaviour – these may be an indication that they are more affected by their bereavement than they are able or willing to say. Reactions may present themselves months or years after the event, and it may be difficult for staff and others to relate behaviour(s) to the bereavement.
- Follow up absences – absence could indicate bereavement – associated problems at home or school.
- At transition time make sure the new class teacher and/or school are aware of the bereavement and support in situ.

- There may be the inability to physically comfort pupils at times so alternative options would be optimal e.g. a ribbon to hold to feel connected or a shared activity to feel they have an adults undivided attention.
- At the end of the day, be yourself, listen and care.

Guidelines for support SEND children with Bereavement

All children benefit from being given simple, honest “bite size” pieces of information about difficult issues - often repeated many times over. For further support visit www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx or contact Simon Says.

When talking about death and bereavement with a child with learning difficulties it might be helpful to consider: -

- **WHO** will be their key worker working with the child and family - inform parents who this person will be and keep in contact, this should be someone they already have a good relationship with.
- **WHERE** is the student most receptive to new ideas? – quiet room, pool, outside. Use this space for talking with them.
- **WHAT** should be talked about? (As agreed with parents). Ensure that you use the same language and ideas as the family to avoid confusion.
- **HOW** is new information normally given? - signs, verbally, pictures or objects of reference. Use their normal communication methods to talk about illness and death.
- **HOW** is new information normally reinforced? – through repetition of concepts, lots of discussions, use of visual aids, social stories (www.speakingspace.co.uk) and direct references. This may need to be repeated a number of times over a long period.
- **PROCEED** using a level, speed and language appropriate to them.
- **BUILD** on information given – small bites of the whole given gradually will be easier to absorb and retain.
- **REPEAT** information as often as needed.
- **WATCH** for reactions to show the child understands – modify and repeat as needed.

- **FOLLOW** the student's lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.
- **WATCH** for changes in behaviour to indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed.
- **MAINTAIN** normal daily routine as much as possible.
- **LIAISE** with other agencies involved with the student to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

