



# Bereavement Policy

Approved by	Headteacher
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## Section 1 - School Background

Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including time of death or dying.

*(This policy is also linked to the RSE policy, EHMW policy and the PSHE Curriculum)*

## Section 2 - Rationale

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

Child Bereavement UK cite that 1 in every 29 5-16 years olds have been bereaved of a parent or sibling, whilst many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person. The Children Act 1989<sup>1</sup> aimed to ensure the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. Whilst the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines children's rights, including the right to have their emotional needs met. All intentions of this policy endorse these aims as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

## Section 3 - Objectives

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is of a member of that school community – a child or staff member.

This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after a bereavement. The aim is to be supportive to both pupils and adults, and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope when bereavement happens. 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.

We recognise:

- That grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- That differing religions/cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the school environment.
- That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching / care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching consequences and extended contacts.
- It is extremely important to take on the views, wishes and feelings of our staff, pupils and their families.

## Section 4 – Preparation & Building Resilience

The prevalence of pupils experiencing bereavement and the introduction of the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Curriculum (2019) [see *RSA Policy*] provides a clear rationale for ensuring that pupils are suitably prepared for managing difficult life circumstances.

At *Royton Hall* we follow *PSHE Association Curriculum* to support our pupils in developing useful resilience and coping skills. This is a universal curriculum/approach and does not replace individual or specialist support which *may* be required in the event of a bereavement.

It is also recognised that staff resilience and training is as important, both for the staff themselves and also the pupils they teach. Staff within *Royton Hall* have access to the following in order to support them in this end:

- *support from School Health and LA agencies*
- *supervision arrangements via SAS Health & Wellbeing Services*
- *training*

Royton Hall Primary School have a commitment to working with outside agencies in order to ensure a high quality of training and preparation for potential bereavements/critical incidents (see Emotional Health & Wellbeing Policy).

## Section 5 - The role of the governing body

To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed every two years.

## Section 6 - The role of the headteacher

The head teacher is often the first person to become aware of the death of a pupil / student or a member of staff within the school and will therefore hold several key responsibilities such as:

- liaising with outside agencies, the Local Authority, Trust or Academies if appropriate, and keeping the governing body informed
- be first point of contact for family / child concerned.
- responding to media enquiries and acting as spokesperson for the school in collaboration with the Local Authority.

Initial contact to the deceased family should be established by the Head Teacher to gather factual information regarding the death, if not already received from agencies such as the Police. The family's wishes should be ascertained and respected regarding the sharing of information.

The deputy head teacher will assume this role in the absence of the Head of school. Furthermore, due to the demands of a leading and supporting role and the importance of the wellbeing of senior staff members there may be times when this role will need to be handed over to others.

## Section 7 - The role of the LA

The Local Authority can offer support at times of bereavement. The first point of contact for support is the ***Educational and Child Psychology Service*** who are the Local Authority's Critical Incident Team.

They can provide immediate support in guiding schools through the initial procedure; as well as longer term support with training, information and consultation at an individual, group and whole school level; as well as signposting to other Local Authority or Health Services as required.

