

THE FEDERATION OF NETTLESTONE & NEWCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOLS



BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Date Agreed: April 2020

Review Date: April 2022

Signed: _____

Chair of Board of Governors

The Federation of Nettlestone & Newchurch Primary School

All the governors and staff at the Federation of Nettlestone & Newchurch Primary Schools are committed to sharing a common objective to help keep the children and staff of the Federation safe. We ensure that consistent effective safeguarding procedures are in place in order to support families, children and staff of the Federation.

Bereavement Policy

Death is a subject that nobody ever wants to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point in every teacher's career the school community will be affected by a death in some way or another. This might include the death of a pupil, the death of a staff member, the death of a pupil's family member, or the death of a key member in the school community such as a governor or popular visitor to the school.

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

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

Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can even lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity, and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel unable to ask questions, their normal grief processes can be obstructed.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. Our Federation is well-placed to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as to support those personally affected by it. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

This Federation is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that support and prepare pupils for coping with separation or loss of a loved one, either through death or divorce.

This policy and associated guidelines is for all staff, pupils, parents/carers, prospective parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the Federation.

Aims

The Federation of Nettlestone and Newchurch Primary School aims to support all those affected by loss and death in a supportive and caring environment in which everyone can respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances. It will:

- Identify key staff within the Federation and LA, resources and further support services to help the whole community work together.
- Provide a framework for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- Give clear expectations about the way the Federation will respond to death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- Provide support for all stakeholders before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Head Teacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation; for liaison with the Governing Body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and appropriate outside agencies.

There needs to be a designated person, usually either the Executive Headteacher or Head of School who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that this person is absent then another named person will take responsibility.

His/Her 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.
- Co-ordinating the planned action to manage school-related incidents in and beyond the school; decide who will be responsible for communicating with the family directly involved, decide who gives news to the school community and if necessary who will communicate with the press.
- 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 issues is Bex Edmonds her responsibilities are:

- To contribute to generating and updating the policy.
- To support the Executive Head Teacher / Head of School in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed.
- To support the Executive Head Teacher / Head of School in overseeing the way in which bereavement is tackled in the curriculum.
- To review practice.

Receiving sad news:

The school may be informed of the sudden death of a parent or close relative of a pupil, the death of a pupil or the death of a member of staff during or outside the school day. This information may come in by telephone, email or in person from a relative, friend, minister or police. Therefore, the person receiving the information needs to know what action to take should this occur.

In a school community, there are a number of different bereavements that may be experienced by an individual, class group or whole school:

- The sudden death of a parent or close relative of a child
- The death of a pupil
- The death of more than one pupil at a time in accidental or tragic circumstances.
- The death of a member of staff or support staff, or someone closely associated with the school

In all these cases, even when death is expected, it is traumatic and it is crucial to handle the initial reception and transmission of the information with care and consideration.

It would normally be the case that the Executive Headteacher would receive the news. In cases where other members of staff receive the news, then they should pass this onto the Executive Headteacher as soon as possible, without discussing it with anyone else.

The Executive Headteacher should confirm the information, record it and check it. It is essential to have the facts confirmed. The Executive Headteacher should take a moment to reflect on the news and consider the action required. Further clarification may need to be sought from the family. In all cases, it is important that the views and feeling of those most closely affected should be of primary concern. Speak to the family if possible, offer them condolences and support before ascertaining what they would like to happen. Give them a direct telephone number for someone they can contact in school.

The Chair of Governors should be informed. It is particularly important to also inform the Local Authority if the circumstances of the bereavement may attract the attention of the media for any reason. Please advise school staff that any media enquiries should not be answered in person but be passed on to the Local Authority media communications team for a response in the first instance.

Guidelines for breaking news about bereavement to staff:

This is usually done when a student or staff member has died. Publicly talking about a single student who has experienced the death of a parent or family member may not be the best thing to do.