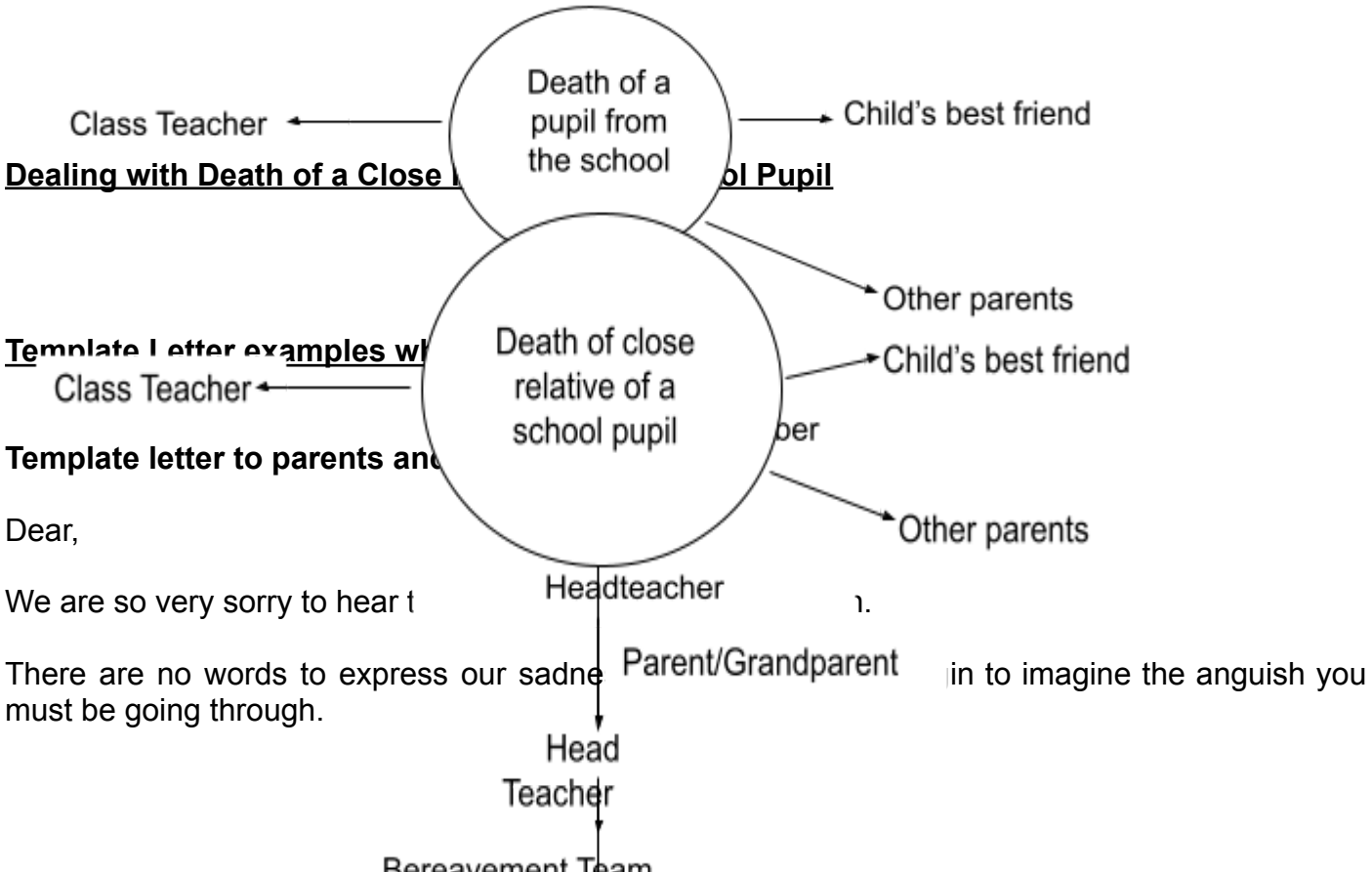
Children's Developmental Understanding

Level	Understanding
< 2 years	No cognitive understanding Fear of separation
3-5 years	Magical thinking * Vaguely associated with sleep
6-7 years	May be some magical thinking Death is final Personification of death
8–11 years	Realise it can happen to them Lack full understanding Perhaps more anxiety, bravado, jokes Want to know all the details
Adolescence	Understand death in a logical manner

* **Magical thinking** is a **child's** belief that what he or she wishes or expects can affect what really happens. For example, if a **child** wants very much for something to happen, and it does, the **child** believes he or she caused it to happen. This refers to the concept that **bereaved children** believe that their actions, inaction, words, behaviours or **thoughts** are directly responsible for their loved one's death.

Dealing with Death of a Member of Staff

Dealing with Death of a Pupil from the School



As a school community, we will miss <Name> very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends, classmates and teachers.

<Name> was a <valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan <Name's> funeral, please let us know.

We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With sympathy,

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a pupil.

Dear parents and carers,

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

<Name> died <suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term>.

<He/She> was a <valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of the class/school community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language.

For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org or Winston's Wish.

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family and friends at this time.

We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

Sign-off
Headteacher

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff.

Dear parents/carers,

I am sorry to inform you that a member of our staff, I am sorry to inform you that a <well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/well-known> member of our staff, <Name>, died <suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness>.

The pupils were told today by their <class teacher/tutor/head of year/in assembly> and many will be reacting to this news.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal. We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website childbereavementuk.org or Winston's Wish.

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

Sign-off
Headteacher

External Support Agencies

simonsays.org.uk - Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.

autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

childbereavement.org.uk – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk - Childhood bereavement.

childline.org.uk - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

crusebereavementcare.org.uk - All aspects of bereavement.

griefencounter.org.uk - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

hopeagain.org.uk - Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

papyrus-uk.org - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

seesaw.org.uk - Grief support service for children and young people.

sands.org.uk - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

teenissues.co.uk – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

theredlipstickfoundation.org – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

uk-sobs.org.uk - Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.

