

Support for Families following a Loss



The school aims to provide support to all pupils who experience bereavement. The caring and supportive school environment has a key role to play and we recognise that every situation is unique and demands careful handling, with the wishes of the pupil and family being of paramount importance.

The school has a number of staff with bereavement training and your child(ren) will be given time to speak with them if they so wish.

It can be difficult talking to children about death and the following has been adapted from the Child Bereavement Charity and Grief Encounters. It gives an overview of how to talk to different age groups about death based on their understanding.

Aged 3-5

- Unable to grasp concept of death
- Grief reactions are intense but short-lived
- May act like a younger child

Provide opportunities for children to see the differences between 'alive' and 'not alive'. For example, a plant is alive but a car is not



Encourage creative play and activities such as paintings and drawings to allow the child to express how they feel



Look at books that describe feelings, and the language associated with death

Reassure the child that they are not responsible for what has happened and that they will be cared for



Answer questions honestly in a straight-forward way. For example: They have stopped breathing, they don't need their body any more, they have died' in an age-appropriate way

Don't use euphemisms such as 'passed away' or 'sleeping' as this can be confusing

Don't avoid the topic for fear of upsetting the child, let them know grief is a natural process.

Provide opportunities for the children to talk about how they are feeling

Aged 8-11

- Understand death has a cause
- Understand death is permanent
- Understand it can happen to anyone, including themselves
- Ask questions around:
 - A need for a factual information
 - A need to check out emotional responses
 - Searching for a reason for what has happened
 - Spiritual and religious concerns

Provide opportunities for children to express their own ideas about what happens after earthly life is over.



Provide opportunities for children to talk about emotions, life changes and death

Answer questions honestly and in a straight forward age-appropriate language

Talk about what has happened in easily understood language, avoiding the use of euphemisms and metaphors.

Give children time to talk about memories, what happened and how they feel

Don't avoid the topic for fear of upsetting the child, let them know grief is a natural process.

Allow the child to make their own decisions about whether they join in death rituals/attend funerals

Encourage play, drawing and painting to allow the child to express how they feel



Don't avoid their questions. If they are old enough to ask, they are old enough to hear the answers.

Allow them to create their own rituals around death such as making a memory box or lighting a candle



Websites:

Cruse Bereavement Care offers support and information for anyone suffering bereavement

www.cruse.org.uk



Facing The Future supports those who have been bereaved by suicide through support groups

www.facingthefuturegroups.org



The Lullaby trust supports families bereaved by the loss of an infant

www.lullabytrust.org.uk



The Miscarriage Association provides support and information to anyone affected by miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or molar pregnancy.

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/



Sands: The stillbirth and neonatal death charity supports anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after birth.

<https://www.uk-sands.org/support>



The Child Bereavement Charity provides resources and information for bereaved families, children, professionals and volunteers.

www.childbereavement.org.uk



Winston's Wish offers a grief support programme for children who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling.

www.winstonswish.org.uk



St Christopher's Candle Project supports all children, young people and their families in the south east London area who have been bereaved.

www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle



Grief encounters provides personal support and access to resources for children coping with a loss.

www.griefencounter.org.uk



Road Peace offers support to those bereaved through a road crash

www.roadpeace.org/



Macmillan Cancer Charity supports those who have lost someone to cancer

www.macmillan.org.uk

