



## **Beaumont Primary School**

### **Bereavement Policy**

Policy written October 2020 by S. Postle/ K Sullivan  
Review October 2025

#### **Rationale**

At Beaumont Primary School we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times and that when the loss is of a member of our school community – such as a child or staff member, it can be particularly difficult.

As a school we are fully committed to supporting all those in our school community affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment, in which everyone involved can respond appropriately to individual circumstances and difficult matters, professionally, sensitively and compassionately.

#### **The Management of Bereavement in School**

This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. We understand that each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges however it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens.

At Beaumont we pride ourselves on working in partnership with parents. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents are encouraged to make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies etc). If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told should be sought, in order that the school does not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

#### **Transition**

It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

#### **Family Bereavement**

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support. (See Appendix A for contact details of organisations offering support and Appendix B for helpful resources).
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows and how they have been involved.
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
- The importance of working together and liaison will be explained – both parties assessing any changes in behaviour. (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child becomes withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. health workers, Educational Psychological Service, Family Partnership).

## Death of a Pupil

The school may be notified in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil, a senior member of staff will be notified.

- Past experience has shown that if death occurs, parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone will put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can – they may have contact with a member of staff. In this instance the member of staff who takes the call will immediately contact the most senior member of the school team possible and that person will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information.
- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school.
- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death (outside agencies should be involved with this e.g. Psychological Service).
- The school may be closed, or as many people as possible released to attend a funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate and they wish to do so.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support.
- Pupils and staff may express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the prior agreement of the deceased's family, relatives or next of kin, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers.
- The class most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these could then be given to the bereaved family to assist in the planning of the service.
- After the service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.

## Terminally Ill Pupils

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

## Sharing Information

It is important to agree with parent(s)/carer(s) which concerned parties within or outside the school community should be informed. Evidence from many schools has shown that parents are often happy to have this burden taken away from them, as they have many people unconnected with the school to contact. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.

The following people should be considered:

- Current school staff not in school that day, including part time staff
- Previous school staff who worked closely with the child
- Social Work team, if applicable
- SEN team, if applicable
- Medical team, e.g. the school nurse
- Chair of Governors
- Other professionals who work with the child
- Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss, and they may need to support or comfort their children. **See Appendix D (iii)** Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but who may not have been informed by the family.

The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Head teacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry – for example, if the child died in hospital, we do not want to give children a fear of hospitals. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, there may be mitigating circumstances that might help, e.g. the child was in pain and is now free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be told that, while they may feel sad, they do not have to feel guilty if they go on to have fun and pleasure in their day ahead. They must not feel obliged to assume a burden of grief. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge.

### **The Funeral**

- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- The Head teacher and/or the Deputy Head teacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral, and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend, together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. It may be appropriate for school to close.
- Will flowers be sent and/or a collection made? Staff and pupils will be involved in the decision.
- Cultural and religious implications will be considered.
- If the parents/carers wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed in order to support the grieving process.

### **Memory Assemblies**

It may be appropriate to hold a memory assembly for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together.

### **If a Child Dies in School:**

- If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health, they will contact a first aider and ideally the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher.
- In the case of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the first aider or a member of the SLT.
- Immediately inform the Head teacher or, in her absence, the most senior member of staff on site.
- The Head Teacher will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital.
- If the child stops breathing a trained school staff member will administer CPR. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered.
- Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. NB Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone.
- Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Head teacher and/or the Deputy Head teacher.
- The school will notify the LA if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be routed through the Head teacher, Chair of Governors and LA Media Team.

### **If a Child Dies on a School Trip**

If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Head teacher. The school will then take the responsibility of contacting the parents. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions.

The school will notify the LA, at the earliest opportunity, if there is a death out of school. The above procedures and protocols will then apply.

## **Responding to the media**

Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff are advised not to respond to journalists and to refer all enquiries to the Head teacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority Press Office.