Widowedandyoung.org.uk – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

winstonswish.org.uk - Help for grieving children and their families.

ANNEX A – GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS ON SUPPORTING THOSE BEREAVED DURING COVID-19.

Salford & Tameside Educational Psychology Service – April 2020

The coronavirus pandemic is impacting on all our educational settings, families, communities and way of life. This is coupled with a collective raised level of anxiety due to uncertainty around the coronavirus crisis and the additional complication of the nationwide closure of schools and other educational settings. There is also an increased risk of unexpected bereavement and feelings of loss in the community.

The EPS continues to offer a critical incident response to leaders in settings to help them develop their community response. We recognise that leaders have the skills and experience to respond to critical incidents. Where there might be a need for external support, our role will be to enhance the setting's own support and coping strategies. The approach taken will focus on supporting the setting to promote a sense of safety, calm, self and community efficacy, connectedness and hope.

This guidance is designed to advise settings on preparing and responding to Covid19 related bereavement issues that are impacting your setting and community. It is important to think about how to support children and members of staff before, during and after a bereavement. The guidance covers:

- General bereavement guidance
- Things to consider following a bereavement during Covid-19
- Things to do to prepare for bereavements during Covid-19
- The 3 levels of response, dependent upon the impact on your community
- Best practice at level 1
- Supporting key adults and leaders
- Responding at level 2 and 3
- Links for a range of useful websites, helplines and resources
- Example of letter to a bereaved child
- APPENDIX A: Outline of the support role offered by the EPS and contact details
- APPENDIX B: A conversation guide for first responders to bereavements

In this guidance we will use the term child/children in its broadest sense. Our intention is that the guidance is suitable for early years settings, schools and colleges.

The current context

Our daily lives have changed dramatically. Whilst huge efforts are being made to stay in regular contact with children, communities are likely to feel less connected whilst educational settings are closed or operating under restrictions. The effects of social distancing, isolating vulnerable individuals and disruption to our day-to-day routines will require a different approach to how settings support their communities.

General Bereavement Guidance

Key points to support best practice following a bereavement:

- Remember that help and support for those impacted are best provided by a trusted, familiar adult.
- Be as honest and open as you can with children, appropriate to their developmental level.
- Remember that children are all different and they will all react to the loss, trauma and bereavement in their own unique way. The differences in their levels of awareness, understanding, age, emotional maturity, security and not least, their relationship with the deceased, will also have significant effects. For further information on children's developmental understanding of death, click onto the following link: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents/childrensunderstanding-of-death#keypoints>.
- When someone dies, use the words dead or died, not euphemisms like "passed away".
- Be guided by the family in terms of information they are happy to share and ensure these wishes are updated as things go along.
- Think about how the family can support children to share memories, perhaps through the creation of a memory box (see Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/help-bereaved-children-maintain-memories/>); the setting can support the family to do this.

Things to consider following a bereavement during Covid-19

- Bereavements linked to Covid-19 are likely to be less expected and the family will have had little time to prepare.
- Family members of the person who has died may have particularly strong emotions around feelings of guilt as well as feelings of loss.
- They may have been socially isolated from the person who has died, and not had recent or usual levels of contact.
- The person may have died in hospital and the family may not have been able to say goodbye.
- There may have been restrictions on the funeral and so the bereaved may have had this healing ritual denied to them.

- There may also be other members of the family who have become ill and there may be fears about their health.
- The people and routines that usually support people following a bereavement e.g. friends and the routine of school or other educational setting may not be accessible whilst social distancing measures are in place.
- The bereaved may feel anger and blame, e.g. towards others who may not have self-isolated quickly.
- It may be difficult to avoid reminders such as the news.
- If there are many deaths linked to Covid-19, the bereaved may struggle with the lack of specialness that their loved one receives. 2
- It will be important to consider many of the points above in relation to any bereavement at this time.
- It is also important to be aware that staff themselves may have bereavement and loss of their own to process. This means that a team approach will be required. The guidance in this document should also be considered and applied when responding to staff bereavements.
- The key focus with families is to listen to their worries, exploring the impact on the various members of their family. Relatively small-sounding issues may be overwhelming. They might be wondering; Should they be doing anything differently now to protect other members of the family? Are any family members feeling in any way responsible? Are they dwelling on what they might have done differently, for example to protect the person who has died from infection?