- Arrange a staff meeting (virtually if needs be), as soon as reasonably possible. Give the news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people react in different ways.
- Any announcement should be based solely on first-hand information that has been received, never make assumptions nor repeat what has been learned by rumour.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and if applicable, the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death
- Make it clear what the procedures will be for informing pupils and the wider community and take the views of staff into account.
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting (it is very important that everyone hears the same message - don't forget part-time and peripatetic staff.). Consider the best way of imparting information to those who are absent.
- Ensure that the Senior Leadership team are prepared for reactions to this news, including visible upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
- Be prepared to arrange supply cover if necessary.
- Identify a member of staff who will be the point of liaison with the individual's family (this is likely to be either the Executive Headteacher or Head of School or it could be a member of staff who happens to have a closer relationship with the family).
- In discussion with the LA, identify those external agencies who will be expert in providing bereavement support.
- Arrange a time to ensure that staff are coping with the situation. Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues. Check that staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in the case of need. Offer staff referrals to further support, for example support from Educational Psychology Service.
- Ensure that a letter is sent out as soon as possible, giving the facts (*a sample template is provided below*).

Speed and chaos may be a major factor on a day when a critical incident has happened - the speed and chaos meaning that constant referring to plans and lists is not possible. DON'T WORRY! Be confident enough to go with your gut instinct. Remember that keeping people as informed as possible is always helpful.

Guidelines for breaking news of a death to children:

- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children; tell them to be honest, it is ok to say if you don't have the answers but remember to revisit the question at a later date when you do have the answer.
- Try to identify any key answers that you may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness, or dates which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing class or schools.
- Where possible, pupils should be informed in small groups. A trusted adult that the children know well should share the news.
- Identify those children who have had more involvement with the person. They should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or in a one-to-one situation.
- Consider those children with SEND needs who may need further support, for example through the use of a [social story](#) to support their understanding.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and if applicable the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death. 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 verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand. Pupils will want to verbalise feelings; they will need to talk about the situation and share their experiences of death.
- End the discussion on a positive note - not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better. Ensure that the death of a close friend has nothing to do with what they might have said or done. It is in no way their fault. Acknowledge some days will be harder than others.
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary to reflect.
- Identify appropriate ELSA support. Free resources for this can be found [here](#). You may also wish to contact Educational Psychology Services for further support and guidance.
- Many pupils will feel the need to show and display their emotions. It is worth opening a 'Memorial Book' (physically and virtually) for pupils to share their thoughts and prayers. Flowers etc. may need to be placed in a central place at the school.
- With discussion, limit the amount of time. It is preferable to resume normal activities as soon as possible. Routine is important in helping keep the community together.

- Perhaps co-ordinate an assembly to end the discussion. In consultation with the vicar, it may be helpful to hold a special collective worship to bring the school together as soon as possible.
- If appropriate, a special church service or school collective worship can be held at a later time to remember the person who has died.
- Identify the person(s) who will be helping support pupils throughout this time, for as long as may be required.

Guidelines for breaking the news of a death to parents:

- News of a death within the school community will usually be communicated by letter from the Executive Headteacher. Before sending any form of communication, permission **must** be gained from the family and copies of the intended communication shared. See examples of letters in Appendix 1.

Things to consider:

- Within the community school environment, it is important to deal sensitively with those who may have a strong religious tradition and those who have very little. The needs of the school and the community need to be handled with considerable sensitivity and tact.
- It may be helpful to formulate some kind of 'action plan', outlining who has been allocated responsibilities to support .
- It is essential to sound out the family's wishes regarding the funeral. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- If a funeral is not possible, please see [this guidance](#) for other ways of saying goodbye.
- It might be appropriate to close the school on the day of the funeral but it is unlikely to be helpful to close it prior to this. Where possible staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released.
- Some parents, children and staff may not wish to attend special services and this should be respected.
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents, etc.
- Consider practical issues like flowers, a collection for a specific item of remembrance, staff cover, transport, making sure everyone knows if the school is going to be closed.
- Great emotional damage can be caused by people who are not aware of the pitfalls and sensitivities involved in offering bereavement counselling. A number of organisations, e.g. Cruse and local hospices are keen to give schools advice and offer professional counselling for pupils and families. Please see the links provided below.
- Schools may need information and advice on the various death traditions and customs of faiths other than Christianity. Inadvertent insensitivity or ignorance can cause

great offence and add to a family's grief. [SACRE](#) is a good starting point for advice and resources.