## **On-Going Support**

### **For staff:**

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection. The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room could be allocated for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- Access to one to one time with a member of staff who is trained in bereavement support.
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school. (See Appendix A and B for support).

### **For Pupils:**

## **Return to school**

For the bereaved child returning to school may be traumatic but experience in many schools has shown that most pupils can be supported by the school staff.

- Where there has been a close family bereavement, in most cases everyone (teaching, support staff, volunteers if appropriate and pupils) should be made aware of the situation before the pupil returns (providing the parents/guardians of the bereaved pupil agree).
- It may be helpful to assign the child a favoured member of staff to approach and provide emotional support.
- Staff should show appropriate compassion and allow expression to those suffering with grief.
- Suitable books and other materials to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss may be provided as appropriate as will the use of social stories. (See Appendix B).
- Teachers should try to foster an environment that is compassionate, yet disciplined.
- Family life at this traumatic time, can be particularly distressing, routines upset, relationships strained, the future uncertain. For this reason, school routines should be kept as normal as possible in order to provide a respite.
- Staff should be aware of anniversaries as this can spark a revival of feelings of bereavement.
- Staff might keep an eye on those particularly affected by the death of a close associate.
- In discussion with parents, children who may need more help can be referred/ signposted to a specialist outside agency such as an Educational Psychology team.

## **Talking to the Bereaved Pupil**

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

### **Do**

- Let the child know that you genuinely care

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

#### **Don't**

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

#### **Appendix G sets out the developmental stages relating to children's understanding of death.**

#### **For the Family:**

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school. (See Appendix D (ii))
- Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Send a representative to the funeral.
- Hold a collection/flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.
- If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance wall or book, then this should be returned to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.
- If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed.

Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. Past experience has shown that this can be helpful in their grieving. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on going links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

#### **The Death of a Member of Staff**

All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. **For a letter template see Appendix D (iii)**

In addition to the above, the school will notify the LA, as the employer. Where appropriate to the wishes of the staff member's family, the Head teacher may seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.

## **Responsibilities**

The designated person within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is the Head teacher. In the event that this person is absent then another Senior Leader will take responsibility. Responsibilities are:

- Policy development and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
- Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
- Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
- Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary school.
- Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.

## **The nominated Governor with responsibility for bereavement is: Shanin Masters**

Their responsibilities are:

- to contribute to generating and updating the policy.
- to support the Head teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- to support the Head teacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- to review practice.

## Appendix A

### **(i) List of Online Resources and Information**

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) – The UK's leading charity for children and young people's mental health.

[www.onceuponasmile.org.uk](http://www.onceuponasmile.org.uk) Manchester based charity offering bereavement support for children.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### **(ii) Websites updated with Coronavirus specific advice:**

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

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

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

<https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/coronavirus/supporting-children-in-your-setting-coronavirus/>

<https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-A-Book-for-Children.pdf>

This is a FREE digital information book for primary school age children to help explain the coronavirus and the measures taken to control it. It answers lots of questions in a child-friendly way, and aims to both inform and reassure. Published by Nosy Crow and illustrated by Axel, the text had expert input from Professor Graham Medley of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and also two headteachers and a child psychologist

### **(iii) Useful telephone numbers and addresses:**

- Winston's Wish Family Line - 08088 020 021– national helpline offering guidance, information and support to anyone caring for a bereaved child, including professionals and family members
- Childhood Bereavement Network - 020 7843 6309 – a network of child bereavement services
- CRUSE Bereavement Care (0870) 167 1677 [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

### **(iv) Useful documents:**

- **Managing grief: A guide for education professionals and parents supporting bereaved pupils:** <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9cd7ee567346-4812-ab3e-5d2d631f75a9>
- **Supporting Children through difficult times:** <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=45dc8050-2152-49e8-a8d7-50629fc0a08c>

## **Appendix B - Books on Bereavement**

The suggestions below are suitable to use with children (not an exhaustive list). Books can help children experiencing loss make some sense of confusing and sad emotions. They can also help children to feel less alone. Try to select books that are appropriate for individual circumstances. The books and resources below will help with this.