Things to do to prepare for bereavements during Covid-19

- Have a small team of nominated leads who can take responsibility for sharing key messages with staff about the principles of how to support children with loss and grief and co-ordinate responses to bereavements e.g. supporting members of staff who are acting as key adults when contacting bereaved families. This means there will always be a nominated lead available to oversee bereavement support work for families and staff if some of the nominated leads are affected by their own bereavements. The nominated leads can be supported by the EPS through group consultations. It is also suggested that all school staff take time to familiarise themselves with the information, advice and guidance provided on the Winston's wish website: (<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>).
- Consider which staff members might take up a role as a key adult and point of contact for bereaved children and families; this would usually be the head teacher or someone that

knows the family well. Guided by one of the nominated leads, a key adult should be prepared to support the family to make decisions about how best to support their child, including how to talk to them about the loss and mourning processes.

- Have a notice on your website or email to prepare parents for your bereavement protocol.
- Invite parents to let school know if they are impacted by a loss; explain how they can do so.
- Let families know what you will then do e.g. identify a key person to maintain contact with the family/ send the child a letter/ card/ let other members of the school community know who might be impacted or want to support the grieving child or family.
- Organise a virtual book of condolences for relevant school community members to sign.
- Plan a memorial assembly for when the children are back in school to remember lost loved ones.
- Make sure class teachers are made aware of children impacted by a loss so they can welcome them back to school appropriately when the time comes.

Responding to bereavements during Covid-19

Your setting's response to Covid-19 related bereavement can be viewed as being at one of three levels, depending on the impact on your setting's community:

<p>Level 3: Bereavement/s that impact the whole setting and wider community and where there are additional complexities and safeguarding concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Claire Jackson / Rona Taylor and EPS inbox (see pg. 11 for contact details) • EPS will be part of a multi-agency response
<p>Level 2: Bereavement/s impacting a large proportion of the community around the setting. This is likely to be through a cluster of bereavement and loss issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact school EP and EPS inbox • Initial support over telephone and follow up virtual meeting
<p>Level 1: Bereavement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Bereavement

impacting a small number of people e.g. one family, one member of staff	Guidance document for best practice guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact school EP and EPS inbox if follow up Required.
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Following your preparation, we envisage that in most cases, settings will have the skills and experience to respond to bereavements at level 1 themselves. Best practice guidelines at level 1 are provided below. For further information about best practice at levels 2 and 3 and how the EPS can support you at each level, see Appendix.

Best practice at level 1 is likely to include:

- Selecting a familiar key adult who will be the main point of contact between the education setting and family or staff member; this would usually be the head teacher or someone that knows the family well. They may need to talk through their role with one of the nominated leads.
- The key adult should contact the family or staff member to acknowledge the death and pass on their condolences, initially by phone. You could ask how family members are and how they are coping. Consider recommending contacting Winston's Wish (08088 020 021) or Child Bereavement UK helpline (0800 02 888 40) if they wanted to speak to somebody about their bereavement. Ask if there are other people school should share the news with;
- The key adult should support the family to talk to their child about loss and mourning processes.
- Support the family to make decisions about how best to support their child. Do this collaboratively, drawing on the family's knowledge of their child and the unique circumstances of their family situation and your knowledge of general principles of supporting bereaved children.
- Check with the family that it would be okay to send a letter to the child. Due to guidance related to physical distancing, restrictions on movement and concerns that people might have about sending and receiving post at this time, a letter emailed as an attachment would be recommended. An example is provided on page 8 of this document. The letter should be personal and should cover:
 - o Acknowledging the death of the relative;
 - o Acknowledging how the child might be feeling;
 - o Telling the child that you (the key person) and other staff are thinking about them;
 - o Offering to check-in with them by phone.
- Check-in/s by phone. The key adult could ask how the family is doing since the bereavement and check if they have been able to access helpful information from any of the specialist websites. When speaking to the child, the key adult could ask for an update as to how the child is and listen to any thoughts and feelings they would like to share. The key adult could also ask about whether the child has had contact with their friends and if the setting could support with this. You could ask permission to share information with their friends.
- Consider the impact of 'trolling' on social media. It may be helpful to check in with young people to see if they have received any negative comments.

