

# **ROXETH PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## ***OUR MISSION STATEMENT***

***Equality, Excellence, Education***

***Together at Roxeth we can achieve***

## **SCHOOL BEREAVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**Responding to a death within the school community**

# ROXETH PRIMARY SCHOOL

## BEREAVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### Responding to a death within the school community

We acknowledge that death, while being the inevitable end of life, is often unexpected and traumatic. Its unpredictability can cause severe distress and can shock and disturb the whole school community.

We acknowledge that should our school community be informed of a death, our response should be a planned, tested and considered one. An unplanned response could make the situation worse for all concerned; we need to ensure we are able to react sensitively and professionally.

We acknowledge that the communication of any death within our community must be planned and handled with great sensitivity. While recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school website, text, telephone, email, or social media sites.

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life changing significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by trained staff and when appropriate, through the use of age related structured programmes provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

The senior leadership team will ensure all staff and governors are aware of our policy and procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed annually or in the event of a death within the school community. The Rainbows trained staff will support where possible.

### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:**

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

Should we receive the news of a death, in **ALL** cases the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (*It is essential to have the facts confirmed*)
- Share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff.

The senior member of staff will:

- Consider the action required, follow the agreed procedures, take notice of the guidance and examples and be aware of the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.

## **THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A PARENT OR CLOSE RELATIVE**

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member break the news with the support of an appropriate member of staff. If this is not possible the Head teacher will ensure someone suitable to break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

## **THE DEATH OF A PUPIL**

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together *having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes.*

We will:

- Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school; be that a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available.
- Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, email, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances
- Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.

## **THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE PUPIL**

Should we receive such news, members of the leadership team will be called together to be briefed with the salient facts and to decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident.

We will consider:

- Who will contact parents, if necessary?
- Who will meet with parents who arrive at school? Where?
- Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. Members of the senior leadership team responsible for dealing with the media will prepare all necessary statements. Such statements should deal only with facts in as sympathetic a way as possible. We will agree a format of response to telephone inquiries, including approaches from the media.

## **THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF**

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff; supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the appropriate senior member of staff will call together colleagues from the rainbows trained staff.

We will use the guidance notes below:-

- a. Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- b. Allow time for corporate grieving amongst the staff.
- c. Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- d. Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes.
- e. Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- f. Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- g. It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way.
- h. Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff that seems particularly affected by the death.

## **BREAKING SAD NEWS**

Should we need to break sad news to children or young people we will first refer to the "*Guidelines for Breaking Sad News of a Death to a class or assembly*" provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB (APP 1).

## **MEMORIALS and FUNERAL SERVICES**

Should we need to consider our involvement with any funeral services or memorial services or memorials, we will first refer to the "*Guidelines for Memorials and Funeral Services*" provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB (APP 2).

## **RETURN TO SCHOOL**

We acknowledge our responsibility to 'keep a special watch' on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school and for at least a two year period and at times of transition. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns. Members of our Bereavement Team will advise an appropriate response, depending on the individual's circumstances.

## **MANAGING ANTICIPATED DEATH AND THE TERMINALLY ILL**

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil's sick relative or friend
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family's wishes)
- Never give false hope to the child or young person
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so

### **THE PLACE OF DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM**

We will ensure we have approval from the family of the deceased to record the deceased name in our school memorial book / memorial garden / memory tree. We also acknowledge our responsibility to explore issues surrounding death and bereavement within the curriculum. This will take place within some area of the curriculum in Years 3-6.

### **LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE**

We will offer pupils access to a range of age related peer support programmes available through our trained staff provided by Rainbows Bereavement Support GB.

### **SUPPORT FOR STAFF WHO SUPPORT BEREAVED PUPILS AND COLLEAGUES**

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement and will offer training as part of our staff induction programme. Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

## **HELPFUL WEBSITES AND BOOKS**

### **WEBSITES:**

#### **RAINBOWS BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GB**

Rainbows Bereavement Support GB offers specific training to assist schools review their policy and procedures for "*When Somebody Dies*" together with more general training in bereavement and loss. Its age related structured programmes that foster emotional healing among children and young people grieving a significant loss are used in over 700 schools in Great Britain.

