



Bereavement Policy

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Date of review by Executive Headteacher | January 2021 |
| Date of next review | January 2022 |

This policy is a joint policy of Central Hub Brighton (CHB). Central Hub Brighton includes Homewood College, Brighton and Hove Pupil Referral Units (BHPRU) and The Connected Hub (CHUB). Where procedures differ between the entities, this will be made clear. References to the governing body or governors refer, in the case of BHPRU and CHUB, to the Management Committee and members of the Management Committee.

Contents Page

Section

- 1 Introduction and aims and objectives
- 2 Our Bereavement Charter – support for bereaved children and young people
- 3 Safeguarding and confidentiality
- 4 Equality and Inclusion
- 5 Young asylum seekers and refugees
- 6 Responding to suicide
- 7 Supporting staff
- 8 Curriculum
- 9 Roles and responsibilities
- 10 Procedures pre and post bereavement
- 11 Additional information and links

Appendices

- 1 Checklists – supporting bereaved children and young people
- 2 Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and governors
- 3 Guidelines for breaking news of a death to children and young people
- 4 Example letters
- 5 Grief and mourning in children
- 6 Faith and cultural considerations

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Central Hub Brighton helps children and young people who have struggled with school to overcome barriers to learning. Our vision is to rebuild the pupils' self-belief by teaching them skills to succeed for lifelong learning. We are an inclusive school which strives to ensure that all children and young people feel safe when with us. Our approaches focus on openness, honesty and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual.

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

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

This policy is for all staff, pupils / students, parents and carers, Management Committee Members, visitors and partner agencies working within the school and provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best support and respond to bereavement in the school community.

It is acknowledged that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce and some aspects of this policy may also be supportive in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by Brighton & Hove City Council and included input from members of staff and representatives from the Management Committee.

1.2 Policy Links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Coping with a school emergency (Guidance and Template available or soon to be available on the Health and Safety Section of the Wave)
- PSHE Education Policy
- Pupil Behaviour & Discipline and within that our Anti-Bullying Approaches
- Educational Visits Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Equality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy & Procedures
- Leave of Absence Policy (staff) (Model Policy)

- Online safety policy

1.3 Aim and objectives

This Bereavement Policy supports us to be proactive and aims to support us to provide effective support to pupils/students and/or staff pre-bereavement (where applicable and appropriate), and following a death.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children or staff require, but we also need to be prepared to make referrals to more specialist support where the impact of grief is more complex. If there is an incident which affects a section of the school community and or a critical or sudden incident which has resulted in a death of an adult or child we will contact the Council's Educational Psychology Service for immediate support.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community
- make best use of the support available in school and wider

2 Our Charter for Bereaved Children and Young People

To support us to meet the aim and objectives of this policy we have adapted the Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children to summarise the support we provide to children and young people.

B Bereavement support

Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost to specialist support if needed.

E Express feelings and thoughts

We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.

R Remember the person who has died

We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives and will support them to share special and difficult memories.

E Education and information

All children and particularly bereaved children need and are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to do this as part of the PSHE curriculum and in response to needs and questions.

A Appropriate response from schools and colleges

Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.

V Voice in important decisions

We will work with families to give bereaved children the choice about their involvement in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.

E Enjoyment

We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.

M Meet others

We will try where possible to enable bereaved children benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.

E Established routines

We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.

N Not to blame

We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.

T Tell the story

We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

Other information on how to support children and young people can be found on the Child Bereavement UK website.

For further checklists to support us to support children please see Appendix 1.

3 Safeguarding and confidentiality

We follow safeguarding procedures to ensure the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout and all children are protected from harm.

Although it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure, pupils/students will be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. To retain the trust of pupils/students and parents and carers will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals. If a child is suffering from trauma we may share this with staff, but not necessarily the detail of their experience.

We will discuss with the child and family affected whether they want our help to inform others that they come into contact with such as those delivering after school clubs.

4 Equality and inclusion

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death and that there may be different expectations of the bereaved child and family. Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs. Appendix 6 provides a brief overview.

We try to present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. Children will be made aware that there are a range of different responses to bereavement and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

5 Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, their behaviour, learning and relationships. Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. Specialist mental health services will be consulted.