- Prepare other children and staff for the return of a grieving child or staff member. Ensure class teachers are aware of children impacted by a loss so they can welcome them back to school appropriately when the time comes. This might be overseen by one of the nominated leads.

Supporting leaders, nominated leads and key adults

- People who have been bereaved may need reassurance that their response is 'normal'. One of the helpful things that leaders, nominated leads and key adults can do is to listen to the bereaved speaking about painful issues. Those staff in direct contact with bereaved families or staff will need support around them to debrief and process their own feelings and may experience bereavement themselves. As a result, leaders and nominated leads will be holding and containing levels of anxiety from across different parts of their community and will need to think about where they get their own emotional support. You may wish to contact the EPS to support with this.
- If you would like support from the EPS to think together about developing your setting's response to bereavements due to Covid-19 please contact both your school EP and the EPS inbox (EPS@salford.gov.uk).

Responding at level 2 and 3

Level 2 is likely to be a cluster of bereavement and loss issues. It's important that there is containment through structure and that the welfare of individuals who are likely to be triggered are monitored in enhanced ways following further triggering news. Level 3 would be when the whole school community is impacted by bereavement issues that may have led to challenges to cohesion that need a broader multi-agency response. Further details of best practice and how the EPS will support you can be found in the Appendix.

Resources

Helpline telephone numbers:

Winston's Wish (08088 020 021)

Child Bereavement UK (0800 02 888 40)

Websites with information and guidance for schools and families to support bereaved children:

Winston's Wish

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-youngpeople/>

Coronavirus: information and guidance for supporting bereaved children and young people.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

Information and scripts to use if someone the child knows has died from Covid-19.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

Saying goodbye when children cannot attend the funeral.

Grief Encounter

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/professionals-schools/>

Support for bereaved children and their families.

Includes downloadable documents at the bottom of the webpage on the following:

- o Children's concepts of death by age
 - o Supporting a Grieving Child in the Classroom
 - o Informing the School Community of a Death
 - o Download grieftalk Posters
 - o Preparing Students for the Return of Grieving Classmate
- Child Bereavement UK

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bc9f3d7d7b43-421a-8ed4-4335f9c23b35>

Downloadable information sheet with tips for supporting bereaved children through difficult times.

Child Bereavement UK also have a drop-in facility for families and professionals in the Salford Royal Hospital on the fourth Thursday of each month. However, these have been suspended and online support is instead available.

https://directory.childbereavementuk.org/?keyword=Salford&organisation_name=&category_term=all&postcode=&radius=5

CRUSE <https://www.cruse.org.uk> Support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. There's a section for schools

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools>

Gaddum provides a needs-led therapeutic service for Manchester and Salford children and families. The Gaddum Centre offers Children's Bereavement Counselling and works with individuals following a bereavement. Initially it has to be a young person who is referred. Once that referral has been accepted, they can also provide support to the adults who are caring for the child or young person.

<https://www.gaddumcentre.co.uk/> - Online services are only being provided at present.

Example letter to send to a child

It is helpful to include the four points noted on page 5. Please note, it will be important that the letter is personalised based on your knowledge of the child, family and context.

Dear x,

I am so sorry that x has died.

I am wondering how you are feeling. It might be a strange and confusing time for you. All feelings are normal and OK. There is no right way to feel when someone has died.

I am thinking about you. Mr x, Miss x and Mrs x are thinking about you too. I will be thinking about your kindness, because I've noticed how caring and helpful you are to the younger children on the playground. I will also be thinking about your wonderful singing voice. At the moment, you might feel like singing sometimes, and sometimes you might not. I am looking forward to hearing you singing in assembly when we are all back together in school.