[www.rainbowsgb.org](http://www.rainbowsgb.org)

#### **Childhood Bereavement Network**

The Childhood Bereavement Network is a national, multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people

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

#### **Cruse – Bereavement Care**

Cruse can offer referrals to Cruse branches and other bereavement and counselling services throughout the UK. It also offers a telephone counselling service for those who are bereaved and those who care for bereaved people.

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

### **GRIEF ENCOUNTER**

Grief Encounter offers guidance and practical support for parents and carers, schools and professionals.

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

### **RAINBOWS IRELAND**

Rainbows Ireland is part of the same international organisation as **Rainbows Bereavement Support GB** working throughout Ireland with children and young people grieving a significant loss.

[www.rainbowsireland.com](http://www.rainbowsireland.com)

### **CHILD BEREAVEMENT UK**

A range of support including on-line information for young people who've lost someone close

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

### **WINSTON'S WISH:**

Winston's Wish offers a range of help and resources for bereaved children and their families together with guidance, support and information for anyone caring for a bereaved child

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

### **REALLY USEFUL BOOKS:**

We acknowledge that it is often very, very difficult to talk with children and young people following death and bereavement. Thankfully, there are now many wonderful books which have been found to be of assistance to children and young people and to parents, carers, and professionals. Books can often provoke discussion and foster understanding about the loss of a loved one.

The following list of books, first created by the Lyn Coyle, Rainbows Registered Director for the Diocese of Southwark, has been found to be really useful. We thank Lyn for her generosity in sharing it with us but it is by no means exhaustive. We recommend that all schools carry an appropriate selection of these books in the school based library.

The age ranges given are for guidance only and depend on the maturity or understanding of the child.

### **BOOKS FOR PARENTS, CARERS OR PROFESSIONALS:**

***Healing the Hurt Restoring the Hope* by Suzy Yehl Marta, founder of Rainbows; the world's largest grief support organisation for children and young people** This book is an invaluable aid for guiding children and young people through times of loss and bereavement with the Rainbows approach. ISBN: 1405041919. Also available directly from [www.rainbows.gb.org](http://www.rainbows.gb.org)

***A Child's Grief: Supporting a Child when someone in their Family has Died.*** Created by Winston's Wish, this excellent booklet is designed to be a helpful tool for adults

who are supporting children through bereavement. (Available from [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) )

***A Special Star* By Alison Wertheimer** This book discusses suicide from an adult perspective but can be an invaluable resource for those helping children and families bereaved through suicide. ISBN: 0415017637

***Children Also Grieve* by Linda Goldman** ... an imaginative, fully illustrated interactive storybook for bereaved children and those who care for them. ISBN: 1843108089

***Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults* by Atle Dyregrov**

***Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grownups* by William C Kroen**

***Water Bugs and Dragonflies: by Doris Stickney & illustrated by Gloria Stickney.*** This booklet with small black and white pictures is based on a fable, associating death with a water bug's transformation into a dragonfly. It portrays the mystery around death but may need an adult to explain the analogy and help a child relate it to their own experience. It uses Christian beliefs with a focus on life after death and also contains advice for parents.

***Helping Your Child through Bereavement* by Mary Paula Walsh**

This book addresses the many questions that arise for parents and children when someone close has died and offers practical advice in a Christian context. ISBN: 1853905305

***It's OK to be Sad* by Margaret Collins.**

Practical, circle time activities to help children aged 4 – 9 to manage loss, grief or bereavement. ISBN 1412918251

***Remembering* by Lorna Nelson and Tina Rae**

Practical guidance for children aged 7 – 13. ISBN: 978-1-90431504201

***Learning to Say Goodbye: When a Parent Dies* by Eda LeShan**

***Hope beyond the headlines: supporting a child bereaved through murder or manslaughter.*** Winston's Wish [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

***Beyond the Rough Rock: supporting a child bereaved through suicide.***

Winston's Wish [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

***Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: by David Crossley.***

This book from Winston's Wish offers practical and sensitive support for bereaved children and has the potential to become an invaluable keepsake in the future. ISBN: 1869890582

***On Children and Death: How Children and their Parents Can and Do Cope with Death* by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

***Living with Grief: Children, Adolescents, and Loss* by Kenneth J Doka**

***Loss Change and Grief – an educational perspective* by Erica Brown**

ISBN: 1853464651

***The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools* by Ian Gilbert**

ISBN: 978-184590464-7

***Out of the Blue* by Julie Stokes and Paul Oxley**

A collection of tried and tested ideas to help young people remember the person who has died and to help express their thoughts and feelings. ISBN: 1903458714 or Winston's Wish.

