



The Gateway Primary Academy

Bereavement Policy

October 2024

Written by: Mr J Cassem

Approved by governors:

To be reviewed: October 2026

Introduction

At the heart of The Gateway, nurturing and supporting all members of our school community is key to our ethos. We recognise that we must have a clear plan in place to support any child experiencing loss. With 1 in 29 pupils aged five to sixteen-years old experiencing bereavement of a parent or sibling it is important that we have a framework laid out. If this sad loss occurs we want to be able to immediately support this member of our school community, sensitively and effectively during this difficult time. We recognise that every bereavement is unique, and that any guidelines we have, will need to take account of individual circumstances and the wishes of those most closely involved.

We have suitably trained staff across The Gateway who understand the complexities surrounding a death of a loved one and can help support families at times of bereavement to ensure that the school does what it can to best meet the needs of the bereaved.

Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a framework for how the school will respond compassionately to a death of a staff member, pupil or pupil's family member in our school community.
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and members of staff experiencing bereavement.
- Enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement
- Provide information on additional training, support and resources staff can access for support.
- Create a bereavement-aware culture within the community.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 The headteacher

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The headteacher will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased.
- Communicate details of a death to staff as set out in this policy in a timely fashion and where possible in person.
- Organise the communication of the news of a death to pupils in line with family's wishes and in a manner appropriate to the age of the pupils, for example: in small groups with a familiar adult.
- Use the letter based on Child Bereavement's UK template (Appendix 1) to parents to share the school's support.
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested.
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement.
- Ensure the class team are supported when working with the returning pupil/staff member and that the child has a safe place and time to grief.
- Liaise with the class team to monitor the child/staff member and signpost to additional support if needed.
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.
- Consult with staff and pupils before removing any temporary tribute, giving notice to prepare them beforehand.

If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a Step-by-Step programme to support schools which will guide the school's response.

2.2 Pastoral support staff

The pastoral support team (deputy headteacher, SENCo, class teacher, class based teaching assistants) has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant - for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff and provide a 'listening ear' and time to talk.
- Give children a sense of 'normality', continuity and the opportunity to be a child when returning to school in a supportive, safe environment.
- Be flexible when responding to the needs of the child.
- Ensure good communication with home and support and discussion of resources school can provide to support their child during this difficult time.
- Signpost to external agencies who may be able to provide additional support if needed.

- Monitor how the child is managing their feelings in school and provide sensitive, timely feedback to Mr Cassem, who will share this with parents.
- Ensure that the family's wishes for who is told are honored e.g. close friends, everyone or no one (if this is possible).
- Provide support through stories and discussion to help the child understand what has happened.
- Ensure that information is passed on at the end of the school year, moving to secondary school and any teacher changes.
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages. *The location for a temporary tribute/book of condolence needs to be safe, accessible and ideally where pupils can be supervised. Family will be offered the opportunity to visit, if they wish to, or photographs will be taken to share with the family at a later time.*
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days

2.3 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy, and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them, for example through discussions at governing body meetings and through the head teacher's reports.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing, for example through meetings between the Chair of Governors and the head teacher.
- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately.

3. Provision for supporting staff who support the bereaved

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

Staff will receive the following support:

- Support from Mr Cassem following his bereavement and DSL training.
- Support from the school mental health champions (Miss Warner and Mrs Gillard)
- Access to external agencies if needed e.g. the teacher support network or MIND
- Access to resources from Child Bereavement UK (see Appendix 4 for phone numbers and additional information on further training and guidance)

4. Immediate actions following a death

After the news of a death of a member of the school community, it will be key to establish the family's wishes at this time as some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family can be consulted. The Gateway will help to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community.

When talking about the bereavement we will follow the guidance from Child Bereavement UK:

- Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give
- Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.
- If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred.
- If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct if known. Where appropriate, remind pupils of their responsibility and the potential impact of them positing on social media.
- Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without eulogising them.
- Mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support.
- Acknowledge that not everyone will be feeling and that is OK.
- Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.
- A template letter will be used in Appendix A to be sent to parents.

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

We will not at any point make assumptions during this time and as much as practically possible Mr Cassem will consult with the family to find out what their wishes are. He will establish how the family wish the news to be shared with the school community. When relevant he will discuss whether or not staff members/pupils are welcome to attend the funeral.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

Mr Cassem will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and how the news is shared with pupils (see guidance above). He will signpost staff to additional support (see Appendix 4).