I plan to phone you and your family, to find out more about how you are doing. You can choose whether you would like to speak to me.

I hope to speak to you soon.

Best wishes,

Head Teacher

APPENDIX A

EPS Critical Incident Team: Response to bereavements during Covid-19

A graduated approach to providing support We will continue to offer a graduated response to bereavement and critical incidents in relation to their impact on the setting and wider community. Our role is to support you to support your community. The EPS response to support settings at the three different levels.

Level 1: Bereavement that impacts on a small number of people e.g. one family

– Settings are encouraged to consider the main document, 'Guidance for Educational Settings on Supporting Those Bereaved During Covid-19' when preparing their setting's response. Additional support for preparation and response will be offered through EP planning meetings. We will also be offering a series of group virtual meetings for staff from settings to learn about responding to bereavement. If settings would like the opportunity to think together about the unique circumstances with an EP they may wish to contact their allocated EP and the EPS inbox.

Level 2: Bereavement/s that impact on large proportion of the community around the setting

– Settings can contact their school EP and the EPS inbox. We will contact you to offer initial support over the phone followed by a virtual meeting with the allocated EP and a member of the critical incident team to think together about the unique circumstances.

The response will depend upon the setting's individual needs and context; however, it will generally follow the framework of **Communication**, **Support** and **Monitoring**. It will also be important throughout your response to use ways to promote a sense of safety, calm, self and community efficacy, connectedness and hope.

Communication

We will think together about:

- Clarifying the facts – what is known, what are the perceived or potential narratives in the community, including social media.
- How and when to communicate the key information to children and staff.
- Communicating with parents – language, messaging, listening and asking questions.

- For those most impacted (e.g. a family), what are their views on what can be shared/what they want to be shared.
- Managing social media and the press.

Support

We will think together about:

- Identifying vulnerable individuals who may be affected.
- Individuals in need of support might be those children and families who have been bereaved through during Covid-19, whether by the virus or due to other causes, staff members who have been bereaved during Covid-19, children and staff with previous experience of loss, children and staff who may be vulnerable for other reasons, e.g. because of their mental health.
- Planning support for those identified.
- Support for staff and pupils both within school and externally regarding their own wellbeing.
- Reducing anxiety and de-escalating panic responses – families, children, staff.

Monitoring

We will think together about:

- Monitoring the wellbeing of those identified above, e.g. by using the monitoring matrix. In some cases, it may help to involve children in monitoring their own wellbeing.
- Be alert to further news which is likely to be triggering to those who are already bereaved by Covid-19.
- Monitoring social/general media. It might be useful to identify specific staff to take on this role. 10

Level 3: Bereavement/s that impact on whole setting and wider community and where there are additional complexities and safeguarding concerns

– The response will depend on the unique characteristics of the context and your setting's individual needs. The EPS would usually be part of a multi-agency response. In addition to best practice at level 2, level 3 may include providing key representatives from the setting to attend regular Team Around the Setting meetings. Please contact Claire Jackson (Principal EP), Rona Taylor (Senior EP, Critical Incidents) and the EPS inbox. Alternatively, another agency may have already alerted the EPS and we will make contact with the leadership team to discuss what support is needed.

Contact Us: Please copy in the EPS inbox with any communications via e-mail and when contacting your school/allocated EP.

EPS e-mail: EPS@salford.gov.uk

Telephone: 0161 778 0476 Claire Jackson (Principal EP)

e-mail: C.Jackson@salford.gov.uk

Rona Taylor (Senior EP, Critical Incidents) e-mail: Rona.Taylor@salford.gov.uk

APPENDIX B: A conversation guide for first responders to bereavements, tragic news and critical incidents

This document provides some additional guidance for those who may be responding to bereavements, tragic news and critical incidents, either in person or by other methods of communication (e.g. by telephone). This document should be read alongside the 'Guidance for Educational Settings on Supporting Those Bereaved During Covid-19, Salford and Tameside Educational Psychology Service' that has been circulated to educational settings.

