



EDITH STEIN **CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST**

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

APPROVED BY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY	FEBRUARY 2026
SCRUTINISED BY SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM	NEW TRUST POLICY
DATE LAST REVIEWED	CEO
MEMBER OF STAFF RESPONSIBLE	MATT QUINN
STATUTORY / NON-STATUTORY	NON-STATUTORY



Policy Amendments

Version Date	Section / Page	Amendments
		New policy for ESCAT

“This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

John 6:40

DEFINITIONS:

In this Policy and Procedure, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

1. ‘Academy or Trust’ means the Academy named at the beginning of this Policy and Procedure and includes all sites upon which the Academy undertaking is, from time to time, being carried out.
2. ‘Headteacher’ means the most senior teacher in the school who is responsible for its management and administration. Such teacher may also be referred to as the Headteacher, Principal, or Head of School.

1.0 Rationale

- 1.1 As a Catholic Academy Trust school, our faith and traditions provide us with a framework for managing bereavement. The ethos, environment and curriculum in our schools supports and prepares students for coping with separation or loss of a loved one.
- 1.2 Statistically 1 in 29 pupils aged five to 16-years olds has been bereaved of a parent or sibling – that is one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, relative, friend or other significant person.
- 1.3 Within a school community there will almost always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.
- 1.4 We understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school communities at different times and that when the loss is of a member of the school community – such as a child or staff member, it can be particularly difficult.
- 1.5 Pupils need to be supported when they experience family bereavements and other significant losses in the course of their lives while they are at school.
- 1.6 This policy will provide guidelines to be followed after a bereavement across ESCAT schools. The aim is to be supportive to both students 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.
- 1.7 ESCAT schools will provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all who are bereaved.
- 1.8 This policy must be read in conjunction with the individual school’s Emergency Response Plan.

2.0 Following a bereavement

2.1 We believe that children and adults alike have the right to:

- Be given space and time to grieve.
- Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible, of their own choice.
- Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

2.2 We recognise that:

- Grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but that makes it no less real.
- 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.
- The death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate teaching/pastoral care team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching contacts.

3.0 The management of bereavement in school

3.1 A policy and protocol will not, in itself, enable everyone to feel comfortable in dealing with the practicalities of death and bereavement. Each bereavement is unique and comes with its own specific challenges; however, it is helpful to have a framework on which to build. The first concern must be the immediate family of the deceased and as a school we state our commitment to any family as they will need ongoing practical, spiritual, and emotional support.

4.0 Transition

4.1 It is vitally important to ensure that if a child has experienced bereavement that this information is passed on to the relevant persons when they move on to a new class or school.

5.0 Death of a pupil

5.1 The school may be notified in a number of ways. Upon notification of the death of a pupil:

- If a death occurs parents usually let the school know directly and the person answering the phone must put them through to the most senior member of staff on site.
- Where death occurs in the holidays or at weekends the parents will contact whoever they can and this may be by email.
- In that instance the member of staff who receives the message will immediately contact the Headteacher as soon as possible and the Headteacher will then assume responsibility for the dissemination of the information. See Appendix A.

5.2 **Sharing information**

- 5.2.1 It is important to agree with the parent the role of the school in informing concerned parties within, or outside, the school community. There can be no definitive list of people to contact and, therefore, it will be different for each child. The school should ensure that all people who are close to the child are told in a sensitive and supportive manner rather than risk them hearing it 'on the grapevine'. The school needs to ensure it does not add to the sorrow by leaving people feeling marginalised.
- 5.2.2 The following people should be considered:
- Current school staff not in school that day.
 - Chair of Governors and Governing Body.
 - Previous school staff who worked closely with the child.
 - Other schools/colleges where siblings attend.
 - Parish priest(s) and School Chaplain.
 - Other professionals who worked with the child; for example, social workers, Educational Psychologists, etc.
 - Business Support - to update contact information and to suspend non-essential communications.
 - Other parents – if children have been informed, the school needs to send a note to parents informing them of the loss as they will need to support and comfort their children. See Appendix C.
- 5.2.3 Some parents may need to be telephoned if their relationship is closer but who may not have been informed by the family.
- 5.2.4 The process for telling the other pupils will be decided by the Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. For example, with different aged pupils there will be different decisions made and the class teacher of the class with the loss will usually be the best person to tell the rest of the children in that class. It is important that staff avoid adding worry and they can do this by being clear in their communication. Although the finality of death cannot be diminished, if there are mitigating circumstances that may help - such as that the child was in pain and now is free of pain - this can be used to help alleviate sorrow. Children must be allowed to ask questions at this time or at any point in the following days or weeks. Staff must answer honestly and to the best of their knowledge but without speculation. See Appendix D.