6 Responding to a suicide

Although a school can be affected by many challenging incidents, including sickness and accidental death, it is suicide that presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide. We will seek advice from the Education Psychology Service and as a school community we will make a response to a suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide. In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans guide to How to prepare for and respond to suicide in the school or college community.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of suicide will include and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to suicide (expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal)
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of funeral expectations.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself

- does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide.

7 Supporting staff

We are aware that staff will be carers, including for those with terminal illnesses and will also experience bereavement. We will ensure that staff are provided with support to take care of themselves at this time and know where they can go for additional help should they need it. For example:

- Their GP
- CRUSE Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- Staff Counselling, Information and Advice – Care First 0800 174319

We will work within our Leave of Absence Policy and if necessary with the Council's Occupational Health Team to ensure staff are provided with leave and support at a time of bereavement.

<http://wave4schools.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schools/HR/Pages/AbsenceManagementandOccupationalHealth.aspx>

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement would not be expected to teach this within PSHE or other parts of the curriculum if they did not feel able to.

8 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement and grief as part of the PSHE curriculum and in line with our PSHE Policy and Curriculum Framework. 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 are also used to address aspects of death e.g. Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We may also observe national minutes of silence. We may also respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class using a framework developed by Brighton & Hove City Council. Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment and we signpost parents and carers to advise on how to talk with their children about these events when necessary.

Any questions relating to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive and age-appropriate yet honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences, but will be signposted to support if they want it.

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.

9 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

9.1 The role of the Management Committee is to:

- approve the policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change.
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how loss and change/death and dying is addressed within the school curriculum and ensure this is respectful of cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that the staff team are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and to access support if needed.

9.2 The role of the Executive Headteacher and senior leadership team (SOLT) is to:

- lead a whole school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff affected by a bereavement
- when appropriate designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff
- monitor progress in supporting the bereaved person or people and liaise with external agencies
- respond to media enquiries
- keep the Management Committee appropriately informed.

9.3 The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff
- know where to access support if advice or information is required
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to offer a child reassurance when distressed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change.
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the Executive Headteacher and inclusion team
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in role of Keyworker.
- inform the Executive Headteacher on hearing about a death in the community at the earliest possibility.

At our school, our Head of Key Stage 4 (Julie Melia) has had more advanced training about bereavement and can offer professional support to other members of staff etc.

9.4 The role of Brighton & Hove City Council

Support from the local authority will be provided by our Educational Psychology Service who can be contacted on 01273 293481. Their role is to:

- advise and support staff
- consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief
- offer specific support when there has been an incident affecting a section of the school community and or a critical incident which has resulted in a death of an adult or child
- ensure that any staff significantly affected by the death are made aware of support available to them.

10 Procedures

10.1 Pre Bereavement

In some situations, it is known that a death is going to occur, usually as a result of a long standing illness. In the case of this being an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the Executive Headteacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations. When the death concerns a child or a child's family member we will:

- invite the family into school to explore sources of support that could be provided and to confirm factual information
- identify a key point of contact in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- clarify that all relevant adults are clear about what information has been shared with the children
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations e.g. local hospice, Winston's Wish, Child Bereavement Organisation, Chestnut Tree House Children's Hospice and or involving faith or community leaders
- explore what support for the children involved might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the child/ren.
- if appropriate consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the child or young person's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death.
- once the death has occurred, bereavement procedures will be followed.

10.2 Following a bereavement

Sudden deaths as a result of accident, suicide or an acute illness can occur. In these instances, key members of staff will be identified to co-ordinate what needs to be actioned so that the situation is managed in a calm and efficient manner and reflects all relevant policies and procedures. The Executive Headteacher with the Chair of Management Committee supporting (if appropriate), will be the key point of contact for all information exchange.

If appropriate, contact will be made with Brighton & Hove City Council's Educational Psychology Service to discuss external sources of support and whether other procedures need to be considered. Contact may also be made with relevant bereavement organisations to obtain specific advice on how best to proceed in terms of supporting those people affected.

We will follow the procedures below in relation to the death of a child or an adult member of the school community. Thought will be given in each individual situation to ensure that the response from school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of each situation and involves as appropriate those affected.