- This conversation requires a calm, steady, quiet and sensitive approach. It will be important to allow the person to tell their story, and to listen.
- You might want time to take a breath and steady yourself. It is okay to ask for a pause, for example to get something to note down contact details and important information.
- Demonstrate that you are listening through occasional gentle responses. These could be empathetic sounds or short phrases like “Oh I’m so sorry”, “I’m listening”, “Take your time”.
- Leave pauses so that the caller does not feel hurried and has time to gather their thoughts.
- Allow the caller to tell their story in their words and in their own time and avoid asking questions.

- You can check that you have heard and understood by paraphrasing back, for example “You said that he died at home last night, is that right?” and again leave pauses so that the caller can correct you.
- When the conversation reaches a natural break, explain that you need to take clear notes of the important information.
- It may become apparent that there are additional complexities and/or that there is likely to be an impact on the wider community. Therefore, it might be important to obtain as much accurate, factual information about the critical incident as possible. Bear in mind that it is very easy for rumours to spread. Uncertainty or misinformation can greatly add to distress levels, create confusion and will take time and effort to correct.
- Before ending the call, check that you have collected sufficient factual information and the personal and contact details of the person you are talking to. The table on page 2 may provide a guide for the sort of information it might be helpful for first responders to gather.
- After alerting others it is important that you give yourself time to process the information and your own thoughts and feelings before getting back to work. It may be helpful to share your reaction with a colleague. Please refer to the checklist on page 3 for suggested steps to take to meet your own needs after responding.

Gathering information as a first responder

It will be important for the first responder to be sensitive and genuine and the conversation should feel as natural as possible; however, the below table might provide an idea of what sort of information it will be helpful to gather.

Table 1. Template for gathering information when responding to tragic news.

Who has called?	First or given name: Surname: Position: Relationship with the person or family affected: Contact details for getting in touch later:
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<p>What has happened?</p> <p>What is the nature of the incident?</p> <p>When did it happen?</p>	
<p>Who has been affected?</p> <p>For example, note the names & ages of children attending school.</p>	
<p>Who else has been contacted?</p> <p>Who else is offering support?</p>	
<p>Ask the caller, "what else is it important for you to tell us?"</p>	

Self-care checklist

This is for anyone who is responding to bereavements, critical incidents, or tragic news, whether directly or indirectly e.g. office staff, family, friends. During the safety talk when flying, we are urged to put on our own oxygen mask before we help others; it is important for us all to consider our own needs in order to respond effectively and safely to others.

Immediate:

- Ideally find someone to talk to (colleague, friend, partner) within the first 12 hours. If there is no one, sit quietly and go over the events in as much detail as possible. Carry out your own debrief in drawn/written form.
- Ask yourself/a colleague 'am I best placed to support, might I be significantly affected by the news and unable to respond effectively?

- Ask 'do I need someone to pick up other tasks or duties for me?'
- Tell a partner/family about your involvement because you may not feel sociable or you may feel upset or angry; be mindful that they might not feel able to be willing listeners.

Short Term:

- Share your experience with colleagues. Participate in personal/team discussion both for support and sharing of experiences.
- Be aware that you may experience physical and emotional effects such as fatigue, anxiety, depression, irritability, aggression, anger, etc. which are normal reactions.
- Consider setting up a 'buddy' system so that everyone is able to support each other.

Long Term:

- Be gentle with yourself! Remember that we can't 'fix' everything and we are bound to feel helpless at times. Caring and being there are sometimes more important than doing.
- Give support, encouragement and praise to peers and to colleagues. Learn to accept it in return.
- At the end of each day, focus on a positive thing that occurred during the day.
- Take time to care for yourself and engage in hobbies or relaxing activities.
- If you feel you are continuing to have intrusive thoughts about the event and these feelings are not lessening after a few weeks, you may need some more support. Your GP may be able to signpost you to relevant help and you may wish to contact the EPS to support with this.