## Section 8 - Responding to Bereavement: Death of a member of the school community

<b>Key Steps</b>	
<b>Procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Headteacher will determine the facts of the case and contact the family at the earliest possible opportunity to offer their condolences. They will inform the Local Authority and coordinate communications.</li> <li>- The Headteacher will work with the family to gather their preferences and wishes and to agree the appropriate information to be shared. The Headteacher, family and key staff will decide about how best to share the news with the school community and pupils. The news will be shared in accordance with this decision.</li> <li>- Where the death has happened in traumatic circumstances and there is likely to be a review, Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher) will represent the school at this.</li> <li>- If there is likely to be media involvement the Headteacher will liaise and oversee this. Where necessary, a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher and assistance can be sought by contacting the Local Authority press office.</li> <li>- The Headteacher and designated staff will review the current support available for staff and parents and plan for any potential additional support. This may include contacting the Local Authority to seek advice (e.g. Educational and Child Psychology Service). The Headteacher will then determine who in school will be responsible for providing support for staff and pupils and will draw up a support plan.</li> <li>- Ongoing review will determine if support is needed and by whom. It is acknowledged that initial heightened emotions are to be expected and specific or specialist interventions may not always be required.</li> </ul>
<b>Informing others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A script will be agreed as to the key events that are to be shared.</li> <li>- Where information is unknown or immediate family consultation is not possible, a simple statement will be initially agreed which confirms the death.</li> <li>- Any incorrect rumours will be corrected and where information is missing this will be communicated clearly. Staff and pupils will be informed of additional information as it is made available. Any further information will also be planned as a script to ensure consistency of communication.</li> <li>- Staff will be informed first; then pupils will be informed.</li> <li>- A letter to all school families affected will be distributed at the earliest opportunity and wherever possible, the wording of this communication will be shared in advance with the bereaved family for their input. <sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>First few days</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The belongings, associated space (e.g. cloakroom peg) and items (e.g. name plates, work on the walls) of the deceased individual will remain. Any change to that will be negotiated with school staff and the pupils at a later date.</li> <li>- Social media will be monitored.</li> <li>- Many pupils will have questions they will want to ask and some pupils will need to talk about the bereavement more than others. Teachers will be given permission to talk freely with their classes about death.</li> <li>- Students who wish to talk will be provided with the time and space to do so. Staff members will be consulted as to those most appropriate for providing this.</li> </ul>

	<p>However, all staff will be encouraged to be open and honest about their own emotions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school's Educational Psychologist will make contact and consultation will be offered based on school need.</li> <li>- The school will endeavour to maintain daily school life as normal. Stability and routine will be very important for the pupils at this time. Most children will respond well to this.</li> <li>- A pastoral team will be available to support children and a suitable place identified if pupils require some time away from the classroom. The school will ensure that at least two members of staff are taken off timetable duties and are available in private rooms for pupils.</li> <li>- Some flexibility within the timetable may be required to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children and staff affected by the situation; and this will be provided.</li> <li>- There will be no expectation for siblings or affected family members to return to school in the aftermath. The family will be reassured of this and a return to school will be negotiated with the family on an agreed timescale.</li> <li>- Where deemed appropriate – and agreed with the family – a book of condolence or similar temporary tribute will be arranged with an agreed date as to the removal of this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funeral</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school will be sensitive of any arrangements which may have been already discussed for a person who died from a progressive illness or on end of life care.</li> <li>- In consultation with the family, arrangements for the funeral attendance will be clarified, this will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances;</li> <li>• Who should go from school;</li> <li>• Whether the school will send a wreath or similar tribute (e.g. donations to charity or a special fund instead).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Informing and supporting staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All staff will be informed before pupils and be prepared and able to then pass on information to pupils / students. This will include contact to current staff members who may not be in school that day.</li> <li>- Staff who are directly affected will be contacted directly. They will be offered support and asked whether (where their role requires it) they feel able to share the news with pupils.</li> <li>- Additionally, those staff who may be particularly vulnerable or known to be alone that night / weekend / holiday will be offered support.</li> <li>- Support for staff will be negotiated with the staff member in line with their needs, e.g. exchange of phone details in order to provide a point of contact for a member of staff or signposting to bereavement resources.</li> <li>- All staff will be informed of the support available to them. An informal mutual support forum will be established in line with school logistics, e.g. an opportunity to meet in the staffroom at the end of the school day.</li> <li>- There will be a designated staff member for staff to contact where they feel they need support. They will be tasked with reviewing staff welfare at an agreed point.</li> <li>- All staff will be provided with key information on the policy and information about grief and how it may impact both themselves and their pupils. Staff training requirements will be considered and met where required.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Informing and supporting pupils</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Royton Hall Primary School will place the emotional well-being of the child(ren) / young person centrally to their needs and support. We recognise that the initial support would be best placed with an adult who the young person already knows and has a positive relationship with.</li> <li>- Pupils may be told in class/form groups or as a whole school depending on the needs of the school community and the situation. Where possible they will be informed by a member of staff who is familiar to them.</li> <li>- Pupils who may be particularly vulnerable, such as friends of the deceased, tutor group of a staff member, those who may have witnessed the event or those with special educational needs (see Appendix C) will be identified and informed in a way most appropriate for them. This may be individually or as a peer group by a person known to them.</li> <li>- A list of internal and external agencies who can support the pupils will be compiled and shared with parents and staff. Procedures for accessing this will be outlined clearly.</li> <li>- It is expected that many pupils may experience heightened emotions initially and the school recognises that this is typical. However, pupil well-being will be monitored by the Pastoral Lead at fortnightly intervals following the bereavement to identify any pupils who are experiencing longer term difficulties arising from it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Remembering</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The family and pupils / students will be asked for their views on how best to mark the death in an appropriate way for that school which is relevant to the deceased and be considerate of the nature of the death.</li> </ul>