Immediate response

- Contact with the deceased's family will be established by the Executive Headteacher or Head of Phase (SOLT) with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours
- Take into account any religious beliefs that may for example affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the process
- Find out, if possible how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- Send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- Where and when necessary the Executive Headteacher will prepare a press statement with support from the Council press team
- Staff will be informed before pupils/students and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance making sure all staff have the same version of the event
- Pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group) will be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- We will inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family through assemblies and or letters
- The school may make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for a minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

The funeral

- We will find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- We will identify which staff and pupils/students may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school

- We will organise flowers and or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils/students
- We will be sensitive to religious and cultural issues

After the funeral we will:

- visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school
- ensure friendships are secure as peer support can be very important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family – show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils/students and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- Continue to assess the needs of individual child or children most affected and plan for support accordingly

Longer term

We will remember that grief will last a life time and can surface throughout with new questions and many reflections.

- We will be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- We will ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those affected by loss and bereavement.

11 Additional Information and links

11.1 National support services and support resources

Child Bereavement Charity: www.childbereavement.org.uk Support and resources for all those affected both when a child dies and when a child is bereaved.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Child Bereavement Network: cbn@ncb.org.uk

Grief Encounter: www.griefencounter.com Helping bereaved children and young people rebuild their lives after a family death.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> a website for young people who have been bereaved.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> range of guidance and support for schools.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org.uk Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

11.2 Local support services

East Sussex Area Cruse - <http://www.cruse.org.uk/east-sussex-area-map>

Chestnut Tree House <http://www.chestnut-tree-house.org.uk/>

Appendix 1 – Checklists – Supporting Children and Young People

When supporting a bereaved child or young person we will keep in mind these practical tips provided by bereaved children and young people:

- Inform other teachers, especially supply teachers about my loss although I may not wish to talk to them about it. Keep this on record.
- Talk to me about what has happened. I may need more information, advice and education about loss.
- Arrange for me to get extra help with my work so I don't get behind, especially before exams.
- Realise that I have a lot on my plate. Try not to put the spotlight on me too much. I will participate when I can.
- Help me to cope by treating me the same as everyone else.
- Let me know about groups for children and young people who are also coping with loss and change.
- Ask me how I am feeling. It may not be obvious.
- Give me a note that allows me permission to leave class briefly, without having to explain myself if I feel overwhelmed.
- Understand that I will not 'get over it' or 'put it behind me' but with time I will learn to cope with all the changes.
- Give me extra encouragement for all the things I am managing to do and keep me in mind.
- Find a way of getting my attention back in class, without others noticing and making me embarrassed.
- Wait until I am ready to talk.
- Remember that I am still me, just feeling a bit lost at the moment.
- Help me to find new dreams of the future and make plans.

<http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/what-you-can-do/schools-professionals.aspx>

When supporting a bereaved child or young person and the wider community we will:

- check out and be clear about the facts
- acknowledge what has happened
- be honest
- be prepared to listen
- allow children to express emotion
- acknowledge the dead person and not be afraid to share any memories

- recognise the full tragedy
- reassure them that they are not in any way responsible
- give bereaved and grieving pupils time
- not assume that a lack of reaction means they do not care
- try not to judge – grief is very personal as is an individual's response to it as well
- talk with the child or young person about the support they want and how they want others informed or involved
- remember that the impact of bereavement may be felt by the child or young person later on
- Allow ourselves appropriate time for reflection and support.

We will also seek to provide:

- 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
- 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 and share appropriate information to subsequent places of education
- 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.

Further resources to support can be found here:

<http://www.childbereavementuk.org/support/families/reading-and-resources/support-children-and-young-people/>

Appendix 2 - Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and governors

Arrange a staff/governor meeting which should take place as soon as possible.

Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.

Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways.

Be aware of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died.

Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, and lunchtime supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or email etc.

Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:

- a support members of staff
- b support groups of children

The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.

Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary).

Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take 'phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a "protected" telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information. Telephone line providers may provide an additional line if the situation requires one.

Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day.

Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation.

Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.

Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.

Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement

Appendix 3 - Guidelines for breaking news of the death to children and young people

Inform the children/young people as soon as possible about the death.

Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class or tutor groups.

Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.

If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later point to remember the person who has died.

Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.

Allow the children/young people to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death, but be mindful of confidentiality issues

Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person.

Avoid using euphemisms.

Those children/young people who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or on a one-to-one situation.

Ensure the children/young people understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.

Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.

Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.

Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family.

Be available for any child/young person who needs additional help and support.

Appendix 4 – example letters

These letters do not cover all circumstances, but can be used as a guide and amended accordance with each individual situation. 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.

Letter A

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> 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 <Name's> life.

Yours Sincerely

<Name> Headteacher

Letter B

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of <Name's> death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss <him/her> very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends and classmates. <He/She> was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan <Name's> funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of <Name's> that remains in school are returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

Yours Sincerely,

<Name> Headteacher

Appendix 5 - Grief and Mourning in Children

Worden (1991) talks about the 4 tasks of mourning that children need to complete (in the content of the stage of their cognitive development).

These include:

Task 1 - To accept the reality of the loss

Task 2 - To experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss

Task 3 - To adjust to the environment from which the deceased is missing

Task 4 - To relocate the dead person within one's life and find ways to 'memorialise' the person.

These tasks are not sequential and may be undertaken simultaneously at times. As they are 'process' tasks they may take months and years to accomplish rather than days and weeks.

This context can be used to inform support and interventions provided to children and young people.

Developmental Cognitive Stages of Mourning

Infancy (to Age 2)

Children do not have the cognitive capacity to make sense of loss

Preschool (Age 2 – 4)

Loss is seen to be temporary and reversible

Egocentric. Believe world centres around them.

Lack cognitive understanding of death and related concepts. Limited language skills.

Concept of Death

Death seen as reversible, as abandonment, not permanent. Common statements: "Did you know my mum died? When will she be home?"

Grief response

Intensive response to grief but brief. Very present oriented. Most aware of changes in patterns of care. Asking questions repeatedly.

Signs of Distress

Regression: changes in eating and sleeping patterns, bed wetting, general irritability and confusion.

Possible Interventions

Short, honest answers, frequent repetition, lots of reassurance and nurturing. Consistent routine. Play is an outlet for grief.

Early Childhood (Age 4 –7)

Loss is seen to be temporary and reversible. Children sometimes attribute non-causal events to loss.

Gaining a sense of autonomy. Exploring the world outside of self.

Gaining language. Fantasy wishing and thinking. Initiative phase seeing self as the initiator. Concerns of guilt.

Concept of Death

Death still seen as reversible. Personification of death. Feeling of responsibility because of wishes and thoughts. Common statements:

“It’s my fault. I was mad and wished she’d die.”

Grief Response

More verbalisation. Great concern with process. How? Why? Repetitive questioning. May act as though nothing has happened. General distress and confusion.

Signs of Distress

Regression: nightmares, sleeping and eating disturbed. Possible violent play. Attempts to take on role of person who died.

Positive Interventions

Symbolic play using drawings and stories. Allow and encourage expression of energy and feelings through physical outlets. Talk about it.

Middle Years (Age 7 – 11)

Beginning to see loss as final and universal. Concrete thinking. Self-confidence develops. Beginning of socialisation. Development of cognitive ability. Beginning of logical thinking.

Concept of Death

Death seen as punishment. Fear of bodily harm and mutilation. This is a difficult transition period, still wanting to see death as reversible but beginning to see it as final.

Grief Response

Specific questions. Desire for complete detail. Concerned with how others are responding. What is the right way to respond? Starting to have ability to mourn and understand mourning.

Signs of Distress

Regression: school problems, withdrawal from friends. Acting out. Sleeping and eating disturbed. Overwhelming concern with body. Death thoughts (desire to join one who died). Role confusion.

Possible Interventions

Answer questions. Encourage expression of range of feelings. Explain options and allow for choices. Be available but allow alone time. Symbolic plays. Allow for physical outlets. Listen and allow for talk about the death.

Preadolescent (Age 11-13)

Attempting to understand the biological and emotional processes associated with loss and death. Formal operational problem solving. Abstract thinking. Integration of one's own personality.

Concept of Death

A more "adult" approach. Ability to abstract. Beginning to conceptualise death. Work at making sense of teachings.

Grief Response

Extreme sadness. Denial. Regression. More often willing to talk to people outside of family and peer support. Risk taking. Traditional mourning.

Signs of Distress

Depression. Anger often towards parents. Suicidal thoughts. Non-compliance. Rejection of former teaching. Role confusion. Acting out.