***Sunshine & Shadows: Reflections of a Macmillan Nurse* by Clare Fitzgibbon.**

An inspirational and sensitive book of hope and courage ISBN: 97809556140002

**PRE-SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS (*age reference is for approximate guidance only. NB some books for 5-8 year olds may also be suitable*)**

***Badger's Parting Gifts* by Susan Varley.** A story about Badger, who is old, and the sadness his friends feel when he dies. His friends eventually realise that death was a happy release for him and so they are able to look back on their memories of him with happiness rather than just dwelling on their grief.

***Grandpa* by John Burningham** This tells of the close bond between a little girl and her grandfather. When he dies, the little girl still misses him but is comforted by her happy memories of him.

***A Dog like Jack* by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan** After a long life of chasing squirrels an old dog comes to the end of his days.

***The day Great-Grandma moved house* by Joy Smith** Written for 3 – 6 year olds this book explains death and bereavement from a positive Christian viewpoint, focusing on the joyful expectations of a person who is looking forward to meeting the Lord.

***The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back* by Margot Sunderland and Nicky Armstrong.** The beautiful sea dries up and the sand dragon finds ways of coming to terms with his loss by finding water to save a dying flower and by building a rock pool. This book comes with a very helpful guidebook, "Helping Children with Loss", complete with further work to do on bereavement and grief. (<http://www.speechmark.net/>)

***The Goodbye Boat* by Mary Joslin and Claire St Louis Little**

A lovely simple story book to help a child understand bereavement ISBN: 0745942644

***Up in Heaven* by Emma Chichester Clark**

For children who have recently lost a family pet. ISBN: 9781842703335

***The Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside** This tells of a little girl whose worries and anxieties overshadow her life. With the help of the old lady next door, she learns to share her worries and try to deal with them.

**5-9 YEAR OLDS (*N.B. Age reference is for approximate guidance only*)**

***Ask Me* by Antje Damm**

*Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2005*

ISBN 978-1-84507-386-2

this book offers an engaging way for primary school aged children to generate those really

special conversations that happen when the defences are down and a child feels more able to open up.

***I miss my sister by Sarah Courtauld,***

*Child Bereavement UK*

*ISBN: 978-0-9521661-1-5*

***Flamingo Dream written and Illustrated by Cathie Felstead***

*Greenwillow Books, 2002*

*ISBN 0-688-17863-4*

this bright and colourful book is narrated by a young boy whose dad is seriously ill and dies soon after a trip to Florida to see the place where he grew up. The collage style illustrations capture the things the boy collects to remind him of his dad. This is a sensitive but honest book, which emphasises the importance of memories.

***My Mommy Has Cancer by Carolyn Stearns-Parkinson***

*Park Press, 1991*

*ISBN 0963028707*

this is an American story book about a child whose mother is in hospital for treatment for cancer. Suitable for use with children aged from three to six.

***No Matter What by Debi Gliori***

*Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999*

*ISBN 0-747581347*

this book gently and powerfully conveys the idea of unconditional parental love through the characters of Large and Small. It is suitable for children aged from three to eight.

***On Eagles' Wings by Sue Mayfield***

*Lion Hudson, 2004*

*ISBN 0-745948901*

Tony's mother is dying. There's nothing he can do about it and he can't always put a brave face on things. Often he wishes he could just fly away from everything, like an eagle, powerful and free. Gradually, through his experiences, Tony begins to understand that death can sometimes bring freedom. A very readable and sensitive story about growing up, family relationships and facing bereavement

***There's No Such Thing as a Dragon by Jack Kent***

*Golden Books, 1975*

*ISBN 0-375832084*

This is another really helpful story for children aged from four to eight. It is a funny, quirky story about a little dragon that gets bigger – eventually becoming an overwhelming size because no-one is noticing him. It subtly conveys to a child that even tough stuff can and needs to be talked about to make it more manageable.