5.3 The funeral

- 5.3.1 It is essential to discuss the family's wishes. The family may well welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep things private.
- 5.3.2 The Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher will make arrangements for the school to be represented at the funeral and will identify which staff and pupils may want to attend together with the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. For some schools it is appropriate to close, for others it is not. Consequently difficult decisions will sometimes have to be made concerning attendance.
- 5.3.3 Religious and cultural implications need consideration.
- 5.3.4 If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed. Past experience has shown that this can be helpful in their grieving.

- 5.3.5 The school traditionally organises a liturgy for family and friends and provides the opportunity for a memorial; for example, a plaque, a tree, etc.

5.4 Memorial liturgy with students

It may be appropriate to hold a memorial liturgy for the child. Staff need to be able to show pupils that it is perfectly normal to feel upset at the loss of a friend and that helpful rituals, prayers, and remembering can be shared in a manageable way together. The Chapel at Oaklands provides the ideal setting for such services.

6.0 If a child dies in school

- 6.1 If any member of staff has concerns regarding a child's health they will contact a first aider and ideally the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.
- 6.2 In the case of serious concern, the school will call for an ambulance. Due to the seriousness of the situation, this decision can be taken by the first aider or a member of the SLT.
- 6.3 Immediately inform the Headteacher or, in his absence, the most senior member of staff on site.
- 6.4 The Headteacher will then ensure that the parents are contacted and seek their agreement to meet the ambulance at the hospital.
- 6.5 If the child stops breathing a trained school staff member will administer CPR. Once the ambulance has arrived at school, the child is given over to their care and it is the ambulance team's decision as to where the child is taken or which form of treatment is administered.
- 6.6 Any change in circumstance following the first call to parents should be reported to them as soon as possible. **NB:** Staff must not impart shocking or worrying news to a parent if they are travelling in a car alone.
- 6.7 Once the child is placed in the ambulance a member of staff will be appointed to travel to the hospital either in the ambulance or in their own transport. The purpose of this is to be a familiar face to the child's family on their arrival at the hospital. This person will remain in regular contact with Headteacher and/or the Deputy Headteacher.
- 6.8 The school will notify the Local Authority, ESCAT and the Diocese if there is a death in school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be managed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

7.0 If a child dies on a school trip

- 7.1 If a crisis situation occurs whilst a child is out on an educational trip, then the adult with the child - or the teacher in charge - should telephone for an ambulance first and then contact the school to inform the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then direct who must take the responsibility of contacting the parents. Once the ambulance team reaches the child, the child becomes the responsibility of the ambulance team and they will direct any subsequent actions. The school will notify the Local Authority, ESCAT and the Diocese if there is a death out of school at the earliest opportunity. All press enquiries are to be managed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

8.0 Responding to the media

- 8.1 Some deaths, particularly those in sudden or traumatic circumstances, attract media attention. All members of staff must not respond to journalists; they are to refer all enquiries to the Headteacher, who will make a considered response after seeking assistance from the Local Authority, or Diocesan Press Office. Staff must not post any information related to the death of a student or member of staff on social media.

9.0 On-going support

9.1 For staff:

Following bereavement, it is only to be expected that some members of staff will be emotionally affected and would benefit from the provision of some time for reflection. The following support may be helpful:

- A specific room could be allocated for the duration of a lunchtime to enable staff to meet and share their thoughts over a coffee or tea. It should be emphasised that anything shared on such occasions should be held as confidential and not for public airing.
- Access to one-to-one time with a member of staff who is trained in bereavement support.
- Availability of information about accessing bereavement support outside of school; for example contacting CRUSE, accessing childbereavementuk.org, or contacting Child Bereavement UK's Helpline 0800 02 888 40.

9.2 For pupils:

Most pupils can be supported by the school staff.

- In most cases, each child will have a preferred member of staff to approach.
- In the secondary setting, the Chaplain, Heads of Year, and Head of PSHCE or equivalent will ensure that we have suitable support and resources to help children discuss death and come to terms with loss. In the primary setting, this support may also be undertaken by the phase leader or class teacher.
- The Educational Psychology team can offer support to pupils who may need more help.
- See Appendix B.