Possible Interventions

Encourage verbalisation. Allow for choices. Encourage self-motivation. Listen. Be available. Do not attempt to take grief away.

Adolescent (Age 13-15)

Attempting to integrate loss into emotional life and philosophical frameworks.

As above.

Adolescent (Age 15-18)

Increasing independence in transition to adulthood may distance adolescents from their family support network.

As above

Appendix 6 - Faith and cultural considerations

It's important to be aware of and sensitive to the bereavement rituals and beliefs of faith and cultural groups within the school community. Some information is given below to support this understanding, but there may be variations as to which rituals are followed by individual families. Schools are advised to consult with groups represented in the school community to ensure sensitivity is shown to culture and traditions should a bereavement occur and to avoid any assumptions. If attending a funeral, it is advisable to ask family members about any dress codes e.g. suitable colours, colours to avoid, whether heads should be covered, shoes taken off or whether men and women are expected to sit separately.

This section in particular is subjected to change and development following feedback from community groups.

For further background information, see the Faith and belief in educational settings - a guide.

BUDDHISM

Buddhists believe in rebirth and that when they die they will be reborn again. The goal is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth and attain nirvana or a state of perfect peace. There are lots of different types of Buddhism and many different ways of dealing with death.

The dying person may ask a monk or nun in their particular Buddhist tradition to help them make the transition from life to death as peaceful as possible. Buddhists believe that a person's state of mind as they die is very important so they can find a happy state of rebirth when they pass away. Before and at the moment of death and for a period after death, the monk, nun or spiritual friends may chant from the Buddhist scriptures.

Buddhists believe the spirit leaves the body immediately but may linger in an in between state near the body. In this case it is important the body is treated with respect so that the spirit can continue its journey to a happy state. The time it is believed to take for the spirit to be reborn can vary depending on the type of Buddhism practised.

Because there are so many different types of Buddhist funeral traditions vary. Funerals will usually consist of a simple service held at the crematorium chapel. The coffin may be surrounded by objects significant to the person who has died. Monks may come with the family to the funeral and scriptures may be chanted.

The person may either be cremated or buried depending on their tradition. There may be speeches and chants on the impermanence of life.

The grave may be visited by friends and family in remembrance of the person who has passed away. The importance of the gravesite will depend on the particular Buddhist tradition. Buddhists believe that it is just the physical body that lies in the grave because the person's spirit has been reborn. Buddhists will often do things to wish for the happiness of the deceased person. For example, in Southeast Asia lay people give offerings to the monks in memory of the dead person.

CHRISTIANITY

CATHOLIC

Catholics believe that there is an afterlife and that once a person dies they will see God face to face. If a person has committed a grave offence and has not repented at the time of death, then that person would not enter into the full glory of heaven.

The sick and the elderly can receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on a regular basis if they wish to. If they can't get to church on their own they will be taken there by other members of the church.

When a person is close to death the family or friends ask a priest to come and pray with the sick person and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is administered. This includes anointing with Holy Oils and the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. After the person has passed away the priest comforts the family and helps them prepare the funeral arrangements.

The Catholic funeral rite is called the Order of Christian Funerals. Family and friends pray for the soul of the deceased person and ask God to receive their soul into his eternal glory. The Vigil of the Deceased (a prayer service) is held the night before the funeral. On the day of the funeral a Requiem Mass for the deceased person is celebrated. This includes scripture, prayers and hymns. Family and friends are invited to take part in the service.

At the grave or place where the body has been entombed the Rite of Committal is celebrated. Family members and friends along with the priest pray once again for the deceased person as they commit the body or cremated remains to the final resting-place. The gravesite is also blessed.

Over the next year family members and friends often have Mass celebrated for the peace of the soul of the deceased person. On special occasions such as the deceased's birthday, Christmas or anniversary of the death, family and friends will often visit the grave. Flowers or other objects to remember the deceased are sometimes placed on the grave as a sign of respect.

CHRISTIAN

Christians trust they will go to heaven to be with God once they have died and so in some respects a funeral is a time of joy, although also sadness, as the person will be missed by friends and loved ones.

The church minister may come and visit the person and their family to discuss any concerns and to help the person to prepare for their death. Depending on the form of Christianity (i.e. Anglican, Presbyterian etc.) and the particular church, there may be slightly different customs that will be followed.

