

# **Critical Incident Policy** (including Bereavement Policy and Procedure)

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Queen's College, Taunton

**Queen's College, Taunton**

August 2017 V.2 v

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1. Introduction
  - 1.1 This is the Critical Incident Policy for Queen's College, Taunton and is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers to respond to all critical incidents
  - 1.2 It applies to all School activities both on the School site and any School-arranged off-site activities such as educational visits, residential trips and expeditions.
  - 1.3 Nothing in this policy should affect the ability of any person to contact the emergency services in the event of an emergency requiring immediate assistance. If you are in any doubt you should dial 999 before contacting the Critical Incident Manager (**CIM**) or another appropriate member of the Critical Incident Management Team (**CIMT**).
2. Aims and objectives
  - 2.1 The aim of this policy is to provide a framework to manage and recover from any crisis affecting the School and to minimise the risks to the health, safety and welfare of those affected and the damage to property or reputation by identifying:
    - 2.1.1 those who may be affected by such an incident;
    - 2.1.2 the types of incident and the threat that they may present to the School;
    - 2.1.3 key activities and assets that may be threatened by such an incident;
    - 2.1.4 measures and procedures to manage, investigate (where appropriate) and recover from such an incident and its aftermath.
3. Critical Incident
  - 3.1 A Critical Incident, is a sudden or unexpected incident, crisis or a sequence of incidents or events which cause, or are likely to result in all or any of the following:
    - 3.1.1 injury, harm or illness to pupils, staff, or anyone else affected by the School's activities;
    - 3.1.2 damage to school property or reputation;
    - 3.1.3 serious disruption to the running of the School or School's activities;
    - 3.1.4 intervention by the police or regulatory authorities;
    - 3.1.5 adverse media attention.
  - 3.2 Examples of Critical Incidents may include, but are not restricted to the following:
    - 3.2.1 an accident, injury, illness or death of a pupil, staff member or anyone else affected by the School's activities;
    - 3.2.2 media attention and / or regulatory intervention following the investigation or arrest of school personnel or former staff arising from allegations of abuse;
    - 3.2.3 an outbreak of illness or contagious disease on the School premises or affecting pupils or staff;
    - 3.2.4 missing or abducted pupil(s) and hostage situations;

- 3.2.5 security breaches, intruder access or vandalism;
  - 3.2.6 criminal or terrorist acts;
  - 3.2.7 assaults on or acts of violence towards pupils or staff members or anyone else affected by the School's activities;
  - 3.2.8 a fire, arson attack, explosion, bomb scare, chemical leak, the discovery of hazardous substances on the School site;
  - 3.2.9 natural disasters e.g. flooding or storm damage;
  - 3.2.10 an unplanned evacuation of the School's premises;
  - 3.2.11 damage to School property or infrastructure including failure of services (gas, electricity, water etc) or computer systems;
  - 3.2.12 loss of key personnel or strike action.
- 3.3 **Child protection incidents**
- 3.3.1 For the avoidance of doubt every complaint of, or suspicion of abuse (whether by an adult or another pupil) will be taken seriously and will be dealt with under the terms of the School's safeguarding procedures before implementing the terms of this policy.
4. Responsibilities
- 4.1 The CIMT consists of senior members of the School's management team and may include those listed below:
- 4.1.1 The Critical Incident Manager (Deputy Head) is responsible for the overall command and management of the incident and the CIMT.
  - 4.1.2 The Communications Officer (Director of Marketing, Admissions & Development) is responsible for liaising with and briefing key personnel, the media and monitoring media response.
  - 4.1.3 The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for providing support, assistance and information to pupils and staff or anyone else affected by the Critical Incident and will liaise with medical staff, hospitals etc. where appropriate.
  - 4.1.4 The DDSLs are responsible for matters relating to child protection and safeguarding and welfare (where necessary).
  - 4.1.5 The DDSLs are responsible for providing support, assistance and information to parents, relatives and anyone else affected by the Critical Incident.
  - 4.1.6 The Operations Director and Site Manager are responsible for managing issues relating to the School site, premises and property and liaising with regulatory bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive (**HSE**), the local authority and the Environment Agency.
  - 4.1.7 The Bursar is responsible for liaising with solicitors, insurers, brokers, loss adjusters and for all financial matters arising out of the Critical Incident.

4.1.8 The Incident Secretary is responsible for assisting the CIM in their roles and taking minutes at meetings and keeping records (where required).