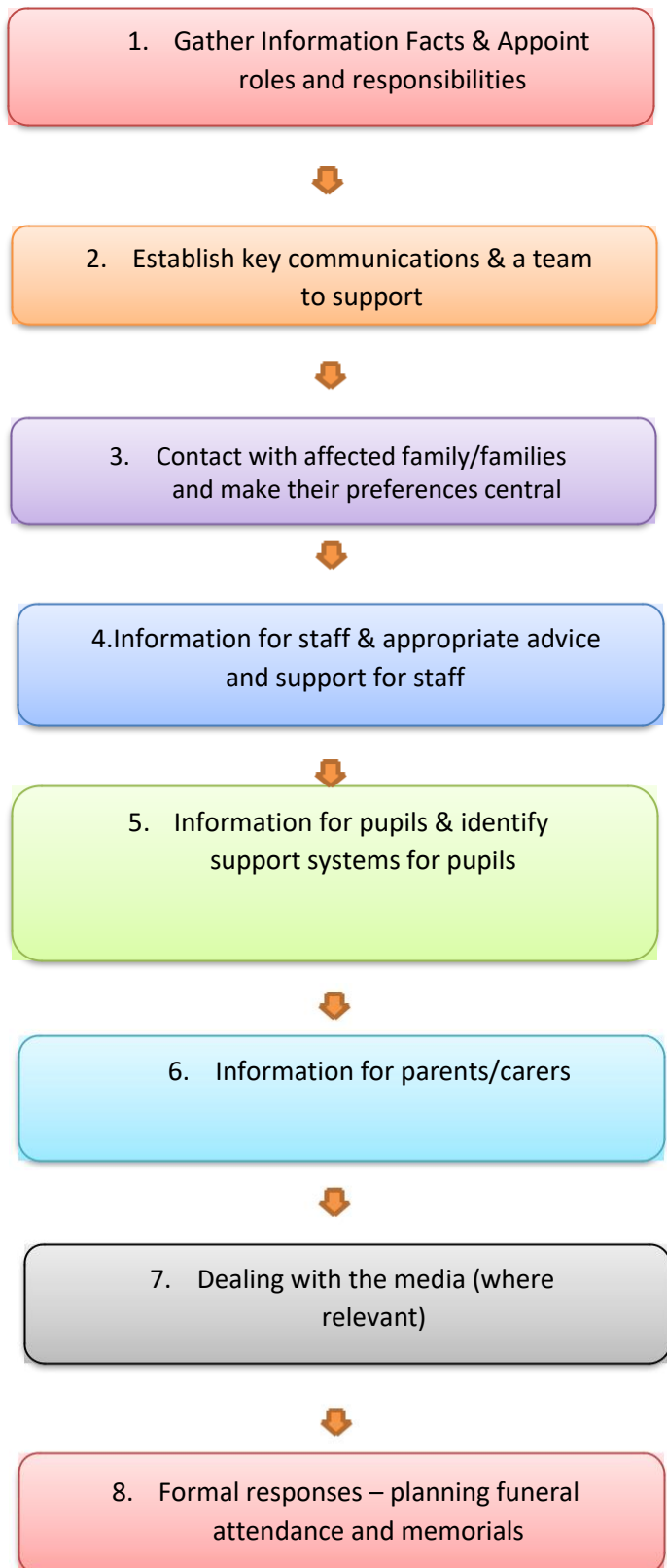
## Section 9 – Responding to Bereavement: Pupils who are bereaved