***The Secret C: Straight Talking About Cancer by Julie Stokes***

*Winston's Wish/Macmillan Cancer Relief, 2000*

*ISBN 0-9539123-0-2*

Available from the Winston's Wish on-line shop or call 01242 515157.

This book aims to help children ask questions about cancer and answers some common questions. It has a simple description of what cancer is and the treatments. The book discusses side-effects in easy to understand language as well as the emotions that a child

may have when a family member has cancer. Suitable for use with children aged from four to 11.

***When Your Mum or Dad Has Cancer by Ann Couldrick***

*Sobell Publications, 1991*

*ISBN 978-0951753736*

Single copies available from Cancerbackup on 0808 800 1234.

This booklet for children uses simple cartoons to explain cancer, treatment and common feelings children may have. Suitable for use with children aged from three to eight.

***Goodbye Mousie by Robie H. Harris & illustrated by Jan Ormerod.*** This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the story of a little boy whose pet mouse has died. At first he doesn't believe it, thinking it is just asleep, but by asking lots of questions and with the help of his family he begins to accept Mousie's death. This would be very helpful to introduce death to young children and a starting point to discuss what happens when someone dies and the different feelings one may have.

***Gentle Willow by Joyce C Mills*** This story is one of the few written for children suffering an illness from which they may not recover. It tells the tale of Amanda and the Little Tree who discover that their friend Gentle Willow isn't feeling very well. This book helps to address feelings of sadness, worry, anger, love and compassion.

***Michael Rosen's Sad Book by Michael Rosen.*** This book is suitable for all ages and tells of Michael's sadness when his beloved son, Eddie, dies. A true story that tells of the very real emotions that affect him and of the things he does to try to overcome and come to terms with his sadness.

***Milly's Bug-Nut by Jill Janney*** Jill Janney, author of this lovely book, wrote this story for her own children after the death of their father. ISBN: 9780953912346 or Winston's Wish.

***Goodbye Vivi! by Antoine Schneider*** When Granny's beloved canary dies, the family comes to accept it, as well as the idea that some day they will lose Granny as well.

***Always and Forever by Alan Durant*** A family of forest animals learn to cope with the death of a loved fox friend. The book does not flinch from facing up to the reality of death as the animals find fox's body "still and cold".

***The Sunshine Cat by Miriam Moss*** Sunny the cat is loved by all his human family, but one day there is a knock at the door - Sunny has been killed in an accident. A sensitive story which aims to help children come to terms with death.

**8-12 YEAR OLDS (N.B. Age reference is for approximate guidance only)**

***Saying Goodbye to Daddy by Judith Vigna*** Clare's Dad died in a car accident and this book looks at changes in the family, difficult feelings, funerals and memories through the eyes of Clare. It would also be a good book to help parents understand the child's perspective. It gives good examples of how adults can answer children's questions, emphasising the need to be clear and honest.

***When Someone Very Special Dies; When someone has a Very Serious Illness; When Mom and Dad Separate*** all by Marge Heegaard. A series of books to help children

cope with their feelings Practical workbooks, rather than stories, they encourage children to personalise and illustrate their thoughts and feelings. (Available from Being Yourself, 73 Livingstone Road, Deal CT14 7NN)

***The Cat Mummy by Jacqueline Wilson*** On the surface, this tells the tale of a girl coming to terms with the death of her cat but this death prompts Verity to think about the death of her mother many years ago.

***What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? By Trevor Romain*** A thought provoking book for older children that describes the huge range of emotions people go through when a loved one dies and how to cope with the situation. It answers questions such as 'why do people have to die?', 'is it okay to cry?' and 'what is a funeral/memorial service?' It is written in a straightforward way, with practical tips, advice and information about different faiths and beliefs.

***Rudi's Pond by Eve Bunting*** When a sick boy dies; his friends and classmates remember him by building a schoolyard pond in his memory.