4.1.9 Other senior members of staff (as required).

5. CIMT emergency contact list

<b>Contact</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
<b>Emergency Services</b>	Police Fire and Rescue Ambulance	999
<b>Police (non urgent enquiries)</b>		101
<b>School PCSO's</b>	PCSO Graham Phimister 8715  PCSO Tony Wearmouth 8413	07889 655213 graham.phimister@avonands omerset.police.uk 07889 655312 tony.wearmouth@avonands omerset.police.uk
<b>Critical Incident Manager / Deputy Head</b>	Mr Andrew Free (DSL)	Ext 213 - 01823 340803
<b>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads</b>	Dr Lorraine Earps	Ext 210 / 01823 272559 07541 385322
	Mrs Tracey Khodabandehloo	Ext 220 / 01823 340852 07766 168625
	Mrs Teri Underwood	Ext 282 / 01823 272990
	Miss Elizabeth Hayes	Ext 314 / 01823 340887
	Mrs Donna Kershaw	Ext 353 / 01823 340892
	Miss Sam Horner	Ext 313 / 01823 340886
	Mr Jon Shepherd	Ext 276 / 01823 340853
	Mrs Amanda Free	Ext 229 / 01823 340825
	Miss Natalie (Tilly) Fowler	Ext 353 / 01823 340892
	Mrs Jan DeCaux	Ext 252 / 01823 340880
<b>Operations Director</b>	Mr Peter Evans	Ext 203 / 01823 340823 / 07766 256369

<b>Site Manger</b>	Miss Deborah Cossey	Ext 219 / 01823 340875 07967 351276
<b>School Nurse</b>	Mrs Sue Parratt & Rachael Wilson	Ext 250 / 216 / 01823 340819
<b>Bursar</b>	Mr Andrew Stevenson	Ext 201, 01823 275715 / 07388 949273
<b>HR Manager</b>	Mrs Emily Turner	Ext 255 / 01823 340904
<b>The Incident Secretary</b>	Mrs Sally Murray	Ext 269 / 01823 340846
<b>Chair of the Governors</b>	Mr Mark Edwards	01823 340885
<b>Solicitors</b>	Farrer & Co 66 Lincoln's Inn Fields London WC2A 3LH	020 3375 7000
<b>Insurers</b>	QBE Insurance (Europe) Limited & AXA Insurance UK plc C/O Hettle Andrews & Associates Ltd Eleven Brindley Place Birmingham B1 2LP	Office: 0121 423 6200/6213

## 6. Preparation for a critical incident

6.1 In accordance with School practice, an up-to-date list of contact telephone numbers and addresses should be held centrally and securely on the School's computer system and in a readily accessible format.

6.2 The Head Teacher will retain an up to date copy of the list of contacts and this policy at home in a secure format such that these may be obtained in the event of an incident outside of School hours.

## 7. Emergency procedure in the event of a Critical Incident

7.1 In the event of a Critical Incident staff should:

7.1.1 assess the nature and extent of the Critical Incident;

7.1.2 take immediate action to safeguard yourself and anyone else affected;

7.1.3 remain calm;

7.1.4 summon emergency assistance and / or medical assistance (if required); and

7.1.5 contact the CIM or another member of the CIMT as soon as possible.

8. Managing the incident

8.1 The CIM will determine whether the Critical Incident requires a meeting of the full CIMT, and if not will call upon key members of the CIMT, as required.

8.2 Once established, the CIMT will take charge of the Critical Incident.

8.3 The CIMT will be assembled as soon as reasonably practicable in the Critical Incident Operations Room as follows:

<b>On-site operations room</b>	Pastoral Office 01823 340846
<b>Off-site operations room</b>	Channon House 01823 284234

8.4 The CIMT will obtain accurate information about the Critical Incident as soon as possible and will seek to establish:

8.4.1 the nature of the incident;

8.4.2 when, where and how the incident occurred;

8.4.3 who has been affected and who might be affected;

8.4.4 the extent of casualties or damage caused; and

8.4.5 the involvement of third parties including emergency services, regulators etc.