The church minister will offer any comfort or assistance the family needs to help them cope with the death and to organise the funeral. Friends will often send their sympathies in the form of cards and/or flowers to the deceased's family.

A Christian may be either buried or cremated, depending on their preference. The ceremony will typically be held at the deceased person's church and conducted by the minister, but it could also be held at a funeral home. The ceremony may involve hymns, readings and prayer by both the minister and the deceased's family and friends. The casket may be present in the room during the ceremony and carried out at the end by pallbearers – usually members of the

deceased's immediate family. There is often the opportunity for people to view the deceased and to say their last goodbyes before the deceased is buried.

If the deceased has been cremated the ashes may be scattered. Otherwise, the ashes or body will be buried in a cemetery and marked with a gravestone to remember the deceased.

On special occasions such as the deceased's birthday, Christmas or anniversary of the death, family and friends may come and visit the grave. Often, flowers or other objects to remember the deceased will be placed on the grave as a sign of respect.

COPTIC CHRISTIANS

When someone dies, a member of the family washes the body of the deceased. Only rarely does the family ask a professional to do the job for them, a man for a man and a woman for a woman. Then the body is dressed in a shroud and the family goes to church to pray for the dead. The priest pays his condolences to the family and thanks everyone who takes part in the funeral service. There is no rule specifying the day on which the deceased has to be buried. Each family buries their dead just as they wish. Three days after the burial the priests visit the family in their home to pray and water is poured on the floor throughout the flat. Tradition has it that relatives visit the family to mourn for forty days. The mourning period can be very long: some widows wear black for the rest of their lives.

GREEK ORTHODOX

Followers of the Greek Orthodox religion believe in eternal life. Thus the church strongly emphasises a positive outcome in death — that the deceased is alive with God. While death is the separation of the soul (the spiritual dimension of each person) from the body (the physical dimension), the physical body will be reunited with the soul at the Last Judgment.

The Orthodox religion is practiced today much as it was practiced hundreds of years ago, and is highly ritualistic and symbolic. The coffin is taken home on the way to the funeral service, so that the deceased can visit their home for the last time. Wailing usually takes place at the home. If an Orthodox priest is unavailable to administer the last anointing, it is sometimes acceptable for a Catholic priest to do so. The person's family would need to be consulted about this.

After death, the priest says the first prayer and a candle is lit. This is repeated for 40 days, because it is believed that the soul roams on earth for 40 days, as did Christ. The lighting of the candle is symbolic in asking God for forgiveness on behalf of the deceased.

At the church, every person lights a candle as they enter, in memory of the deceased. The coffin is usually open and an icon placed on the body or the coffin. At the end of the service, everyone pays respect to the deceased and the icon, by passing the coffin. At the cemetery, the last funeral prayer is said and the body is buried facing east, because when Christ was born the guiding star was in the East. The family has supplied a small bottle of wine mixed with oil and some wheat or bread, to the priest at the church. When the last prayer is finished, the priest pours the wine and oil mixture over the lowered coffin, making the sign of the cross three times, symbolising the Holy Trinity and sustenance for the departing soul. The priest sprinkles earth into the grave, followed by family and friends.

In the Orthodox religion, cremation is not permitted because it is believed that we are made from earth and that we shall return to the earth.

Masses are conducted as memorials, at 3 days, 9 days, 40 days, 6 months, 12 months and 3 years. After each mass, food is eaten in honour of the deceased's soul.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that when they die they go into a kind of sleep until God resurrects them from the dead. Those who gain entrance to heaven will live with God but the vast majority of mankind will be resurrected to a restored paradise on earth.

The church elders will visit the person, pray with them and share scripture to bring the person comfort.

No rituals are performed at time of death but an elder will give comfort to friends and family of the deceased.

The funeral is usually held at the Kingdom Hall that the deceased attended or at the funeral home. The body may either be cremated or buried depending on the wishes of the deceased. Mourners will usually wear dignified clothing in muted colours out of respect for the deceased. A church elder runs the service with a sermon, prayers and singing.

A committal service may take place at the graveside if this is the wish of the family. It would include prayers and scripture, which will once again be led by the church elder.