### **(i) Books appropriate for EYFS/KS1**

#### **Pre-Bereavement Books:**

**My Brother and Me by Sarah Courtauld.** Available from CBUK shop This pre-bereavement book is designed to help children understand how they and the rest of their family might feel when someone in that family is seriously ill. It offers opportunities to share concerns and fears and ways to manage difficult feelings such as jealousy. Age 4-10 but could be used with younger children.

**The Saddest Time by Norma Simon** Explains death as the inevitable end of life and provides three situations in which children experience powerful emotions when someone close has died. The scenarios are an uncle with a terminal illness, a classmate killed in an accident and a grandparent who dies of old age.

#### **Books:**

**Granpa by John Burningham** (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3) Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her granddad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

**Remembering Grandad by Sheila and Kate Isherwood** (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5) A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.

**Fred by Posy Simmons** (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5) When Fred the cat dies, his owners Nick and Sophie attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

**Grandad, I'll always remember you by De Bode and Broere** (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8) A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

**Lifetimes Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between – a beautiful way to explain life and death to children Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen** (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9). places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants; for people; and for birds".

**I'll always love you by H Wilhelm** (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985) A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated.

**If all the world were.... By Joseph Coelho.** A moving lyrical picture book about a young girl's love for her grandad and how she copes when he's gone.

**I Miss My Sister by Sarah Courtauld.** Available from CBUK shop A young girl's sister has died and the impact on her and her family is sensitively illustrated with min text. Designed to be shared with an adult, it will help to start conversations, answer questions and allay any fears.



**Missing Mummy by Rebecca Cobb.** Available from CBUK shop Beautifully illustrated and with moments of wonderful warmth, this is a touching, honest and helpful book about the death of a parent. With minimum text, it touches on some of the worries and fears that a young child may have after a death, offering reassurance and hope.

**When your mum or dad has cancer by Ann Couldrick.** Available from CBUK shop This is a useful booklet for younger children (7+) to teenage children. It has an introduction for parents but then explains cancer in a simple way children can relate to. It also covers many questions children ask such as will the person die and what exactly happens, but tackles the answers with insight and honesty.

**Badger's Parting Gifts (also available in Urdu and Arabic) by Susan Varley** When old badger dies, his friends think they will be sad forever. Gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and treasure gifts he left behind. Sensitively written, this book will help children identify and begin to understand feelings associated with the death of someone they love.

**The Lonely Tree by Nicholas Halliday.** A story based on the life cycle in the natural world. The young tree is sad when his old friend the Oak dies but Spring brings joy to the little tree

**Heaven by Nicholas Allan.** While he is waiting for the angels to collect him, Dill the dog explains to Lily what he thinks heaven is like: hundreds of lampposts to pee against, lots of whiffy things to smell and bones everywhere. Lily completely disagrees. Luckily, they agree to disagree just in time for a poignant, last goodbye.

**Dogger by Shirley Hughes.** A sensitively written story, with which adults and children will identify. It is about a little boy who loses his favourite toy "Dogger" and describes his feelings and responses as a result. Useful as a gentle intro to Loss.

**Beginnings and Endings With Lifetimes In Between by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen.** A beautifully illustrated book which aims to help parents/teachers explore the subjects of life and death.

**When Uncle Bob Died by Althea** A helpful book which in a simple way explains the facts surrounding death. It is honest but reassuring. A good book to read to a young child to prepare them for the death of someone close. Realistic illustrations.

**When Dinosaurs die: A Guide to Understanding Death** by Laurene Krasny Brown, Marc Brown The authors explain in simple language the feelings people may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to honour the memory of someone who has died.