If the school is open, Mr Cassem will speak to staff individually. However, if the school is shut or it is out of hours he will use the staff messaging groups to arrange a virtual meeting or speak to staff individually on the telephone.

4.3 Sharing the news with pupils

After discussions with parents, Mr Cassem will organise how the news is shared with pupils, for example as a whole class, individual pupils or in small groups. He will signpost the pupils to additional support,

for example speaking to the class based adults or himself or Miss Warner. The school will ensure that pupils are informed in a timely way to avoid them hearing rumours and speculation.

If school is closed, consideration will be made to the most appropriate method to inform pupils in line with the parents wishes, for example: telephone calls to the pupil's close friends.

4.4 Informing parents/carers

Mr Cassem will ensure parents are informed in a timely fashion via parent mail. The letter will explain steps that have been taken during the day to inform pupils of the death, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

4.5 Responding to specific causes of death

The Gateway recognises that some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation. For example if:

- The death is the result of suicide we will refer to Samaritans [step-by-step programme](#) which is designed to support schools in this instance.
- The death is due to homicide or family violence the school will refer to Child Bereavement UK's guide to 'Supporting children and young people bereaved by murder or manslaughter', which you can find at the bottom of [this page](#).
- If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

4.6 Responding to the media

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- Mr Cassem, with support from the governors, will respond sensitively and in line with the family's wishes to requests from the media.
- Any other staff members from The Gateway will not respond to requests from the media and should immediately inform Mr Cassem if they have been contacted.

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

Following the death within the school community, those closely affected will be monitored and support will be given with the recognition that grief can have long-lasting impacts.

To remember the member of the school community we may create a school memorial, assembly or other tribute in line with the family's wishes. A more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork or a bench) may be appropriate, but in future the removal, relocation or replacement will need to be managed sensitively. Religious/cultural considerations will be made when planning memorials.

5.1 Support for pupils and staff

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

Support for pupils

- An understanding, nurturing and supportive approach.
- Flexibility when they return to school.

- A designated safe, secure area to have quiet, reflective time.
- The opportunity to return to the 'normality' of school when they are ready with support.
- Access to external agencies, if needed to support them e.g. Project Salus.

Support for staff

- Support from Mr Cassem, Miss Warner, Mrs Gillard and Mrs Powell as mental health champions.
- Acknowledgement from school that they are going through a difficult time and time to grief.
- Flexibility and understanding when they return to work.
- A back to work interview to establish how the school can best support them during this time.

5.2 Timetables

All pupils will react to bereavement in individual ways, and some may benefit from an altered/reduced timetable during this time while they manage their feelings. We will work alongside the parents to ensure we support the child during the most effective way during this time.

5.3 Funerals

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- Staff must put their request in writing to attend the funeral and send this to the chair of governors and Mr Cassem. Considerations to cover will be made when deciding whether or not permission will be granted.
- If a number of staff wish to attend the funeral, the school may on this occasion close.

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so:

- Their parents must inform the school in writing in a timely fashion that their child will be absent from school that day.

6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

6.1 Reintegration meeting

Mr Cassem will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Acknowledge the death.
- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return.

- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'. Discuss how they will let the adults in their class know this is the case.
- Consider whether to provide 'time-out' activities - journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc.
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant).
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support.
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability.

6.2 Ongoing support

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping.
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult and will keep a bereavement calendar to provide additional support during this time.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will provide personalised behaviour charts to support them and focus on their positive achievements.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

7.1 Reintegration meeting

Mr Cassem will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant).
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member.

7.2 Ongoing support

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person. This may include: access to outside agencies, a buddy system in school or a flexible approach to their working hours initially.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by Mr Cassem (headteacher). At every review, it will be approved by full governing body.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy and procedures
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: Letter to parents following bereavement of a child – based on letter from Child Bereavement UK

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of <name> death. There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

As a school community, we will miss <name> very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends, classmates and teachers. <Name> was a <valued/cherished/high-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan <Name's> funeral, please let us know.