10.0 Returning to school after a bereavement

- 10.1 Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert' - they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. School, with its familiar environment and routines, can be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person.
- 10.2 It can be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school. This could be a familiar adult, such as the Chaplain, Head of Year, form tutor, SENCO, a member of the pastoral support team or it could be the Deputy Head or Headteacher.
- 10.3 The purpose of the meeting should be to:

- Acknowledge the death.
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'. The Chapel is the ideal place for students to go to.
- Decide how they will inform staff of this - for example, a 'time-out' card, a non-verbal signal or message.
- Decided how this will be communicated to all staff
- Agree whether 'time-out' activities need to be provided - journals, art and craft, memory boxes, etc.
- Set guidelines for communication – with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school.
- Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend.

10.4 A short film is available on the Child Bereavement UK website:
www.childbereavementuk.org/for-teachers-when-a-pupil-returns-to-school-after-being-bereaved.

11.0 Long term support for pupils

- 11.1 The pupil will continue to grieve for the rest of their life and may require ongoing support.
- 11.2 Significant dates or anniversaries, Mother's/Father's Day etc, may be particularly difficult.
- 11.3 Regular contact with the family/carers and reviews with the pupil will help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping.
- 11.4 The 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. There may be changes in their behaviour which will need to be managed.
- 11.5 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.
- 11.6 Vulnerable pupils may need additional support, particularly on transition.

12.0 Support for families

- 12.1 Communicate with the family straight away and offer support. Send a letter of condolence from the school.
- 12.2 Give parents and family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- 12.3 Ensure the school is represented at the funeral.
- 12.3 Hold a collection/flowers to be sent as appropriate.
- 12.4 Invite parents/family to any commemorative events held by the school, both at the time and in subsequent years.

- 12.5 If memorial work has been completed, for example a remembrance book, then this should be handed to the parents at an appropriate time, and pupils informed where it has gone.
- 12.6 If the parents wish to visit the school at any time after the funeral, this will be agreed.
- 12.7 Parents will be told that they are welcome in the school and will be encouraged to come and visit. Past experience has shown that this can be helpful in their grieving. The first visit to the school is often difficult and will be arranged sensitively in accordance with the parents' wishes. It will then be for the parents to decide if they wish to maintain on going links. Each family will be different, with differing needs. Therefore, the school will always be there to act as a source of support and information.

13.0 The death of a member of staff

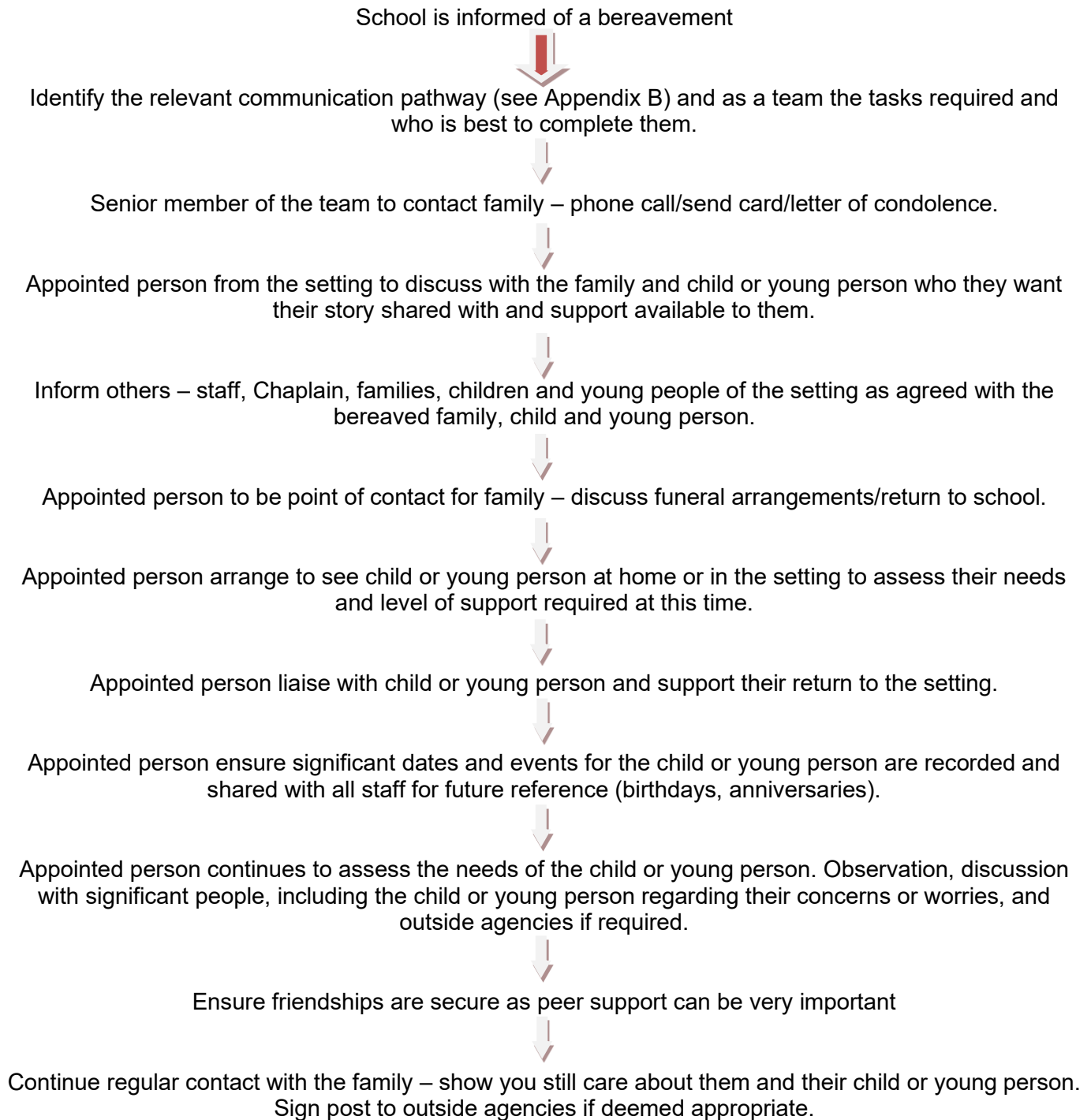
- 13.1 The school will notify the Chair of Governors, Governing Body and ESCAT. If appropriate, the Headteacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school so that all members of staff are able to attend the funeral.
- 13.2 All of the principles and procedures listed above apply to the death of a staff member. For a letter template see Appendix C.