	Key Steps
<b>Procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Headteacher will determine the facts of the case and contact the family at the earliest possible opportunity to offer their support.</li> <li>- The Headteacher will determine who in school will be responsible for coordinating support for the pupil and managing communication with the family. Ideally this will be someone familiar to the bereaved pupil.</li> <li>- The Headteacher, family and key staff will decide about who the news needs to be shared with, e.g. close friends of the bereaved pupil.</li> <li>- The Headteacher and designated staff will review the current support available for bereaved pupils and plan for any additional support. This may include contacting the Local Authority to seek advice (e.g. Educational and Child Psychology Service).</li> <li>- Ongoing review will determine if support is needed and by whom. It is acknowledged that initial heightened emotions are to be expected and specific and specialist interventions may not always be required.</li> </ul>
<b>Returning to school after a bereavement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The designated member of staff will meet with the pupil and their family/carers to discuss their return to school or upon their return to school following a bereavement. The purpose of this meeting will be to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the death.</li> <li>• Find out how the bereaved pupil would like to share their news.</li> <li>• Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a ‘time-out’ (with an agreed system for doing this, e.g. a ‘time-out’ card) which all staff will be made aware of.</li> <li>• Consider whether to provide ‘time-out’ activities – journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc.</li> <li>• Set guidelines for communication – with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school.</li> <li>• Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Most grieving pupils do not need a ‘bereavement expert’, they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. Royton Hall Primary School with its familiar environment and routines, can provide a place of comfort for a bereaved young person.</li> </ul>
<b>Longer term support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The bereaved pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support. We will consider implementation of the following, as appropriate:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member of the school community to record significant dates for the bereaved young person and communicate them with staff.</li> <li>• Regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil to help build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping after the bereavement.</li> <li>• A member of staff to be responsible for passing on details of the bereavement at transition points.</li> <li>• Identifying whether the bereaved pupil is a vulnerable pupil, as they may need additional support, particularly on transition.</li> <li>• Bereaved young people can find change difficult, so preparing them in advance (where possible) may help them to voice their worries and ease the process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. A member of school staff will be named to be responsible for monitoring this and action where necessary.</li> </ul>