- In each school there should always be age appropriate books that touch of the issue of death, so that children begin to know and understand the vocabulary of death (see recommendations below). These help children articulate their fears and distress when the time comes.

Suggested script to use with pupils when someone dies:

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

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

Staff support and training

It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils and mutual support for each other and in implementing this policy. We subscribe to Hampshire Educational Psychology Service who offer support/advice in situations involving loss. We will ensure that members of staff are regularly consulted as to their training needs and training is provided as appropriate to keep up to date with developments.

Responding to the media

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

Supporting a bereaved pupils' return to school:

Not all children and young people will need the support of specialist practitioners; they need familiar people who care.

Schools can offer children and young people:

- A routine, providing a sense of normality

- Some space, away from an emotional intense atmosphere
- Neutral space and people to share their feelings without the worry of upsetting a loved one (i.e. a surviving parent)
- Time to be themselves without feeling guilty (being with friends, time to play in a safe space outside of the home environment).
- Regular correspondence with home, providing reassurance about behaviours and general well-being, will ensure the child or young person is managing their grief.
- Access to appropriate resources via Healthy Schools, resources libraries etc
- Preparation time for children and young people to discuss what to say and how to behave when the bereaved child or young person returns to school. This can help young people to see death as a common experience for us all at different times and places.
- Time for staff to be aware of changes in behaviour that may be related to the death.
- An individual link person to support the pupils when necessary.
- A suitable place in school for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

When the bereaved child or young person returns to school, they may want to get straight back into friends, work and routine. They will have been surrounded by grieving family members and often a chaotic household of visitors. School may be their break from that. We will help the child and young people return by:

- Identifying a member of the staff team who will be the main contact point for them and their family.
- 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.
- If they stay at home, remember them. Have cards and messages sent to them from appropriate people (peer group and staff they have good relationships with) Activities such as these will give the other children the opportunity to discuss their own concerns or experiences with the family and help them to feel they are doing something positive to support them, you may want to collate them into a book. This death may remind others of their own experiences and so be prepared to support them. You may find out information about a child in your class that you didn't know before. Be ready to listen to them all.
- 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, tummy aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, feeling tired, disorganised anger and frustration. These will have an impact on work load and learning. Monitor how things are going on their return and maintain communication with all staff involved.

- Maintain normal rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important for the children and young people within the setting and the child or young person who have been bereaved. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure. Remember the impact of bereavement on the whole family when giving sanctions and the impact the sanctions may have on the whole family
- Consider 'time out' strategies that suit the child or young person and the setting. Time out cards, signals or signs can help them to exit the room quickly if they are feeling vulnerable or emotional. Make sure they have a safe place to exit to.
- Remember, there is no set pattern or time limit to grief - It is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one. At different ages and during new or transitional times they 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. For others the familiarity, stability and routines of school life may prompt an early return. The time away from school will vary from pupil to pupil but when they do return, they may have a number of concerns - you will only know what these are and how they might be resolved if you ask. Some of the more common concerns might be:

- How will staff and peers react- who has been told, what do they know, what will be said, how much will I have to say to people?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Inability to concentrate and feel motivated or sit still

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

- Family grief impacting on normal family functioning e.g. 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 to 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/DfE and the possible outcomes.

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, for example, by making a referral to [Simon Says](#)
- Make a note of significant dates that might affect the pupil, e.g. date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries. Make sure other members of staff are aware of these and the possible impact these may have. Don't be afraid to acknowledge these potentially difficult times with them e.g. "I know Christmas is coming up and it might feel a very different and difficult time for you all this year without your Dad - so don't forget, if it helps to talk you can always come and see me".
- Consider possible reactions to class/assembly topics. Discuss how these difficulties might best be managed with them e.g. if making Mother's day cards do ask them if they wish to be included in the activity too, very often the answer is 'yes' as they still have a parent, they just can no longer see them, but still want to remember them.
- Look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground - bereaved children/young people are often seen as vulnerable and may become a target.
- Consider using books/activities to help explore feelings and ideas about death as part of the normal school curriculum (see resources list provided below)
- 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.

And don't forget to look after yourself. Please seek support from the Federation should you require it.