14.0 Responsibilities

- 14.1 **The designated person** within the school who has overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss is the Headteacher. In the event that this person is absent then another Senior Leader will take responsibility.
- 14.2 These responsibilities are:
- Policy monitoring and review, involving pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and relevant local agencies.
 - Implementing the policy and reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
 - Using the expertise within the school and sharing the responsibilities.
 - Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.
 - Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary school.
 - Accessing and co-ordinating training and support for staff.
- 14.3 The Chair of Governors responsibilities are:
- To support the Headteacher in overseeing the way in which bereavement is managed in school.
 - To review practice.

Appendix A

Bereavement Flowchart: this flowchart will support Oaklands to respond to a bereavement.



Appendix B

List of Online Resources and Information

B.1 Bereavement Resources

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-grief-and-loss/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIh-DsyYrR6AlVia3tCh25vAdEAMYASAAEqJ4lD_BwE

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

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus/coronavirus-useful-links>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/managing-a-sudden-death>

B.2 Helpful Organisations

Bereavement support for children and young people

There are many national and local support charities and organisations that offer a range of support for individuals, parents and organisations. Below are some of the charities and organisations with a well-established history of supporting those experiencing grief through a bereavement.

Child Bereavement Network



CBN supports professionals working with bereaved children and young people. The website includes lots of helpful information including resources which can be used to support children. **Tel:** 020 7843 6309. Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK Charity



Produces lots of ideas and support materials for children and their families. Calls from schools are answered by someone with classroom experience. Helpline line 0800 02 888 40. Website www.childbereavement.org.uk [Look under 'Information and Support' tab for different themes]

Samaritans

If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools. They can be contacted on: **0808 168 2528**

CRUSE Bereavement Care



Bereavement counselling service for adults and children but also produces resources and helpful leaflets. CRUSE offers a 1:1 counselling service from nearly 200 local branches. Helpline: 0808 808 1677. Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Aimed at children and young people: www.hopeagain.org.uk this is a website run by CRUSE for children and young people who have been bereaved and want news and information designed for them.

PAPYRUS



PAPYRUS has developed a guide to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention in schools and colleges. It aims to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support schoolchildren who may be having suicidal thoughts with [Save The Class](#) resources. It runs [HOPELINEUK](#) where advisers can talk with children or young people under 35 or others who are worried about them. The [Bedtime Stories](#) resources highlight the impact of online bullying. www.papyrus-uk.org

Winston's Wish



On line resources and advice especially for children and families
Tel: 01242 515157. Website: www.winstonwish.org.uk

B.3 Other Support Organisations

Hampshire Local Authority

Availability of professionals who can provide reactive support for schools in the event of sudden tragedies.