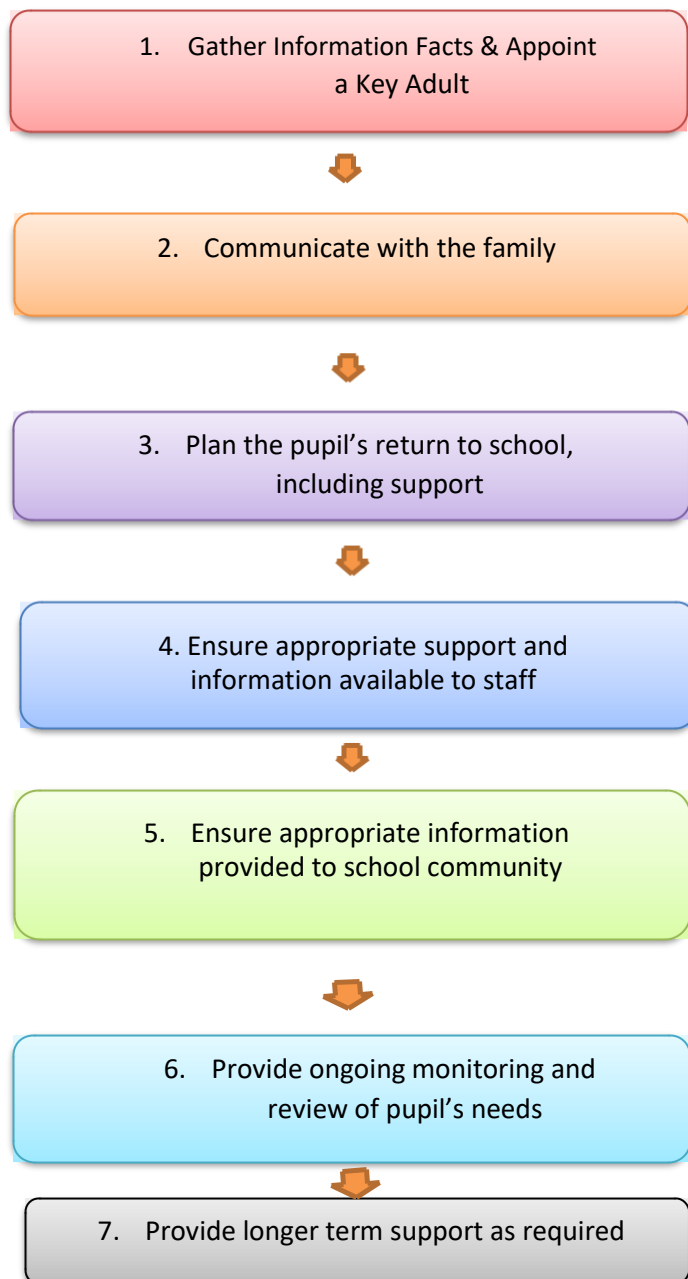
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grief may impact the pupil's behaviour. A member of school staff will be named to be responsible for monitoring this and action where necessary.</li> <li>- We will maintain continued liaison with family to understand the wider impact of the bereavement as pupils may also be managing/experiencing the grief of other family members.</li> <li>- Outside agencies will be contact for further advice and support as required in agreement with the family.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As referenced in section 4, teaching about the topic of death, grief and bereavement can help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future. However, Royton Hall Primary School will be sensitive to the needs of bereaved pupils before delivering a curriculum around loss.</li> <li>- Parents and carers will be informed in advance of lessons on loss and should inform school about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be prepared for the lesson.</li> <li>- Recently bereaved pupils will be given the option to work elsewhere or take time out from the lessons.</li> <li>- All staff can access 'Elephant's Tea Party' resource on Child Bereavement UK's website (<a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party</a>).</li> <li>- Staff will plan as required to adapt aspects of the wider curriculum, as needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support for staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being alongside anyone experiencing a loss can be emotionally draining and supporting a bereaved pupil particularly so. Royton Hall Primary School will be mindful of school staff's needs and individual circumstances (staff may be vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives) so the most appropriate and best equipped staff will be identified to support the bereaved child.</li> <li>- Staff will be provided with details of support agencies.</li> <li>- Staff training requirements will be considered and met where required.</li> <li>- All staff will be provided with key information on this policy and information about grief and how it may impact both themselves and their pupils.</li> </ul>

## Section 10 – Process overview

### Death of a member of the school community



### Bereaved Pupil



## Section 11 - Supporting young people with additional learning needs

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014<sup>3</sup> makes clear that local authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN) must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents / guardians,
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents / guardians, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions,
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents / guardians, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

Children with learning difficulties are no different to all other children and young people, in having their grief recognised, hearing the truth and being given opportunities to express their feelings and emotions, but may need extra help with their understanding and ways to express feelings.

Support for each child / young person should be dependent on their needs and suitable resources utilised for communication to be honest and understood, finding creative ways to communicate when words are sometimes not appropriate.

Further information can be found in [Appendix C](#)

## Section 12 – Social Media

- If news of an incident or death is shared on social media sites, Royton Hall Primary will act quickly to establish the facts and communicate effectively to the school community as previously described to avoid rumour and speculation as well as alleviating complexities and unnecessary trauma to the bereaved family.

It is our policy that no information regarding the death will be shared using social media by staff or pupils, until all the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma and Royton Hall Primary will make every effort to handle the event and communication of this in a sensitive and efficient manner.

## Section 13 - Appendices

### Appendix A: Children's understanding of death

Adults and children feel the same loss when a loved one dies, but their reactions can be noticeably different.

Children themselves react in different ways to a loss, depending on their age and stage of development. The worst loss of all, at any age, is that of bereavement.