8.5 The CIMT will:

8.5.1 assess ongoing risks and take immediate steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of pupils, staff or anyone else affected by the Critical Incident;

8.5.2 make adequate arrangements to liaise with the emergency services, regulators, investigators and outside agencies, as required;

8.5.3 ensure that proper consideration is given to the disclosure of School documents to external sources and, if so authorised, ensure that copies of the latest versions of any such documents are provided and that separate copies of any disclosed documents are retained;

8.5.4 ensure that the emergency services are provided with up to date information including site plans, asbestos registers, chemical storage areas etc;

8.5.5 take immediate steps to minimise disruption, in so far as is possible, to the School, pupils, staff members, parents or anyone else affected by the Critical Incident;

8.5.6 brief the Governing Body and keep them informed of progress;

8.5.7 provide information to and arrange support for and welfare assistance to pupils, staff, or anyone affected by the Critical Incident, to include follow up support as appropriate;

- 8.5.8 make adequate arrangements to liaise with parents, relatives or anyone else affected by the Critical Incident;
  - 8.5.9 ensure that the School acts in a lawful manner and take steps to protect and preserve its legal position and where necessary seek legal advice from the School's solicitors;
  - 8.5.10 contact the School's insurers where necessary, obtain confirmation of cover and obtain their approval / agreement to proposed actions;
  - 8.5.11 ensure that adverse publicity is minimised and that all external enquiries are handled by the Communications Officer or other nominated personnel;
  - 8.5.12 make adequate arrangements to communicate with and where necessary provide a controlled response to the press and media;
  - 8.5.13 ensure that all site-evacuation and health and safety procedures have been followed, if appropriate;
  - 8.5.14 ensure that the School premises and property are secure following the Critical Incident; and
  - 8.5.15 activate contingency plans and / or interim measures in order to safeguard continuity of educational provision, where possible.
9. Communicating with the media
- 9.1 Under no circumstances should staff (other than the Communications Officer or other nominated personnel) make any comment to the media. For more information regarding handling the media see Appendix 1.
  - 9.2 All requests for information from the media should be referred to the Communications Officer or other nominated personnel immediately.
  - 9.3 The Communications Officer will seek advice from the School's solicitors and / or insurers and / or media / PR advisors in order to determine an appropriate strategy for dealing with the media, which may including preparing a suitable press statements, if so advised.
  - 9.4 Depending on the nature of an incident, the School may have to seek the approval and / or agreement of the police or other statutory agencies before releasing statements in which case the Communications Officer or other nominated personnel will liaise with the police and / or other agencies before doing so.
  - 9.5 The School will also seek advice regarding the form and content of communications with parents, pupils, staff and others.
  - 9.6 The School will set up appropriate media alerts and monitoring.
10. Reporting and record keeping
- 10.1 The CIMT will be responsible for ensuring that the School complies with its reporting and record keeping obligations in relation to the Critical Incident.
  - 10.2 **Statutory reporting obligations:**



### 10.2.1 Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

- (a) The School is legally required under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/1471) (**RIDDOR**) to report the following to the HSE:
- (i) **Accidents involving staff**
    - (A) work related accidents resulting in death or 'specified' injury (including as a result of physical violence) must be reported immediately (major injury examples: any loss of consciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia; amputation); or
    - (B) work related accidents which prevent the injured person from continuing with his / her normal work for more than seven days; or
    - (C) cases of work related diseases that a doctor notifies the School of (for example: certain poisonings; lung diseases; infections such as tuberculosis or hepatitis; occupational cancer); or
    - (D) certain dangerous occurrences or near misses - reportable examples: bursting of closed pipes; electrical short circuit causing fire; accidental release of any substance that may cause injury to health).
  - (ii) **Accidents involving pupils or visitors**
    - (A) accidents where the person is killed or is taken from the site of the accident to hospital and where the accident arises out of or in connection with:
      - (1) any school activity (on or off the premises);
      - (2) the way a school activity has been organised or managed (e.g. the supervision of a field trip);
      - (3) equipment, machinery or substances; or
      - (4) the design or condition of the premises.
  - (iii) More information on how and what to report to the HSE, can be found in *Incident reporting in schools (accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences): guidance for employers* (EDIS1 (revision 3)) and at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/resources.htm>.
  - (iv) It is also possible to report online via the following link: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm>.

### 10.2.2 Notifiable Diseases

If anyone at the School is known or suspected to be suffering from disease which is classified as a notifiable disease, and / or in the opinion of a registered medical practitioner has an infection and / or is contaminated in a

manner which could present significant harm to human health (as set out in the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/659)), the CIMT should ensure that a report is made by the proper officer at the relevant local authority. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>.

### 10.2.3 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- (a) The School will notify local child protection agencies of any serious accident or injury to, or the death of, any child while in their care and must act on any advice from those agencies.
- (b) Registered Providers only must notify Ofsted of any serious accident or injury to, or the death of, any child whilst in their care and of the action taken. Notification must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident occurring.
- (c) Registered providers must notify Ofsted of any food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on the premises. Notification must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident.
- (d) The CIMT will also consider whether the School is required to report the Critical Incident to any other regulatory body or organisation, such as the Charity Commission.
- (e) If the CIMT has any doubt about when or how to report a Critical Incident, or whether or not it should be reported, the School's solicitors should be contacted for further advice.