Mourners gather at the family's house so friends and relatives can offer their sympathies. Flowers and cards are usually sent. Family and friends may come and visit the grave in the coming years to remember the deceased.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (MORMON)

Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints (or Mormons as they are also known) believe that at death the body and the spirit separate. The spirit goes to the spirit world before being reunited with the body. The judgment will then occur and after that the person will live in Heaven with God.

The ward bishop and members of the church will offer support to the person who is dying and their family.

The ward bishop will go to the deceased's home and offer assistance to the family in making arrangements for the funeral.

Funeral services are generally conducted by the bishop in a ward chapel or in a mortuary. Although people mourn the loss of a loved one, the funeral service is viewed as a celebration of the life of the deceased. The service will consist of a eulogy, doctrinal messages, music and prayer. The funeral is designed to bring peace and solace, as church members believe families may be reunited in the life hereafter. Mourners often send flowers to the family to show their support.

Church members who have received temple ordinances are buried in their temple clothing. The grave is dedicated as a place of peace and remembrance for the family. Cremation is generally discouraged.

The gravesite is considered to be a sacred place for the family to visit and place floral remembrances.

HINDUISM

Hinduism embraces a pantheon of gods and goddesses, with individual Hindus worshipping one or more of these. Hindus believe in reincarnation. When a person dies their soul merely moves from one body to the next on its path to reach Nirvana (Heaven). So, while it is a sad time when someone dies, it is also a time of celebration.

Family and a priest may come to pray with the dying person, sing holy songs and read holy texts. The priest may perform last rites. Other rituals can include the tying of a thread around the neck and wrist of the dying person, the sprinkling of Ganges water, or the placing of a leaf from the sacred basil bush on the tongue.

Family will pray around the body soon after death. People try to avoid touching the body as it is considered unclean. Sacred threads and other religious objects should not be removed.

The deceased will be bathed and dressed in white traditional Indian clothing. If a woman dies before her husband she will be dressed in red. The procession might pass by places that were important to the deceased. Prayers are said at the entrance to the crematorium. The body is decorated with sandalwood and flowers. Someone will read from the scriptures. The head mourner is usually a male or the eldest son and he will pray for the body's soul.

Hindus are cremated as they believe burning the body releases the spirit. The flames represent Brahma (the creator).

A priest will purify the family's home with spices and incense. A mourning period begins during which friends and relatives can visit the family and offer their sympathies. After the funeral mourners must wash and change their clothing before entering the house. One year later Shradh occurs. This is either a one-off event or may become an annual event. Shradh is when food is given to the poor in memory of the deceased. Shradh lasts one month and a priest will say prayers for the deceased; during this time the family will not buy any new clothes or go to any parties.

JUDDAISM

Beliefs may vary depending on whether the Jewish person is Orthodox, Reform or Conservative. Jews believe that when they die they will go to Heaven to be with God. This next world is called Olam HaEmet or 'the world of truth'. Death is seen as a part of life and a part of God's plan.

Family and friends will gather. A rabbi may be called to offer comfort and to pray for the person who is dying. It is a basic tenet of Judaism that a dying person should not be left alone. The reading of Psalm 23 and the reciting of the Shema prayer may be desired.

The person's eyes are closed, the body is covered and laid on the floor and candles are lit. The body is never left alone. Eating and drinking are not allowed near the body as a sign of respect. In Jewish law, being around a dead body causes uncleanness so often the washing of the body and preparations for burial will be carried out by a special group of volunteers from the Jewish community. This is considered a holy act.

Jews may not be cremated or embalmed. In Israel a coffin might not always be used but outside of Israel a coffin is almost always used. The body is wrapped in a white shroud. Mourners have the opportunity to express anguish. Tears are seen as a sign of sadness and show that the mourner is confronting death. Mourners also tear their clothing as an expression of grief.

The burial takes place as soon as possible following the death. Pallbearers will carry the casket to the grave. A family member will throw a handful of earth in the casket with the body. This is to put the body in close contact with the earth. Jewish law says each grave must have a tombstone to remember the deceased.

A candle is lit after returning from the cemetery to mark seven days of mourning called Shivah. This is when people can offer sympathies to the mourners. A meal is prepared by friends to help the mourners regain their strength. Each year the anniversary of the death is commemorated according to the Hebrew calendar. This day is observed as a solemn day of remembrance.