***Saying Goodbye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle by Ifeoma Onyefulu*** This book has bright colourful photos and follows a little boy, Ikenna describing what happens at the ceremony after his great-grandmother's funeral. It gives ideas of different ways to remember someone and an insight into Nigerian culture. A lovely book that could be used in many different situations

***How it feels When a Parent Dies by Jill Krementz.*** Children from 7- 16 discuss the questions, fears and bereavement they experienced when one of their parents died.

***A Gift for Tia by Karen T Taha*** Little Carmela is close to her elderly neighbour and saddened by her illness and death but she finds a way to express her love when Tia Rosa's grandchild is born.

***Death: What's Happening? By Karen Bryant –Mole*** This factual book has clear text and large photos. It uses stories of young people to discuss issues surrounding death such as feeling frightened, the funeral and the future. It includes advice on how to feel better and cope with difficult situations after someone has died. Using straightforward language, this book may reassure the reader there are other young people who have had someone important to them die and answer some of their questions and concerns.

## **12 YEARS PLUS (Age reference is for approximate guidance only)**

***Alice's Dad by Bill Merrington*** A book to help girls cope with the death of a parent  
ISBN: 1-84003-374-6

***The Hideaway by Bill Merrington*** A book to help boys cope with the death of a parent  
ISBN: 978-1-84003-182-9

***Death, Funerals and Heaven by Bill Merrington*** *Guidance for young people*  
ISBN: 978-1-84867-185-0

***Losing Uncle Tim by Mary Kate Jordan*** This picture book for an older child explains how a young boy finds out his Uncle Tim has AIDS and is going to die. It is a serious and

sensitive book covering many of the issues, changes and difficult feelings that can occur when someone has a serious illness.

***The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and their Friends by Helen Fitzgerald.***

A fairly sophisticated book aimed at young people that gives advice on how to cope with death and the emotions that may be felt.

***Before I Die by Jenny Downham*** Suitable for older teens, it tells the story of Tessa, a 16 year old who is dying of terminal leukaemia and of her wish list of things she wants to do before she dies. It very movingly tells of how she faces up to her death and the responses of family and friends.

***When a Friend Dies a Book for Teens about Grieving and Healing by Marilyn E Gootman***

***Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers by Earl A. Grollman, 1999 How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love.*** This book was written after the author spoke to thousands of teenagers and found they often felt forgotten after someone has died. Written in short, clear sentences that are easy to read, it covers feelings, different types of death and the future. This book gives the reader many options of what can happen, how s/he may feel, giving advice and reassuring readers grief is normal.

***The Charlie Barber Treatment by Carole Lloyd***

Simon's Mum died suddenly from a brain hemorrhage and he came home from school to find she had died. With his GCSE coursework piling up and having to help around the house, Simon finds it hard and doesn't go out much with his friends. He then meets Charlie, who is visiting her Grandma, and believes their meeting was fate. Simon starts to enjoy life again and to re-build relationships with his family and friends. A sensitive and realistic book that conveys some of the thoughts and emotions of a teenage boy

## **BREAKING SAD NEWS:**

### **GUIDELINES FOR BREAKING NEWS OF A DEATH TO A CLASS, OR SCHOOL ASSEMBLY**

**On receiving news of the death of a student or a member of staff please follow the agreed procedures which will include the following points:**

- Consult with the bereaved family concerned to ascertain their wishes.
- Those to be informed of a death should be gathered together in an appropriate place. This is best done in familiar groupings by someone they know.
- Whoever is giving the news should prepare themselves with what to say.
- Try to be as composed as possible as this helps to reduce the possible over emotional reaction of some students. Remember, however, it is perfectly human and understandable if you are moved by the events.
- Start by acknowledging that you have some sad news to give them.
- Be honest; give the news stating simple facts which have been checked for accuracy.
- Talk briefly about the person who has died.
- Let the students know of any arrangements already in place or of any arrangements agreed by the family.
- Underline how important their support is at this most difficult time and that it may be appropriate to involve them in a school response e.g. letters, flowers, cards, funeral attendance, memorial etc.
- Keep a watching brief throughout the assembly/meeting and for a period of time afterwards to pick up and support students and staff showing signs of distress?
- Keep in contact with the family suffering the loss. Make a note to remember the anniversary.
- Confirm any agreed arrangements by email or letter to parents and ensure details are posted on the school's website but not before all members of the bereaved family have been informed.

