

This Policy has been adopted and approved by Gippeswyk Community Educational Trust and is to be used by all members of the Trust.

BEREAVEMENT POLICY	
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Responsible Officer	Head of Trust Standards
Policy Number	TS1

Definition of a Parent

- All biological parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- Any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Contents

Charter for Bereaved Children and Young people	1
Aims	2
Roles and responsibilities	2
Procedures	3
Clarifying information	6
Follow up actions	7
Support for returning pupils	8
Links to other policies	9
Appendix 1 support materials	10
Appendix 2 general guidance informing pupils	12
Appendix 3 general guidance ongoing support	14
Appendix 4 common concerns addressed	15

1. Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.

E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from Academies. Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

2. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school community
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils experiencing bereavement
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils returning to school following bereavement

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The Principal will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead, or delegate to an SLT member, pupil reintegration meetings following a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils

3.2 Pastoral support staff and Designated Safeguarding Lead

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team including the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils

- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils and ensure they're supported on those days
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school

3.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing –regular meetings between the Principal and chair
- Assist the Principal, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the Principal is not available to respond to a death immediately.

3.4 Bereavement Lead

Each academy should appoint a bereavement lead. This is likely to be the staff member who has pastoral responsibility for the pupil within the school. This person will be responsible for:

- acting as the communication focus for the family and the school. See section 4 Procedures for further detail as to what this will involve.
- advising the SLT and principal as to the needs and wishes of the family.
- updating relevant staff including the office staff and especially the attendance team on religious and cultural expectations
- supporting the student as they return to school providing a plan that is shared with all relevant staff
- ensuring that transition to a new year group or to a new school is managed carefully.
- being aware of key dates that may cause additional distress.
- monitoring closely the academic and emotional development of the child in the school and take all measures to support and help as necessary.

4. Procedures

4.1 Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

4.2 Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours
- understand that the bereaved will need time off school. The attendance team will be informed by the principal and will act with consideration and compassion. See attendance policy.

- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected • will prepare a press statement, if required and with due regard to the family affected (Principal in liaison with the trust)
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.
- Inform the Local Authority via the Schools Organisational Support Education Officers using either their email address edorgsupport@suffolk.gov.uk or their phone number 01473 263942

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some very rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school with empathy and sensitivity
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference
- signpost families to bereavement services.
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

4.3 Unexpected deaths additional considerations

4.3.1 Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide. It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide. In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/>

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is

- age appropriate
- is factually correct
- does not include detail of the suicidal act itself
- does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as ‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended his / her life’ rather than ‘committed suicide’ or ‘successful suicide’, and saying ‘attempted to end his / her life’ rather than ‘unsuccessful suicide’ or ‘failed attempt at suicide’.

4.3.2 Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide.

It is estimated that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston’s Wish recommend taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston’s Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

4.3.3 Following a sudden and unexpected death – Accident

A sudden and unexpected death can be very difficult to process. Feelings of shock anger and disbelief are natural. As mentioned above children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person or organization that caused their relative to die as well as deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them.

Winston’s Wish recommend taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston’s Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/sudden-death>

5 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

- The principal in consultation with the pastoral lead and designated safeguarding lead will decide who will be responsible for contacting the family to confirm news of a death and determine the wishes of the family in terms of what can be shared with the rest of the school community and how.
- If news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made Then the principal in consultation with the pastoral lead and the designated safeguarding lead will arrange for an assembly or assemblies for different year groups to communicate known facts and stop unfounded rumours.

5.1 Sharing the news with staff

- The principal will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it
- To ensure that staff will be informed promptly a staff meeting will be called at the end of the working day. If this is not possible due to the school not being in operation then the activation of a phone tree or another academy emergency notification systems will be used to bring staff together virtually.

5.2 Sharing the news with pupils and parents

- The principal will be responsible for sharing the news with pupils. This responsibility can be delegated to pastoral leads or other senior leaders. They will sharing the news with pupils and explain what support will be available to those who need it
- To ensure pupils are informed in a timely and appropriate way an assembly should be called. This will based on phase or year groups to ensure that the message being delivered is age appropriate and can take account of specifics year group matters e.g. friendship groups. or year group leaders calling year groups together to share the news, or using school emergency notification systems to alert parents of where to find important news online if your school is closed)
- To ensure that parents are informed in a timely and appropriate way a letter and an emails should be written by the principal to all parents informing them of the circumstances of the death; explaining the steps that has been taken during the day to inform pupils of the death; what additional support is available and where to go to for more help and information. To ensure that parents/guardians look for this communication a phone notification should be sent to all asking them to refer to their inbox or ask their children for the letter as there is an important school message.