We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With sympathy,

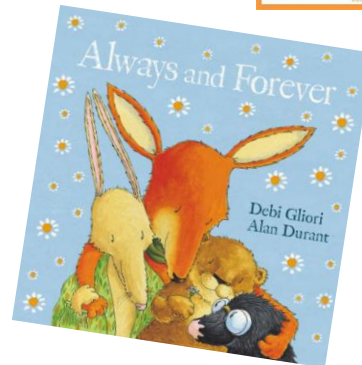
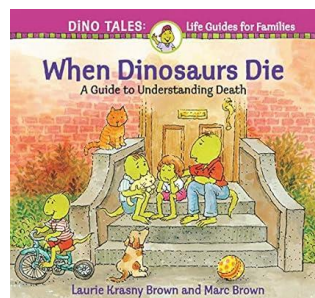
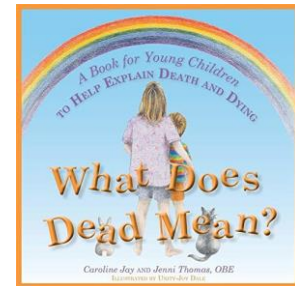
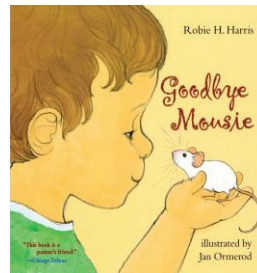
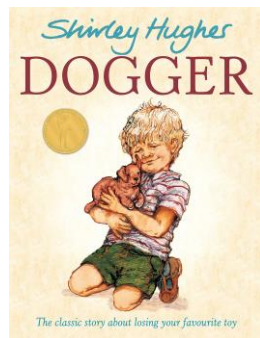
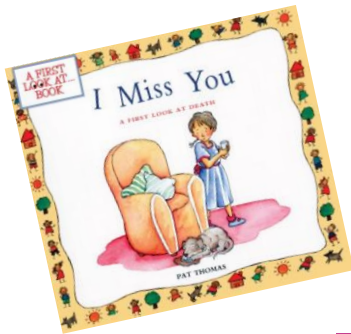
Appendix 2: useful contacts

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us <i>A dedicated area for young people, created by bereaved young people.</i> <i>The following information sheets on Child Bereavement UK's website can be downloaded for free:</i> <i>Supporting bereaved children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Difficulties</i> <i>Supporting bereaved children and young people with additional needs through grief</i> <i>Viewing a body with a child and explaining, burials and cremation to children</i> <i>Further information on SEND can be found on their online resource for schools called Supporting a bereaved pupil - see their website for more information.</i>
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/ <i>Videos, guidance and stories to support.</i>
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us www.hopeagain.org.uk <i>A website run by CRUSE Bereavement Care</i>
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393

