

Every death in the school community, expected or sudden, presents real challenges. This guidance is intended to help the school community to respond appropriately and sensitively at this challenging time.

When the whole school may be affected by the death of a pupil or member of staff.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE FOLLOWING THE DEATH:

- Gather the facts, not hearsay, in order to plan an appropriate response.
- The Head Teacher or Principal should contact the family of the person who has died and seek permission to inform pupils and parents.
- Inform the local authority, staff and governors.
- Inform pupils of the death in classes/tutor groups, or if necessary, in assembly. Smaller groups are preferable and the younger the children, the smaller the groups should be.
- Prepare a brief personal tribute about the person who has died to pass to Corporate Communications (Public Relations) who can liaise with the Press on behalf of the school.
- Prepare a letter for parents informing them of the death. The letter should be sent on the day the pupils are informed so that parents can support their children.

Useful contacts:

- The Educational Psychology Service (01952) 385216
- Corporate Communications (Public Relations Team) (01952) 382402
- Local Clergy (.....)
- Chair of Governors (.....)

It is important to be open and honest with all members of the community. Remember that grief is painful but normal and healthy. Children need to be allowed to grieve just as much as adults. **They are unlikely to need “experts” counselling them.** Rather they need **familiar and trusted adults** who can be sensitive to their feelings and offer a listening ear.

NEXT STEPS

- Head Teacher/Principal to visit the family
- Consider arranging a meeting for staff so that they can be advised on how best to support pupils and one another. The Educational Psychology Service can facilitate this.

- Ensure that pupils have the opportunity to talk about the death with familiar, trusted adults with whom they have daily contact. For younger children this may be done, e.g., in circle time. For older students, a room could be made available for those particularly affected perhaps supported by staff who know them.
- Consider whether further support may be required for pupils and/or staff who have directly witnessed an incident.
- Maintain contact with the family prior to the funeral and for some time afterwards, depending on individual needs.

FURTHER STEPS

- Establish the family's wishes regarding funeral arrangements and find out if the family would like staff and individual pupils to attend.
- In consultation with the family, decide if the school should have a memorial service and/or a more lasting memorial such as a sensory garden, a cup or trophy, a tree or a painting.

When an individual pupil is affected by a bereavement which may not impact on the whole school.

- Gather the facts and liaise with the family to find out what the pupil understands.
- Let the pupil know, in a sympathetic manner, that you are aware that someone close to them has died.
- Dedicate a member of staff to make daily contact with the pupil, whilst allowing the pupil to seek support elsewhere.
- Maintain routines but adjust expectations.

More specific support and advice is available from :

Winston's Wish www.winstonswish.org.uk 08452 030405 e-mail ask@winstonswish.org.uk

Hope House Children's Hospice tel. 01691 672618 e-mail kay@hopehouse.org.uk

CRUSE www.rd4u.org.uk CRUSE Youth Helpline 0808 808 1677 Mon-Fri 9.30 - 5pm

The Samaritans www.samaritans.org.uk tel. 08457 909090 e-mail jo@samaritans.org

Death in the Curriculum

Pupils are likely to cope better with bereavement if they have had natural opportunities to think about death within different areas of the curriculum such as in stories and role play, Drama, English, PSHE, RE and Assemblies. There are also specific resources which focus on bereavement, e.g., within SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and Seasons for Growth. Recommendations of additional and current resources can be obtained from www.telford.gov.uk/libraries