**What does dead mean? By Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas.** Available Jessica Kingsley [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) Is a beautifully illustrated book that guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Suitable for children aged 4+, this is an ideal book for parents and carers to read with their children, as well as teachers, therapists and counsellors working with young children.

**A place in my heart by Annette Aubrey.** Written by a child psychology expert this charming book addresses the sensitive issue of losing a loved one.

**I miss you by Pat Thomas** For very young children – Explains how death is a natural part of life. Including why people die. How people express grief in different ways and provides suggestions on how to cope with the death of a loved one.

(ii) **Books appropriate for KS2**

**Pre-bereavement**

**Us Minus Mum by Heather Butler** The boys think Mum is invincible. But they're wrong. Because Mum is ill. Really ill. It's up to George and Theo to keep Mum (and everyone else) smiling – which will almost probably definitely involve willies, shepherd's pie and Goffo's victory at the pet talent show. This book is funny and a little bit sad. When your mum or dad has cancer by Ann Couldrick. Available from CBUK shop This is a useful booklet for younger children (7+) to teenage children. It has an introduction for parents but then explains cancer in a simple way children can relate to. It also covers many questions children ask such as will the person die and what exactly happens, but tackles the answers with insight and honesty.

**The secret C by Straight Talking About Cancer by Julie Stokes, Vicky Fullick** This illustrated guide for children provides a sensitive introduction for a child when a parent, sibling or a person close to them is diagnosed with cancer. It is aimed at children aged 7 to 10 years and will work best when an adult is present to expand on the simple messages in the text.

**The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside** Bereaved children and those in families where someone is expected to die, often have worries that they feel unable to share. This reassuring story will encourage them to voice their fears and concerns

**Books**

**Granpa by John Burningham** (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3) Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

**Remembering Grandad by Sheila and Kate Isherwood** (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5) A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.

**Fred by Posy Simmons** (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5) When Fred the cat dies, his owners Nick and Sophie attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humoured and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.

**Grandad, I'll always remember you by De Bode and Broere** (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8) A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.

**Lifetimes Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between – a beautiful way to explain life and death to children Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen** (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9). places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants; for people; and for birds".

**Badger's Parting Gifts (also available in Urdu and Arabic) by Susan Varley** When old badger dies, his friends think they will be sad forever. Gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and treasure gifts he left behind. Sensitively written, this book will help children identify and begin to understand feelings associated with the death of someone they love.

**A birthday present for Daniel by Juliet Rothman** (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1) This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly".

**If all the world were.... By Joseph Coelho.** A moving lyrical picture book about a young girl's love for her grandad and how she copes when he's gone.

**Always and Forever by Alan Durant** When Fox dies the rest of his 'family' are absolutely distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But, months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.

**The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Voirst** A lovely short story that by dealing with the death of a pet, takes a child through the rituals associated with any death. It addresses the feelings children have when faced by loss, and how we all deal with those feelings, learn from them, and grow. This book does not have religious overtones, so it can be used by families with different sets of beliefs.

**Remembering Mum by Ginny Perkins** A simple photo journey of a real family whose Mum died. It shows how that family - a Dad and two primary aged boys - coped with the anniversary of Mum's death, and how they are living without her but still including her in their daily lives. Very real and one that children will identify with.

**Sad Book by Michael Rosen** Michael Rosen talks of his sadness after the death of his son. A personal story that speaks to adults and children. Minimum text with moving illustrations.

**What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?** by Trevor Romain Child friendly, accessible text, this short book deals with the many questions that bereaved children of this age have when someone dies.

**What does dead mean? By Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas.** Available Jessica Kingsley [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) What Does Dead Mean? is a beautifully illustrated book that guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Suitable for children aged 4+, this is an ideal book for parents and carers to read with their children, as well as teachers, therapists and counsellors working with young children.