## 10.3 Record keeping

10.3.1 Following a Critical Incident, the School will take all reasonable steps to collect and preserve relevant evidence and documentation.

10.3.2 The School will not keep evidence and documentation containing personal information, which has been collated as a result of a Critical Incident for any longer than is reasonably necessary in compliance with the School's Data Protection Act 1998 obligations.

10.3.3 Where there is a risk of litigation, enforcement action or other proceedings, against or on behalf of the School, documents (which include electronic documents) will be retained for at least six years unless:

- (a) the Critical Incident involved a pupil or anyone else who was under the age of 18 at the time of the incident, in which case documentation will be retained at least until that person's 24th birthday; or
- (b) the Critical Incident may have resulted in exposure to a substance which may be hazardous to health, such as asbestos, and / or there is a risk that any person may develop an occupational disease or illness or work-related medical condition, in which case records should be retained for a minimum of 40 years.

## 11. Internal investigations

- 11.1 An appropriate member of the CIMT will be nominated to investigate the Critical Incident if the CIMT consider that an investigation is necessary.
- 11.2 Such investigations may be required in order to discover the immediate and / or root causes of a Critical Incident to prevent a recurrence, to discipline employees or pupils or to brief lawyers for the purpose of obtaining legal advice or to aid litigation.
- 11.3 Where appropriate, the CIMT will seek legal advice from the School's solicitors before commencing an internal investigation.
- 11.4 The scope of an internal investigation may be restricted to fact-finding and may not make any finding of fault or allocation of blame.
- 11.5 The CIMT will not sanction any internal investigation which may prejudice the investigations of outside agencies.
- 11.6 No admission of liability on the School's behalf should be made without legal advice and / or prior agreement from the School's insurers.

## 12. Follow-up and review and monitoring

- 12.1 Where possible, the School will make all necessary arrangements to ensure the continuing provision of education for pupils.
- 12.2 The School will also consider arrangements for support and follow-up for staff and pupils who have been affected by Critical Incident(s), such as counselling.
- 12.3 Following a Critical Incident, this policy, and other triggered policies and procedures and / or relevant risk assessments will be reviewed.
- 12.4 In any event, this policy will be regularly reviewed and records of relevant risk assessments and accidents will be regularly monitored by the Head or another senior member of the management team, and updated as necessary.

## 13. Linked policies

- 13.1 The School has policies covering a range of foreseeable major incidents or crises which should be read in conjunction with this policy including policies covering:
- risk assessment
  - safeguarding / child protection
  - complaints
  - educational visits
  - fire policy and procedures
  - health and safety.
  - lockdown procedure

<b>Effective date of the policy</b>	31st August 2017
<b>CLG Responsible Member</b>	Andrew Free, Deputy Head

<b>Authorised by</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Signed</b>	Mark Edwards, <b>Chair of Governors</b>
<b>Date</b>	31st August 2017

## **Appendix 1** Bereavement policy & Procedure

At Queen's College our aim is to ensure that all students have access to a happy, challenging and safe learning environment. To achieve this we need to nurture a partnership with parents and students that is based upon openness, mutual respect and the highest expectations of all.

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 a time of death or dying.

### Rationale

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.

Within our school community there will almost always be some children who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope not to encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these challenging situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

### Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement

To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.

To identify key staff within school and the Local Authority, and clarify the pathway of support.

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm ( [http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b\\_section2](http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2) ). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

### **The role of the Governing Body**

To approve policy and ensure its implementation as an active document. To be reviewed every three years. This includes:

Reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.

Utilising the expertise within the school and sharing responsibilities.

The role of the head teacher.

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the governing body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies.

The Head teacher will:

Monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.

Respond to media enquiries.

Keep the governing body fully informed.

Be first point of contact for family/child concerned.

Head teacher: Dr Lorraine Earps

The role of the Local Authority

To advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways and help with the identification of more complex grief.

The role of pastoral staff (including for example spiritual advisors, school counsellors and house parents).

To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.

NB: It is important that all staff feel confident in delivering support for pupils, supporting each other and implementing this policy. To this end it is desirable that the whole school staff have some awareness of bereavement through a whole school training if possible.