#### Children under 5 years

Babies will be affected by their parents' emotional state. Tiny babies will sense when something is wrong and may become unsettled, their sleep patterns can become disturbed. Young children do not understand the 'finality' of death. They cannot grasp that the dead person has ceased to exist and may be concerned over their well-being. They may ask questions and repeat them persistently e.g. *"Who will feed Daddy now?"*

Children may become anxious about death, asking, *"When am I going to die?"* or *"Can boys die as well?"* Children of this age can react in the same way as child lost in a supermarket, frenzied, looking for the dead person, followed by a quiet, desperate grief and then anger at being deserted.

It is important that children are told the truth about dying and not led to believe that the dead person has gone on a long journey, or gone to sleep, as young children's 'magical thinking' may lead them to believe that the person is going to return.

It is important that children are given honest explanations and told sensitively that the deceased person is not coming back. This often needs to be explained repeatedly.

#### Children aged 5 – 10 years

At this age children understand that death is irreversible and unavoidable. They need to be involved in the rituals of death and the sharing of grief. These children need more detailed information and to be told, sensitively, the truth of how the person died. They may withdraw into themselves at this age, carrying on with everyday life in a 'robotic' way one minute, and behaving normally the next.

Sometimes children at this age may 'take the blame' for the death seeing it as a punishment or judgement. Children have to be reassured that the death is not their fault. That they argued with the deceased, or were naughty, was not the reason their loved one died.

#### Children aged over 10 years

At this age, children and young people understand the longer-term consequences of death, they understand the justices and injustices of death, and they can accept the death of an older person and the unfairness of a younger person dying.

Older children display stronger reactions to grief, showing shock and disbelief. They can keep death at a painful distance, denying it. They can become apathetic and yet on the other hand go out socialising with friends.

Young people may have more practical concerns e.g. *“Who is going to pay the bills? “Who will look after me?”* They may become irritable, tense and their schoolwork may suffer. Exam time can be difficult for them and school staff need to be made aware of the family circumstances.

At this age young people may experience poor sleep patterns or nightmares. They may isolate themselves, cry often, react more aggressively and display anti-social behaviour. They may need to talk through events with a sympathetic listener.

If any of these reactions become too extreme, additional professional help may be needed. Young people can be very supportive during grieving, often considering other people’s needs.

## Appendix B: The stages of grief

Grieving takes people through many different emotions; the grieving process will take its natural course. It is accepted that when we grieve we may go through several different stages, though we can move backwards and forwards through them, or perhaps not go through all of them.

- **Shock and disbelief** - Unable to take in the reality of the loss this enables the bereaved person to cope with the immediate needs and arrangements. Sometimes the shock is so great the bereaved person may physically collapse.
- **Denial** - Behaving as if the death has not happened. This can last minutes, hours or for longer periods of time. Courage is needed to accept the death.
- **Anger** - Anger can be directed at many things, such as at god for taking the loved one; the deceased for leaving us; medical people or oneself. Anger can be suppressed, too.
- **Depression** - There is often a feeling of emptiness and despair. This is the natural stage of ‘letting go’.
- **Guilt** - The ‘if only’ stage. For example, “if only I had told him how much I loved him” or “if only we hadn’t argued so much”.
- **Anxiety** - Anxious about the changes and uncertainty that the future holds. Concerned about the loneliness looming ahead.
- **Acceptance** - This completes the stages of grief, bringing a feeling of peace and acceptance. The time it can take to reach this stage varies enormously but generally begins to take place in the second year after the bereavement.

## Appendix C: Talking about death to children with learning difficulties

When talking about death and bereavement with a child with learning difficulties it might be helpful to consider: -

- WHO should be the key worker working with the child and family - inform parents who this person will be and keep in contact. Ideally this should be someone who is familiar with the pupil and their needs.
- WHERE is the child most receptive to new ideas? – quiet room, outside. Use this space for talking with the child.