Simon Says

A Hampshire based child bereavement support charity. Their contact details are 02380 647550, email info@simonsays.org.uk
www.simonsays.org.uk

Care for the Family

A Christian based charity that seeks to support families in a range of areas including bereavement
www.careforthefamily.org.uk

The Marie Curie Great Daffodil Appeal



This is a way to fundraise towards their work to support families living with cancer. Click [here](#) for ideas on how schools can get involved. Click [here](#) for advice, including what to say or do when a child is returning to school after being bereaved.

PINTEREST



A PINTEREST page of bereavement resources [here](#) includes useful books and links. Including Rabbityness by Jo Empson; Waterbugs and Dragonflies by Doris Stickney and The Invisible String by Patrice Karst.

Engage Worship



Engage Worship has recently released a song written by Sam Hargreaves called “[There’s a Time For Tears](#)”. It draws on Ecclesiastes 3, Jesus at Lazarus’ tomb and 2 Corinthians. Click [here](#) for resources including words, video and MP3.

Youthscape



Youthscape signposts to [resources](#) that are useful for children/young people’s good mental health – mostly aimed at secondary school age pupils.

BBC Ideas



A suite of short films focusing on death, bereavement and grief has been made. They may be useful individually to stimulate discussion. For example there is one where Palliative care doctor and author Kathryn Mannix argues that it’s time to break the taboo that exists around death – click [here](#). And another, which centres on how for some, their childhood bereavement has been a source of strength as they have grown up. Click [here](#).

Appendix C

C.1 Template of a Letter Informing Parents of the Death of a Pupil

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.

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher 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> Head Teacher

C.2 Template of a Letter informing Parents of the Death of a Member of Staff

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

Appendix D

Supporting pupils

The following guidelines are taken from CRUSE bereavement care website. They are general principles, and need to be thought about whatever the needs of the child are. Adapt and aid communication as appropriate.

D.1 Loss from a child's perspective

For many children and young people, the death of a parent, caregiver, sibling, or grandparent is an experience they are faced with early in life. It is sometimes incorrectly assumed that a child or young person who is bereaved by the death of someone close at a young age will not be greatly affected as they are too young to understand the full implications of death.

This is untrue and unhelpful. Even babies are able to experience loss. A baby cannot cognitively process the implications of the bereavement but that does not mean that they do not feel the loss.

D.2 Accepting the child's experience

Children and young people need to be given the opportunity to grieve as any adult would. Trying to ignore or avert the child's grief is not protective, in fact it can prove to be extremely damaging as the child enters adulthood. Children and young people regardless of their age need to be encouraged to talk about how they are feeling and supported to understand their emotions.

It is also important to remember that children and young people grieve in different ways. Grief is unique and therefore it is not wise to assume that all children and young people will experience the same emotions, enact the same behaviour or respond similarly to other grieving children and young people. A child or young person's grief differs from that of an adult's grief because it alters as they develop.

D.3 Time to grieve

Children and young people often revisit the death and review their emotions and feelings about their bereavement as they move through their stages of development. Children and young people do not have the emotional capacity to focus on their grief for long periods of time and therefore it is not uncommon for grieving children and young people to become distracted by other things. This is a protective mechanism which allows the child or young person to be temporarily diverted from the bereavement.

Bereaved children and young people need time to grieve, and in order for them to address the bereavement they need to be given the facts regarding the death in language appropriate to their age or level of comprehension. Avoid using metaphors for death such as, "Daddy has gone to sleep", this will make the child or young person believe that Daddy will come back to them and may constantly ask when he is going to wake up. Similarly, the child or young person might encounter problems with bedtime and not wanting to sleep for fear of not waking up.

D.5 Talking to children

It is understandable that many caregivers are reluctant to talk to the child or young person about the death as they do not want to cause distress or fear. Children and young people who are bereaved need to know that their loved one has died, how they died, and where they are now. Failure to be honest with the grieving child or young person means that their grief is not being acknowledged and this can cause problems later on.

If the bereaved child or young person wants to ask questions about death and what dying means, answer them truthfully and if you do not know the answer to a specific question don't be tempted to make the answer up. Assure the child or young person that although you do not know the answer to their question you will find out for them.

D.6 Key points to remember

- Babies can experience feelings of loss.
- Be honest with the bereaved child or young person.
- Avoid using metaphors for death.
- Every child and young person's grief is unique.
- Encourage the child or young person to talk about the death and how they feel.
- Children and young people may 'revisit' the death and review their feelings about the bereavement as they develop.
- Use language that is appropriate to the child or young person's age and level of comprehension.

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/Children/loss-from-childs-perspective>