Establishing and co-ordinating links with external agencies.

Cross-phase liaison with other primary or secondary schools.

Cross-phase liaison with external agencies

Educational Psychology Support – Taunton Sedgemoor and West Somerset – 01823 334475

Samaritans Step by Step: - 0808 168 2528 (School contacts Geoff Rickson & Jimmy Beale)

[Samaritans Step by Step Support booklet](#)

### **Procedures:**

Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

Contact Samaritans Step by Step team 0808 1682528 [stepbystep@samaritans.org](mailto:stepbystep@samaritans.org)

### **Samaritans Step by Step Support Booklet**

Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

Pupils should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision should be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole school approach or if only certain groups of pupils need to be informed.

A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.

The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.

In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.

Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher

School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new pupils. To this end it is important to have effective communication with 'feeder' schools.

NB: Many of the guidelines in this policy are only appropriate when the school community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a pupil or another staff member.

Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a pupil experiencing the death of a parent. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual pupil should still be given careful consideration.

If a child has been bereaved it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss. Talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.

Effective date of the policy	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2018
CLG Responsible Member	Andrew Free, Deputy Head

Authorised by	Board of Governors
Signed	Mark Edwards, Chair of Governors
Date	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2017



## **Appendix 2** Dealing with media incidents

As set out in this policy only authorised staff should be in contact with or make comments to the media.

If you receive a request for comment from the media in any format, this should be referred immediately to the Director of Marketing, Admission and Development, who will then liaise with the CIMT / Senior Management Team and / or Governors and the School's solicitors / PR / media consultants and insurers.

Staff should simply acknowledge the query / request and advise that it will be passed to the appropriate person who will endeavour to respond in due course.

Staff should be aware that the media often impose short deadlines to respond so they should ensure that this information is passed to the appropriate person as a matter of urgency.

Under no circumstances should staff:

- feel pressurised or drawn into making comments or statements to the press
- any apology, admission of liability or facts or any offers on behalf of themselves or the School.

It will be for the CIMT / Senior Management Team and / or Governors to determine the School's strategy to deal with the incident and the School's response will vary depending on the nature of the incident. Usually the School will prepare a short statement, but only after having taken advice and / or obtained prior agreement from the School's insurers.

Samaritans Press team contact details:-

07943 809162 (Including out of hours)

[Samaritans Media Centre Website](#)

Staff should be aware that any breach of this policy could result in the School taking disciplinary action against them.

## Appendix 3 Supporting a bereaved pupil – guidance for all staff

### INFORMATION SHEET

**We are often at a loss to know what to say to a child or young person who has been bereaved and what we can do to help them. The following are brief guidelines on how to offer support.**

**Check out the facts** and familiarise yourself with the circumstances surrounding the death. The Head Teacher will communicate with the family and make sure that staff are informed of the family's wishes.

**Acknowledge what has happened** and do not be afraid to use the word "death" "I was very sorry to hear of the death of your....." If you find words difficult you can say a lot with just a touch.

**Children and young people need honesty.** Although sometimes difficult, it is better to answer awkward questions truthfully.

**Be prepared to listen,** again and again and again.

**Allow them to express emotion** and feelings and do not be afraid to share your own feelings of sadness.

**Do talk about the dead person** and share any memories. The bereaved child may well need to do this. Ignoring the dead person is a denial that they ever existed.

**Recognise the full tragedy.** Do not try to comfort with comments such as "at least it is not as bad as....." You might think this is helpful, it is not.

**Reassure them that they are not responsible.** It is very common for children and young people to feel that in some way they caused the death.

**Give bereaved pupil's time.** It may be many months before they can fully cope with the pressures of school work. Remember that they will be grieving for life and the loss will always be with them.

**Don't assume that a lack of reaction means that they do not care.** Initially, the full reality may not have sunk in. Young people can feel that they have to be seen to be coping as a sign of maturity.

**Try not to judge,** grief is a very personal experience, every child and young person will do it their way.

Support Ideas and Resources

#### Time Out Cards

The pupil is given permission to leave the class when beginning to feel out of control or just to get some "personal space" when upset. A card giving permission is carried in the pocket and the pupil may leave the room without having to ask. It is important that staff are made aware of the situation to avoid embarrassing scenes for either pupil or teacher. It is essential that the pupil does not just wander around the school but goes to a designated place and person for as long as required.

#### Pocket Comforter

A pupil can discretely carry in their pocket a soft piece of fabric or a pebble or stone. Holding onto something solid such as a smooth pebble can help a pupil to remain grounded and in control if

upset. Equally, touching a soft piece of garment that belonged to the dead person can provide a comforting memory.