- WHAT should be talked about? (as agreed with parents). Ensure that you use the same language and ideas as the family to avoid confusing the child.
- HOW is new information normally given? - signs, verbally, pictures. Use the same format to talk about illness and death.
- HOW is new information normally reinforced? – you will probably need to repeat information a number of times over a long period.
- PROCEED at a level, speed and language appropriate to the child
- BUILD on information given – small bites of the whole, given gradually will be easier to absorb.
- REPEAT information as often as needed.
- WATCH for reactions to show the child understands – modify and repeat as needed.
- FOLLOW the child’s lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.
- WATCH for changes in behaviour to indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed.
- LIAISE with other agencies involved with the child to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

All children benefit from being given simple, honest “bite size” pieces of information about difficult issues - often repeated many times over. For some children with special needs, it might be more appropriate for symbols to be used to convey ideas rather than language. This can include the use of ‘talking mats’ or other symbol support resources.

## Appendix D: Useful resources and websites

### For schools, professionals and individuals

**Child Bereavement UK** - supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement. Large choice of resources available to download and purchase including an “information for school’s” pack. **Helpline 0800 02 888 04**

**Cruse Bereavement Care** – offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Section for schools and professionals as well as parents, military families and young people (see Hope Again). **Helpline 0808 808 1677**

[www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement\\_helpchildren.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../bereavement/bereavement_helpchildren.shtml) - Information on the way bereavement affects children

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm> - Federation of organisations

## Support around suicide and bereavement by suicide

Chameleon - A team in Manchester who offer support around sudden unexpected deaths such as suicide or things like sepsis etc. <https://www.gaddumcentre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-Chameleon.pdf>

Papyrus UK – Provide confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone who is worried about a young person via their helpline **HelplineUK 0800 068 4141**. Engage communities and volunteers in suicide prevention projects and deliver training programmes to individuals and groups

Shining a Light on Suicide – Help to find what support is available in the boroughs of Greater Manchester and provide national resources that are available to help if you are bereaved by suicide or concerned that someone you know may be thinking of suicide.

Samaritans – “We're working together to make sure fewer people die by suicide. Every six seconds, we respond to a call for help. No judgement. No pressure. We're here for anyone who needs someone”. **Call 116 123**

Survivors of Bereavement By Suicide (SOBS) – “We exist to meet the needs and overcome the isolation experienced by people over 18 who have been bereaved by suicide”. Includes support groups, contact via email, forum or **helpline 0300 111 5065**

## For children and young People

Hope Again - is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care. It is a safe place where you can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief, and feel less alone. You will find information about services, a listening ear from other young people and advice for any young person dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Winston's Wish – Offer support for children and young people after the death of a sibling or parent – **Helpline 08088 020 021**

[www.chums.info](http://www.chums.info) – a bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss.

[www.juliesplace.com](http://www.juliesplace.com) – a support resource for bereaved siblings.

[www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature](http://www.bhf.org.uk/smallcreature) - British Heart Foundation site to help children come to term with loss using carton creatures.

Once Upon a Smile - <https://www.onceuponasmile.org.uk/>

**Marie Curie Helpline 0800 090 2309**

## Books on Bereavement

(Marie Curie website has a number of book titles to explore.

<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/supporting-grieving-child/books-about-death>

Further reading...

- Granpa  
John Burningham (Puffin, 1998, ISBN 0099-43408-3)  
Designed to stimulate discussion rather than to tell a story, the book has a series of



scenes of a little girl and her grandad, with comments from each or both of them. At the end, she is shown staring at his empty chair, without comments. The book allows the adult to direct discussion about not only the good things that the child remembers, but also the not so happy memories.