ISLAM

There are two types of Muslims – Shi'ite and Sunni, so beliefs and customs may be slightly different for each. Muslims believe that the soul continues to exist after death. During life a person can shape their soul for better or worse depending on how they live their life. Muslims believe there will be a day of judgment by Allah (God). Until then, the deceased remain in their graves but on judgment day they will either go to Heaven or Hell. Muslims accept death as God's will.

Muslims should be prepared for death at any time, which is partly why daily prayers are so important. A dying person may wish to die facing Mecca, the Muslim holy city. Family members and elders recite the Muslim scripture called the Koran and pray for the person. If there is no family, any Muslim can do this. Grief counselling is often not well accepted and may be considered an intrusion of privacy.

The eyes of the deceased will be closed and the body is laid out with their arms across their chest and head facing Mecca. The body will be washed by family or friends. It will be wrapped in a white shroud and prayers will be said. Contact between the body and non-Muslims is discouraged. If a non-Muslim needs to touch the body, gloves should be worn. Male staff should handle male persons, female with female persons.

The body will be buried within 24 hours as Muslims believe the soul leaves the body at the moment of death. The funeral will take place either at the graveside and involve prayer and readings from the Koran.

No women are allowed to go into the graveyard. Before burial a prayer will be recited. Mourners are forbidden from excessive demonstrations of grief. The body will not be cremated as this is not permitted in Islam. The deceased will be buried with their face turned to the right facing Mecca. A coffin is usually not used but a chamber dug into the grave and sealed with wooden boards so no earth touches the body. The grave will usually be simple without any fancy decoration.

Three days of mourning follows where visitors are received and a special meal to remember the departed may be held. Mourners avoid decorative jewellery and clothing. Male family members go to visit the grave daily or weekly for 40 days. There will also be prayer gatherings at the home for 40 days. After one year there will be a large prayer gathering of family and friends. After that, male family and friends visit the grave and everyone remembers the deceased in prayers.

SIKHISM

Sikhs believe in reincarnation but also that if a person lives their life according to God's plan then they can end the cycle of rebirth in this life. They believe in an afterlife where the soul meets God

Friends and relations will be with the dying person and recite from the Sukhnam Sahib or the Guru Granth Sahib.

After passing away the deceased will be washed and dressed in clean clothes. If the deceased has fulfilled the Sikh baptismal ritual, then the five symbols of Sikh membership will also be placed in the coffin. Non-Sikhs may attend the body at death.

Friend and family drive in procession to the crematorium which takes place as soon as is possible. Death is not seen as a sad occasion but an act of God and so it is forbidden to cry. There may be an opportunity to view the deceased. Hymns may be sung, prayers and the poem Sohila recited.

Cremation is the norm although Sikhs and only small children and babies will be buried. A male family member will switch the cremation oven on. The ashes will be spread in running water and are traditionally sent to India.

Afterwards the mourners will come to the temple for more hymns and readings as well as the distribution of *parsad*, a kind of bread/pudding, which is a symbol of God's blessing. For days after the death, Guru Granth Sahib will be read or sung regularly in order to ease the sorrows of the family. After ten days another ceremony, the *Bhog*, is held to formally end the mourning period.

OTHER COMMUNITES

Traveller communities

Some Traveller communities traditionally hold elaborate wakes and funerals attended by large numbers of the extended family. Sometimes the body will be returned to family burial places in other parts of the country. Black clothes may be worn by wives or children of the deceased for up to a year. Travellers have sometimes burnt the trailer belonging to the deceased as a mark of respect.

African communities

Different religions are practised across Africa. These include Christian denominations such as Baptist, seventh day Adventist and Roman Catholic. Other religions such as Zionist Christian Church, Islam and Judaism are followed. Often the funeral is an important rite for friends and family and the proceedings will continue for several days. The bereaved family will not leave the house during the mourning period which will vary in length. Once the mourning period has concluded a waking ceremony is held to celebrate the deceased's life. This is a joyous occasion where family and friends gather and share food and music.

Caribbean community

Different religions are practiced across the Caribbean. Ritual practice will vary according to the island. Requirements according to faith will determine how the body is laid to rest. A wake takes place before the funeral which can last for up to three days before the funeral. In preparation family and friends help clean the house, offer financial support and provide

assistance with childcare. Very expressive grief is positively encouraged. The body may be sent to the island of origin to be laid to rest.