Support for pupils generally

- It is important to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable or likely to experience symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example anyone who witnessed the death.
- Compile and keep updated a list of outside professionals and agencies who can come into the school in the event of a traumatic death to counsel pupils. Make sure that the help offered from outside agencies is appropriate before accepting. Pupils may find it difficult to be receptive to support or counselling from families of fellow pupils.
- Remembering/commemoration: this is difficult to plan in advance, but careful thought is required. The dead person's family and the young person need to be consulted. Schools often find that an assembly that takes the form of a celebration of life is appropriate.

Support for staff

- Supporting bereaved pupils will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. See list of outside agencies, including professionals from Children and Young People's Services that may offer help, both short and long term.
- Plan for some sort of informal mutual support, for example in the staffroom at the end of the school day, to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.
- Give people time to attend the funeral if appropriate.
- Training before events happen - general for all staff and specific to bereaved children and young people.
- Awareness of available resources and time to become familiar with what is available.

Support for Parents

- Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- Depending on the wishes of the family, give out information to appropriate people.

- 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.

Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy and Religious Education. Assemblies may also be used to address aspects of death e.g. Remembrance Day or commemorative occasions.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way.

Children are given the opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death as well as being encouraged to express their own responses and feelings.

Our teaching will be based on an understanding of the principles stated above and that a variety of approaches should be used to meet the needs of our pupils and show sensitivity to their age and experience.

Teaching methods adopted in the classroom include:

- A range of teaching and learning styles including individual and group discussions, role play and drama.
- Introducing supporting resources - photographs, mementoes, stories, poetry and music.
- Giving clear, truthful and accurate information, not trying to soften the blow with ambiguous language which does not tell the truth.
- Practising the collaborative social skills necessary to help cope with the feelings of loss.
- Giving relevant and appropriate advice and support.
- Providing continuity and progression by visiting and revisiting issues as pupils develop and their needs and understanding change.
- Considering the attitudes and values of pupils and a range of other significant groups in their locality.

Related Policies

Other policies which relate to the implementation of this policy are:

- Single Equalities policy
- Positive Behaviour policy
- PSHE policy
- Safeguarding/ Child Protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Off-site Visits policy
- Administration of Medicines policy

All policies are freely available on the school websites.

Useful Websites:

Further support and advice:

The following organisations provide excellent advice and support materials for coping with bereavement within a school context:

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/> - Cruse provides counselling and support and offers information, advice, education and training services. It aims to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable them to understand their grief and cope with their loss.

<https://www.simonsays.org.uk/> - Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support in Hampshire.

<https://www.jigsawsoutheast.org.uk/> - Supporting children with bereavement in the South East.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/> - Schools information packs and lesson aids.

<https://www.seesaw.org.uk/> - Lots of support materials including downloadable information packs put together for use in schools.

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/young-people/> - Bereavement support for teenagers.

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> - National UK charity providing specialised training and support for professionals to help them respond to the needs of bereaved families.

<https://www.tcf.org.uk/> - A charity offering advice and support for families who have lost a child, including peer support for other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents.

<https://www.stchristophers.org.uk/> - A charity providing professional care and supporting the emotional, spiritual and social needs of their patients, their families, children, friends and carers.

<https://www.helenanddouglas.org.uk/> - A registered charity providing professional care, practical support and friendship for children and young people with life-limiting conditions, as well as support for their families.

<http://theredlipstickfoundation.org/> - Support for families bereaved by suicide.

<https://uksobs.org/> - Supporting those bereaved by suicide, including self-help groups.

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/> - Information about death in different faiths.

The 2011 Grove Booklet, '*Journeying Through Bereavement in Schools*' is an excellent resource. (Available to download from www.grovebooks.co.uk)

Appendix 1

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

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of , a pupil in . died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly 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 life.

Yours sincerely

Sample letters on death of a staff member/adult:

Dear Parents,

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

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

The children were told that <Name> died from an <asthma attack> on <Date>. A number of pupils have been identified as being asthmatic and <Name>, the School Nurse has today reassured them that it is unusual for a person to die from asthma.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from contacting Simon Says a Hampshire based child bereavement support charity.

The Department for Education have also released guidance for parents to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing, which can be found here.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's class teacher.

OR

Once details regarding the funeral are clearer, then parents will be informed of what arrangements the school will make regarding flowers and a memorial.