*(We offer these words below purely as an example. You may like to cut and paste phrases that you find helpful. We recommend that in the event of having to break the news of a death within the community that you take a little while to consider what you will say; how you will say it and how you and colleagues will manage the situation)*

**Start:**

There is no easy way to say this to you and the event that has happened will affect us all in one way or another but I have to tell you.....

You may have heard already .....

That N... has died ... The information that we have and therefore can tell you about is that.....

.....While we are all deeply shocked at this awful, sad news, before we do anything else and while we are all together to support and help each other, may I suggest that we be still now for one or two minutes to honour and remember N...

Thank you.....

N... was a gift to our community here and we are so deeply grateful for the privilege of knowing him/her. In some way we are all better people because of N...

I ask you to close your eyes for a moment and to remember the unique part that N... played in our lives. We think of good times together, training, travelling on school trips, etc. We reflect on her/his many talents and blessings. (Examples: think of her/his delight on the occasion that she sang, that he scored that goal..., that he/she represented the school at...)

We all feel the loss of N... Place a circle of light around N...'s face now and think lots of love and thanks and hope for N...

We do not know much about what happens after death but it is possible that our loving thoughts and wishes and prayers this morning may help N... to a place of great happiness and peace.

There will be many opportunities for us to show our feelings during the next few days. As more details come to us, we will let you know what is happening and how the family would like us to be involved. There will be a variety of ways of honouring N's life and their life amongst us. Your ideas will be most welcome. Talk to .....but talk to any of the staff with your thoughts and feelings. We are all here to help each other; that is what our community is about.

A poet has written these lines to help us at a time like this; you may like it:

*Name*, may you continue to inspire us:  
to enter each day with a generous heart;  
to serve the call of courage and love,  
until we see your face again  
in that land where there is no more separation,  
where all tears will be wiped from our mind,  
and where we will never lose you again.

**Appropriate ending** .....perhaps the poem itself; music; a prayer; a moment of silence.....

## **MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES**

Funerals and memorial services are a way in which the family, friends and society can say goodbye to someone who has died.

### **The values of funerals and memorial services are:**

- They acknowledge the deceased person and provide an opportunity for the person to be remembered,
- They give the opportunity for the death to be put in a religious context, if that is appropriate for the family and/or for the school community
- They give significance to what has happened,
- They provide a time when the bereaved try to come to terms with what has happened,
- They provide a time to express sorrow. Such an occasion helps in the grieving process and should be encouraged at every opportunity.

If the funeral is that of a parent, then the school may wish to send a representative or representatives in support of the pupil who has lost a parent. Should the school wish to send children then please check with the family of the bereaved and ensure permission has also been given from the parents of those attending.

If the funeral is that of a pupil or member of staff then the numbers of pupils and teachers wishing to attend may be considerable. Again, please check with the family of the bereaved and with the parents of those attending.

### **The following should always be considered:**

- An appropriate member of the senior leadership team should always contact the family of the deceased to discuss funeral arrangements and to ascertain the family's wishes regarding representation from the school.
- Such wishes are paramount and should always be respected.

- If the school is to be represented at the funeral by pupils, it would be good if the pupils received support from members of the appropriate members of staff before and after the funeral service.
- Under certain circumstances a form/class close to the bereaved may wish to send messages of sympathy to the bereaved family. These messages may be in the form of poems, cards, flowers etc. The appropriate staff should ensure that all such presents are appropriate.

Often a memorial service may be held in school. This could be a whole school assembly or within a class situation. The planning of such an occasion, choosing readings, poems, music, hymns, pictures, tributes etc. all assist in the grieving process. It might be appropriate to invite members of the bereaved family to share in such a service. Again, on such an occasion, staff members should be on hand to lend support to the pupils who could be upset when sharing in this part of the grieving process.

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**For further guidance please see the guidance and information about bereavement found in staff only/Bereavement.**