(iii) **Book to support children in the event of a death of a teacher.**

**The Copper Tree by Hilary Robinson and Mandy Stanley** When Olivia's teacher dies, the children at her school are encouraged to think of everything that reminds them of her. Written with sensitivity and sprinkled with light hearted moments, The Copper Tree approaches grief with sensitivity and sound judgement. A delightful and touching short story.

(iv) **Books to support adults in the school community.**

**Talking about death and bereavement in school by Ann Chadwisck.** Available from [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) This short, easy to read book offers simple but important advice and guidance for school teachers and staff on what to do when a child is grieving. It includes advice on explaining death to children, insights into how children may be feeling and how they may react, and ways in which they can be supported. Age 4-11.

**Good grief: Exploring feelings, loss and death with under 11's. Available Jessica Kingsley [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)** With twenty educators contributing ideas piloted with children of different abilities and backgrounds in their care. To explore and demystify the experience of loss within the framework of the National Curriculum.

**As big as it gets. Published & available [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)** Supporting a Child when a Parent is seriously ill. This booklet provides a range of ideas for parents and carers so that they feel able to involve their children in what is happening. The book also includes some suggestions about what parents might say to children and how to offer support.

**The Invisible String by Patrice Karst** In this heart-warming story, delivers a very simple approach to overcoming the fear of loneliness or separation from parents, written with an imaginative flair that children can easily identify with and remember. Specifically written to address children's fear of being apart from the ones they love, The Invisible String delivers a particularly compelling message in today's uncertain times that though we may be separated from the ones we care for, whether through anger, or distance or even death, love is the unending connection that binds us all, and, by extension, ultimately binds every person on the planet to everyone else.

## **Appendix C**

### **Workbooks to use to support pupils**

**Remembering by Dianne Leutner.** Available from CBUK shop A workbook for children when someone important to them has died. Sensitively illustrated, it will help a child to talk about their memories and make some sense of how they are feeling. **Helping Children Think About Bereavement** by Heather Butler. Available to buy on CBUK shop This fun story and related short activities are presented as four, differentiated, lesson plans including one for pupils with learning difficulties. It helps pupils develop resilience and coping skills should someone they know die.

**Someone I knew has died by Trish Philips** This is an innovative activity book with many unusual and interactive features, written for bereaved children to help them understand what it means when someone dies and to explore their thoughts and feelings with an adult. Although designed with pre-school and early years age groups in minds, some older children may also enjoy this book.

**Talk to My Gran About Dying** – my school project by Gina Leveté. Available from [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) Teacher resource to promote class discussion. Written in a diary format in a fun and engaging tone, this illustrated book is an excellent way to talk to children about dying, to answer their questions and to help them understand what dying means. Questions to the reader throughout the book help to spark discussions and will allow the child to safely explore their thoughts and feelings. This is an ideal resource for teachers and parents to read with children aged 8-11.

**Finding a Way Through When Someone Close Has Died by Mood and Whittaker** This workbook is written by children who have experienced the death of someone close. They offer advice based on their own experiences. The activities encourage young people to express their feelings and responses to death.

**When Someone Very Special Dies by M.Heegard** A simple workbook designed to be used by a bereaved child with adult help. It will help a child or young person to understand and express the many feelings that they will have. Communication is increased and coping skills developed as they work their way through it.

**We will met again in Jannah by Zamir Hussain** This book helps children make sense of their experience following the death of a sibling. This book can be a valued resource for schools in the field of bereavement care for pupils. Lesson plans can be customised according to the topic and activities adapted around the needs and background of the children

**Helping Children Think About Bereavement by Heather Butler.** Available to buy on CBUK shop This fun story and related short activities are presented as four, differentiated, lesson plans including one for pupils with learning difficulties. It helps pupils develop resilience and coping skills should someone they know die.

**Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine by Diana Crossley** Activity book offering practical and sensitive support.

## Appendix D

### Letter Templates

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents/carers. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents/carers and school.*

#### **(i) Letter Template Informing Parents of a Death from Coronavirus**

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with great sadness that I share the news that <Name> has died due to complications of the coronavirus. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of <Name> at this difficult time and we are providing what support we can to the family.