5.3 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The principal is responsible for responding to requests from the media
- Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to this responsible person

6 Follow-up actions and support following a death

6.1 Support for pupils.

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- The pastoral team will be responsible for providing the day to day care that pupils will need as they know the pupils well and can cater for individuals in an age appropriate manner.
- If possible a trained bereavement team should be deployed to support pupils in school. This should only be used if the staff members have been trained in bereavement. Failing this trained counsellors should be brought into school to support staff and pupils as needed.
- Pupils and staff should be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources children social care and other relevant agencies and bereavement charities. See end of Appendix 1 for a possible list of support agencies.
- Refer to appendix 2 and 3 for general guidelines when supporting pupils.
- If an extended absence is required then the school will make available materials and other educational support if at all possible such as video linked tutorials to support the student during the prolonged period of absence.

6.2 School Timetables

- Only in truly exceptional circumstances will the timetable be altered for all or some pupils. The views of the SLT and pastoral team should be sought before pursuing this course of action.

6.3 Tributes and condolences

- A tribute to the deceased person(s) is likely to be appropriate. This will be an opportunity for the school to celebrate their life and remember them. In such circumstances the deceased family should be consulted as to the nature of the tribute.
- A physical memorial should be considered such as book of condolence. All members of the school community should be offered the opportunity to contribute to it. This book can be given to the deceased family.

6.4 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute
- If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so. They should follow established school principles to ask for leave noting that availability of cover might prevent some from attending.
- If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so then they should seek school permission in the usual way.
- If extended absence from school is needed for example for cultural, religious, and travel needs.

7. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

Before they return ensure all staff are aware of the bereavement and the possible effects on them, their behaviour and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be given throughout the setting. Remember bereaved children and young people have 'physical' illness, such as headaches, stomach aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, feeling tired, anger and frustration.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

Before the pupils returns to school the pastoral lead will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability

7.2 Ongoing support

Put in place action plans to help the child and young people return by:

- Identifying a member of the team who will be the main contact point for them and their family. This designated lead will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping.
- Ensure **regular** contact, 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 plan strategies to cope.
- Recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.
- Maintain normal expectations and practice of our core values. This is important for the children and young people within the setting and the child or young person who have been bereaved. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure.
- 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 will have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a re-visit of what happened; 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. Make sure that the attendance team and office staff are aware of the circumstances, so

conversations are contextualized. 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. The designated bereavement lead will be able to advise how to address these concerns. Refer to appendix 3 and 4 for additional information and guidance.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Child protection policy
- Critical incident policy
- Behaviour policy
- Safeguarding policy
- PSHE education policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Offsite visits policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Equality policy
- Health and safety policy
- Attendance policy

Appendix 1: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 • https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 08088 020 021 • https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 0808 808 1677 • https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 • Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
St Elizabeths Hospice	Home - St Elizabeth Hospice
Local counselling support. Local trained counsellors are available. It would be best to establish contact beforehand.	https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/ Please ensure that all counselors used are DBS checked.
The Samaritans Step by Step Guide.	https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/
Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.	Bereavement (autism.org.uk)
Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.	https://www.childbereavement.org.uk
Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.	https://www.childline.org.uk
Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives. and young people. Grief support service for children	https://www.griefencounter.org.uk SeeSaw Grief support for children and young people in Oxfordshire
Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.	Sands Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.
Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.	Hope Again
Provides resources & support for	Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention Prevention of Young Suicide (papyrus-

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.	uk.org)
Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.	SimonSays

Appendix 2 Guidelines on how to inform pupils.

Remember it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important we model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear.

- Be honest and factual.
- Use clear language – use the person's name, do not use euphemisms like 'passed away' or 'lost' use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death (even if that is the death of a pet).
- 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.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- Acknowledge some days will be harder than others
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

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.

Appendix 3 Guidelines for providing ongoing support to a bereaved pupil

- If the child/young person thinks it would be helpful and friends agree, establish a peer support network – ensuring that those helping are given appropriate support themselves or seek help outside.
- 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 celebrating or acknowledging Mother's Day 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.
- At the end of the day, be yourself, listen and care.

Appendix 4 Common concerns

- **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 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.