Yours...

Dear Parents ,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died.

The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news.

Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory.

It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community.

I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours.....

Appendix 2

Books for children:

Examples of Picture Books can be found [here](#)

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children (Looking Up) by Doris Stickney (Feb 2004)

Always and Forever by Alan Durant and Debi Gliori (Sep 2004)

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss (Elf-Help Books for Kids) by Michaelene Mundy (Mar 2004)

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief (Drawing Out Feelings) by Marge Heegaard (Jan 1991)

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley and Susan Varley (Dec 1992)

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: Your Activity Book to Help When Someone Has Died (Winstons Wish) by Diana Crossley and Kate Sheppard (Oct 2000)

Gentle Willow: A Story for Children about Dying by Joyce C. Mills and Cary Pillo (Dec 2003)

Michael Rosen's Sad Book by Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake (Feb 2008)

Up in Heaven by Emma Chichester Clark (April 2004)

The Yearning Tree: A Children's Bereavement Resource by Gina S. Farago (Feb 2011)

The Day the Sea went out and never came back (Helping Children with Feelings) by Margot Sunderland and Nicky Armstrong (Oct 2003)

I Miss You by Pat Thomas (May 2009)

The 10th good thing about Barney by Judith Viorst

The day Great-grandma moved house: A Story Explaining Death and Bereavement to Young Children by Joy Smith and Angela Paifrey (Nov 2000)

Does God Have An Airplane?: A Candid Journey of Bereavement Through the Eyes of a Child by Kimberly Mettler-Eells (Jan 2010)

The Lonely Tree by Nicholas Halliday

The very hungry caterpillar by E Carle

Remembering Mum by G Perkins and L Morris

A Taste of Blackberries by Doris Buchanan Smith

All we know about Heaven by Peter Crowther

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Butterfly Summer by Christine Wood

The Day Grandma Died by Jan Selby

Dogger by Shirley Hughes

Emma Says Goodbey by Carolyn Nystrom

Emma's Cat Dies by Nigel Snell

Fred by Posy Simmonds

Frog and the Birdsong by Max Velthuiys

Goodbye Max by Holly Keller

Grandpa's Slide Show by Deborah Gould

Grandpa by John Burningham

Gran's Grave by Wendy Green

I Feel Sad by Brian Moses

I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhem

Life's End by Denise Chaplin & Lynne Broadbent

Love You Forever by Robert Munsch

On Eagle's Wings by Sue Mayfield

Patterns in the Sand by Sue Mayfield

Sam's Story by Fiona Chin-Yee

Scrumpy by Elizabeth Dale

Vicky Angel by Jacqueline Wilson

When Mum Died published by Hillins & Sireling

Will my Rabbit go to Heaven? by Jeremy Hughes

The Goodbye Boat by Mary Joslin and Clare St Louis Little

Further suggestions can be found [here](#).

Further reading for adults:

Talking with Children and Young People About Death and Dying: A Resource - Mary Turner & Bob Thomas

Talking About Death and Bereavement in School: How to Help Children Aged 4 to 11 to Feel Supported and Understood - Ann Chadwick

Living with grief in school: Guidance for primary school teachers and staff - Ann Chadwick

The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools (Independent Thinking Series) - Ian Gilbert, with William and Olivia and Phoebe Gilbert

You'll Get Over It: The Rage of Bereavement - Virginia Ironside

Childhood Bereavement: Developing the curriculum and pastoral support - Job & Francis

A Resource Bank on Loss and Grief "It Hurts" - M Harvey

Good Grief-Exploring Feelings Loss and Death with under 11s - B Ward

Supporting Young People Coping with Grief, Loss and Death - Weymont & Rae

Then, Now and Always - J Stokes (Winston's Wish)

A Teacher's Handbook of Death - Jackson & Colwell

Grief Encounter - S Gilbert

Grief In Children - A Dyregrov

Talking About Death - E A Grollman

Helping Children Cope With Grief - R Wells

The Forgotten Mourners - S M Pennel & S Smith

Working With Young People In Loss Situations - L Machin

Death and Loss - Compassionate Approaches In The Classroom - O Leaman

Wise Before the Event - W Yale & A Gold