We are letting you know about this sad event so you may inform your children.

When someone dies, it is normal for children, indeed all of us to feel sad and confused. Any death may make children anxious, as they become more aware of their own mortality and that of those around them.

We know that children hearing about a death benefit from maintaining normal routines, being listened to, having their questions answered honestly (sticking to known facts rather than rumour) and having their feelings acknowledged and normalised.

We do not yet know when the funeral will take place and obviously attendance will not be possible in the current circumstances. When children return to school we will of course devise a suitable memorial activity. In the meantime, you may find helpful information on this site: <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

We appreciate your understanding and support with this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us via email if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

<sign off>

Headteacher

## **(ii) Template letter to parents/carers of deceased**

Dear <insert name>

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of <insert child's name> death. There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

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

Sign-off

Headteacher

### **(iii) Letter Template Informing School Community of the Death of a Pupil**

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents/carers. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents/carers and school.*

Dear Parents/Carers,

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

<sign off>

Headteacher

**(iii) Letter Template Informing Parents of the Death of a Member of Staff**

Dear Parents/Carers,

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

<sign off>

Head teacher



## **Appendix E**

### **Supporting Pupils**

The following guidelines are taken from CRUSE bereavement care website. They are general principles, and need to be thought about whatever the needs of the child are. Adapt and aid communication as appropriate.

#### **Loss from a Child's Perspective**

For many children and young people the death of a parent, caregiver, sibling or grandparent is an experience they are faced with early in life. It is sometimes incorrectly assumed that a child or young person who is bereaved by the death of someone close at a young age will not be greatly affected as they are too young to understand the full implications of death.

This is untrue and unhelpful. Even babies are able to experience loss. A baby cannot cognitively process the implications of the bereavement but that does not mean that they do not feel the loss.

Accepting the child's experience Children and young people need to be given the opportunity to grieve as any adult would. Trying to ignore or avert the child's grief is not protective, in fact it can prove to be extremely damaging as the child enters adulthood. Children and young people regardless of their age need to be encouraged to talk about how they are feeling and supported to understand their emotions.

It is also important to remember that children and young people grieve in different ways. Grief is unique and therefore it is not wise to assume that all children and young people will experience the same emotions, enact the same behaviour or respond similarly to other grieving children and young people. A child or young person's grief differs from that of an adult's grief because it alters as they develop.

#### **Time to Grieve**

Children and young people often revisit the death and review their emotions and feelings about their bereavement as they move through their stages of development. Children and young people do not have the emotional capacity to focus on their grief for long periods of time and therefore it is not uncommon for grieving children and young people to become distracted by play. This is a protective mechanism which allows the child or young person to be temporarily diverted from the bereavement.

Bereaved children and young people need time to grieve and in order for them to address the bereavement they need to be given the facts regarding the death in language appropriate to their age or level of comprehension. Avoid using metaphors for death such as, "Daddy has gone to sleep", this will make the child or young person believe that Daddy will come back to them and may constantly ask when he is going to wake up. Similarly, the child or young person might encounter problems with bedtime and not wanting to sleep for fear of not waking up.

## **Appendix F**

### **Support and Further Suggestions for Teachers**

Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement.