- [Water bugs and Dragon Flies – Explaining Death to Young Children](#)  
Doris Stickney (Pilgrim Press, 2009, ISBN 978-0829818307)  
Water Bugs and Dragonflies' tells the story of a small colony of water bugs living happily below the surface of a quiet pond. Every so often one of them climbs up a lily stalk and disappears from sight, never to return. Those left behind are faced with the mystery of figuring out what has become of them.
- [Grandad, I'll always remember you](#)  
De Bode and Broere (Evans / Helping Hands, 1997, ISBN 0237-51755-8)  
A picture book about loss and memories, and potentially a good stimulus to talk about a bereavement.
- [When dinosaurs die](#)  
L & M Brown (Little, Brown, 1996, hb, ISBN 0-316-10197-7)  
Charming busy anthropomorphic pictures of dinosaurs illustrate topics and questions and a range of answers about death: Saying Goodbye; Customs and beliefs about death; Why do people die? What does "dead" mean? It is also quite acute psychologically, acknowledging that disbelief, anger, fear, and sadness are common feelings when someone dies. Expensive, but attractive and appealing to children.
- [Remembering grandad](#)  
Sheila and Kate Isherwood (Oxford, ISBN 0-19-272368-5)  
A girl's grandfather has died and looking back over the happy times they enjoyed together helps her to cope with the loss. Very specific episodes and illustrations give it a life-like feel. Sensible and sound if a little stereotyped in its pictures of family life, it could help children to think about how to remember someone.
- [Liplap's wish](#)  
Jonathan London and Sylvia Long (Chronicle Books, 1994, ISBN 0-8118-0505-0)  
Liplap the rabbit's grandma has died, and his mother tells him of the rabbit legend that "long ago, when the first rabbits died, they became stars in the sky. And to this day, they come out at night and watch over us. And they remind us that our loved ones shine forever in our hearts..."
- [Fred](#)  
Posy Simmons (Jonathan Cape, 1987, ISBN 0-2240-2448-5)  
When Fred the cat dies his owners, Nick and Sophie, attend his funeral and learn about his secret life as a famous singer. The story raises the idea of celebrating a life in a good-humored and touching way, with entertaining pictures and not much text.
- [Lifetimes](#)  
Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (Belitha Press, 1997, ISBN 1-85561-760-9) full title: *Beginnings and endings with lifetimes in between* – a beautiful way to explain life and death to children. This book places human life and death firmly in the natural world, and the tone is quietly reflective: "All around us everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time. It may be sad, but it is the way of all things. For plants. For people. For birds". Whilst not exactly comforting, it tells the truth, puts death in perspective.

- **Badger's parting gifts**  
Susan Varley (Collins Picture Lions, pb, 1992)  
An old favourite, a charming illustrated book in which a very old and much-loved badger dies. The forest animals gather and reminisce about the important part Badger played in their lives, and as time passes memories of Badger make them smile. These memories were different for each of them, including very recognisable things like a favourite recipe or showing someone how to knot a tie - Badger's "parting gifts."
- **We love them**  
Martin Waddell (Walker Books, 1990, ISBN 0-7445-7256-8)  
Death is seen very much as part of life in this nicely illustrated story of life in the country, which conveys the idea that life goes on and that old creatures give way to young ones. But it is a bit too matter of fact about loss - barely is the old dog dead than the children have found a new one, is there an implicit message that dead pets (and people?) are easily replaced.
- **Grandma's bill**  
Martin Waddell (Macdonald Young Books, pb, ISBN 0- 7500-0307-3)  
Bill's grandma is a widow, and he learns about her "other Bill" by looking through her photo album with her. A bit too stereotypically suburban and middle class for general appeal perhaps. Some like its ordinariness, gentleness and factual accuracy, and couldn't fault what it had to say about death and living on in memories and in the family.
- **I'll always love you**  
H Wilhelm (Hodder & Stoughton, 1985)  
A touching story of the love between a little boy and his dog, who have grown up together. When the dog dies, the boy says that, although he is very sad, it helps that he used to tell the dog "I'll always love you" every night. An opportunity to discuss the importance of telling how you feel. Aimed at 4 to 7 year olds and delightfully illustrated.
- **I feel sad**  
(Wayland, ISBN 0-7052-1406-6)  
Not specifically about death, but about different ways of expressing sadness. Could be a useful opening for a conversation about a bereavement, or about coping with feelings.
- **A birthday present for Daniel**  
Juliet Rothman (Prometheus Books, ISBN 1-57392-054-1)  
This story of a little girl whose brother has died is intended for children aged 8-12. "A difficult subject handled very well and movingly".