### **Secret Diary**

One way to communicate with a bereaved child who finds it difficult to verbalise feelings is by using a notebook. The pupil just leaves it on the teacher's desk having written or drawn whatever they wish. The teacher responds in the diary and either discretely returns it to the pupil or just leaves it to be picked up from the desk again.

### **Happy/Sad faces**

The bereaved pupil has a sheet of paper/paper plate or even a stone with two drawings of faces on either side, one happy, one sad. The pupil shows the side that reflects how they are feeling on a particular day. This gives the teacher an idea of how they are and therefore what approach to use.

### **I Can...You Can...**

A series of four postcards for bereaved children and young people with ideas for how others can help them. Titles include TO MY TEACHER.....what you can do

Available from The Childhood Bereavement Network Tel: 020 7843 6309.

### **Workbooks**

See "Resources for Staff" factsheet for workbooks to use as a support tool and communication aid with bereaved pupils.

## Appendix 4 Looking after yourself

Being alongside anyone experiencing a loss is emotionally draining, but supporting a bereaved child, particularly so. The need for support is not an inability to cope or of professional incompetence but a recognition that everyone needs help to carry out this demanding role. Below are some ideas for ways to look after yourself.

### Share Feelings

Use friends and colleagues to talk about how you are feeling and share experiences. Just knowing that others are affected can help you to feel less alone and more able to care. Informal peer support in the staffroom can be a welcome opportunity to talk through issues and concerns and reduce feelings of inadequacy by jointly talking through helping strategies.

### Anticipate that you may Experience an Emotional Reaction

It is perfectly normal and OK to be emotionally affected. However, recognise that in order to help others, you need to feel reasonably strong yourself. You may become aware of previous losses in your own life that have resurfaced. If it all feels too close to home, do not be afraid to say so. This is not a sign of weakness but merely recognising that we all have our limits. .

### Professional Boundaries

When working in a school environment, it is very easy to let the carer in us take over and forget our professional boundaries. Getting over involved is not helpful to either yourself or the bereaved child or adult. Remember that you cannot carry their grief for them, but you can share their journey by being there and being aware.

### Have Information on Resources and Organisations

Having contact details of bereavement organisations will enable you to feel that you have done something practical to support a grieving family. You will be helping by putting them in touch with people better able to offer the support they need.

### Help Others

If you become aware that a colleague is stressed or affected by a death in your school community, or know that they have experienced a bereavement themselves, try to find the time to ask how they are.

**Spoil Yourself** Make time to do something just for you, or give yourself a treat. Physical exercise is a great stress buster. S

Factors that can contribute to overload.

Supporting bereaved children is emotionally demanding. In a study by Brown (1993), teachers from five schools cited the following factors as contributing to their stress.

- Witnessing pain and distress experienced by the families.
- Feeling unskilled in dealing with emotional responses.
- Physical exhaustion as a result of emotional trauma.
- Poor communication between themselves and families or other carers.

Brown also comments on the tensions that can arise in a school setting between personal needs and the professional role. Distancing oneself protects but may be perceived as not helpful to the bereaved individual. Being over involved can lead to attachments that are inappropriate or impossible to sustain.

It might help to keep in mind:

It does not help to offer something that you cannot deliver. No matter how well meant or strong the desire to take the pain away, always try to be realistic with the amount of support that you can give. It is much better to offer something small but constant rather than a grand gesture that is going to be difficult to deliver. Providing a listening ear once a week and sticking to it is more meaningful than the offer of help anytime when inevitably that cannot be achieved within a busy school environment. Other demands will get in the way and you will feel stressed over breaking the arrangement.

You do not need to be an expert to provide effective help.

Many of us feel inadequate and out of our depth when faced with adults or children experiencing deep sadness or trauma. Being alongside hurting children can remind us of our own vulnerability and mortality. Most teachers and school staff are caring individuals who naturally have the characteristics required to support bereaved children. It is more about being there for them whilst in school and building a relationship with them in your classroom, than being a bereavement professional.

Try to recognise when you are running on empty. Working in the education profession is very much about giving in terms of time and energy, supporting a bereaved pupil may compound this, resulting in very depleted resources. It is hardest to ask for help when we most need it as to do so requires energy and strength. Some of the signs include feeling physically exhausted and overworked, an inability to delegate and generally not on top of things. Remind yourself that doing a "good enough" job is perfectly OK.