It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events. Teachers need not be experts on the subject but they do need to use sensitivity and their skills in understanding children's development and emotional needs.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

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

## Appendix G

### Developmental Stages relating to an understanding of death

Age	Understanding of Death	Child's Needs	Phrases/Techniques
<b>Infancy</b> Birth – two years	Death as separation and /or abandonment Careful listening and watching Death is when the body stops working	Brief simple, honest explanations with familiar examples Reassurance of safety, parental support and attention	“We’ll be here to take care of you.
<b>Pre- school</b> 2 – 5 Years Uses magical and intuitive thinking	Death as sleep, temporary, reversible, impersonal. Or as a person who comes to get you, can be catching Egocentric thinking causes feelings of responsibility or guilt	Disrupted sleep, regression, eg toilet training. Clarification and expanded answers. Permission to attend funeral with assistance Acceptance of feelings without qualification, corrections or judgement.	Avoid euphemisms such as gone to sleep, lost, passed away. Check and see if explanations are understood Expect repeat questions Acknowledge everyone’s feelings of sadness and loss. Anticipate and counteract guilt Look out for unusual or subtle expressions of grief
<b>School Years</b> 5-11 years Uses concrete thinking, begins rational thinking	Death is final, perhaps not inevitable Occurs to others Perhaps retaliatory	Reassurance that grief is OK, to feel bad is normal Reassurance about health and safety and Open communication and opportunity to express feelings when ready. Encouragement to attend the funeral	Acknowledge adult feeling, including anger and guilt. Reassure – not their fault. It’s OK to cry Accept fluctuating grief

## **Appendix H**

### **Remembering - Collaborative projects for the school community (from Child Bereavement UK)**

If a pupil or member of staff dies, the school community may welcome a collaborative project to help to remember the person who died, creating something positive for everyone to share. In this way, pupils and staff may feel more connected to each other and take comfort in working together, even though they may be physically separated. The finished project could be shared within the school and, if appropriate, with the family of the person who died.

#### **Collaborative project ideas:**

- Audio or film messages which could be collated in classes or as a whole school message. These could also be recorded and sent in by digital means.
- Individual works of art, which could be based on a common theme such as a season, time of day, special place, sport, hobby or interest. These could be uploaded to a virtual gallery.
- Compiling a cookbook in memory by contributing favourite recipes.
- Composing a piece of music using instruments, household items, percussion and/or singing.
- Writing individual lines of poetry which could form a remembrance poem.
- Contributing to a book of condolence.
- Writing, recording or drawing messages for the family of the person who died.
- Making a jigsaw wall for which students write messages or create decorated tessellating shapes, such as paper jigsaw pieces, which can be put together on a wall in school when everyone returns.
- Setting up an online memorial or fundraiser in memory.
- Helping other people by sharing ideas about what has helped them at this difficult time, and creating an information guide to help bereaved pupils in other schools. Some of these project ideas may also be helpful suggestions for a grieving family, as a way of connecting extended family members and friends when they are not able to attend a funeral or visit each other.

## **Appendix I**

### **Coronavirus: How schools can support children and young people (From Winston's Wish)**

Support from teachers and school staff is crucial for bereaved children and young people, especially during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic when children are isolated from their usual support networks. Although you probably won't see them face-to-face, there are plenty of ways you can support children and young people during this difficult time.

How can I help my pupils when the schools are closed?

This is a time of great uncertainty and potential anxiety for all of us, and for teachers and pupils the huge change in circumstances and the loss of daily contact can be very hard to manage.

#### **1. Keep in touch**

Where possible, the provision of some contact and support from teaching staff can be hugely helpful to children and young people who may be feeling anxious and uncertain, or who may be experiencing the illness or death of a loved one.

Keep in touch, perhaps offering scheduled points of contact with you during the week, using social media, apps, and phone calls. For pupils who are known to be vulnerable, offer additional opportunities to check in with a key member of staff and keep in touch with parents and carers especially if you are concerned about their child.

#### **2. Keep a routine**

Try and bring an element of 'normality' to their days by encouraging pupils and parents to continue the school routine from home, and to create some structure to their days, including during school holidays.

#### **3. Listen and reassure**

Acknowledge how strange and difficult this situation is, rather than trying to make it better. Listen to their worries and fears: these are real and we can't take them away, but it will help children if someone they know and trust hears them. Reassure them when you are able to do so honestly.

Be as clear as possible what help is available, both from school pastoral staff and externally within the wider community.