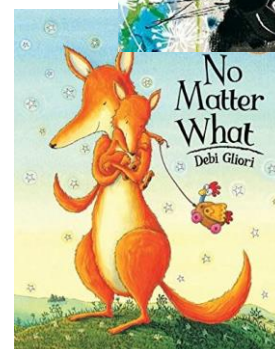
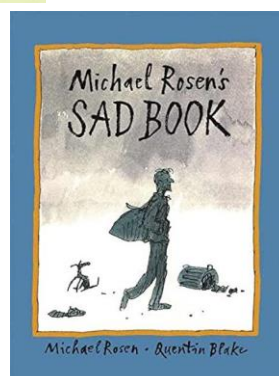
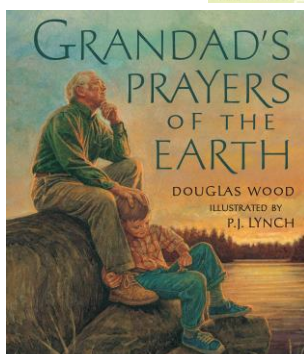
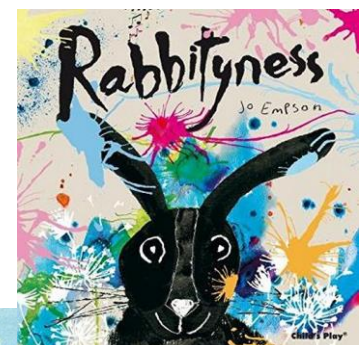
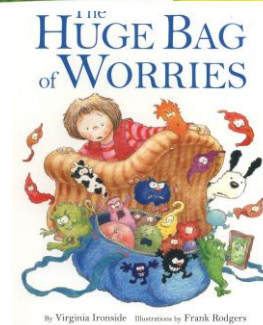
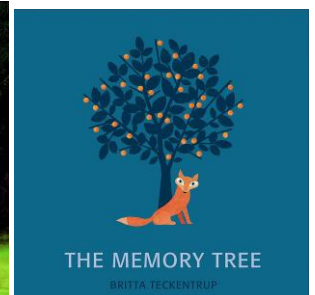
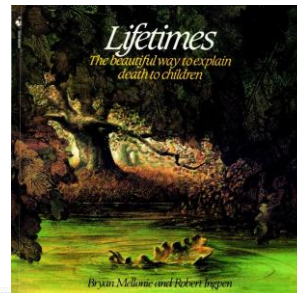
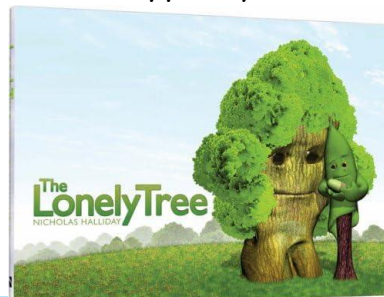
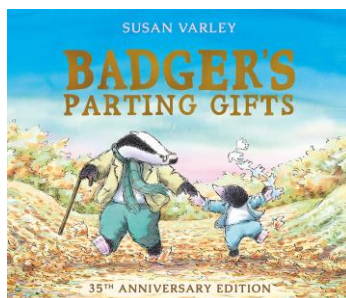
ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
	Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
Winston's Wish	www.winstonswish.org.uk Videos, guidance and stories/case studio
FREE APP: Grief: Support for Young People Children Bereavement UK	Available from the Apple App Store and Google Play. Designed by bereaved young people for young people. Can also be used by friends, parents and professionals supporting bereaved young people.

Appendix 3: Useful Books for discussing bereavement with children

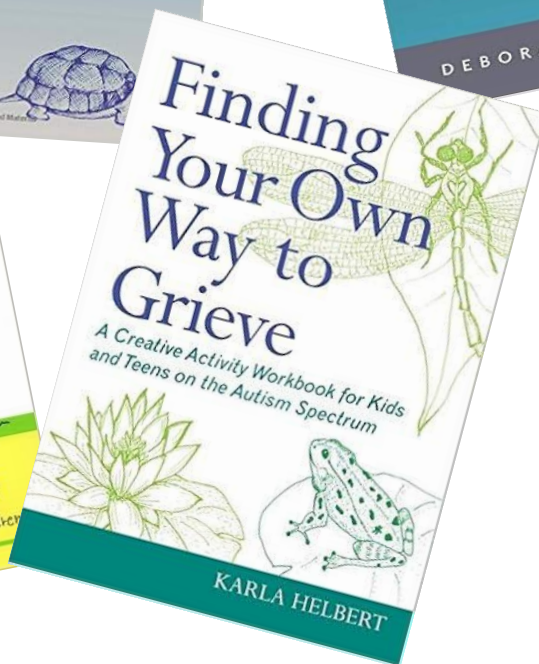
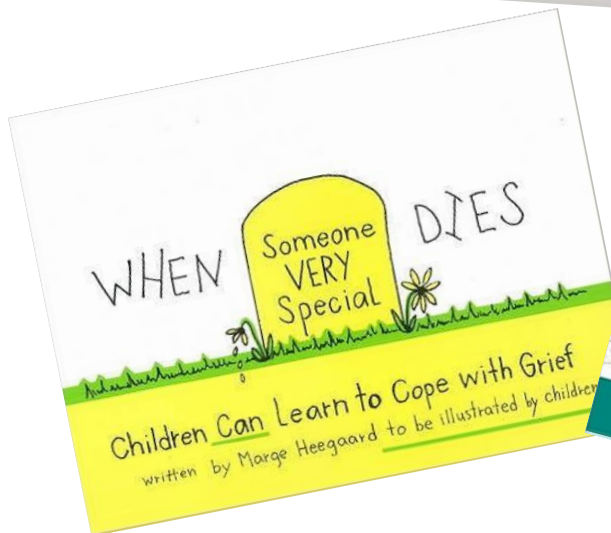
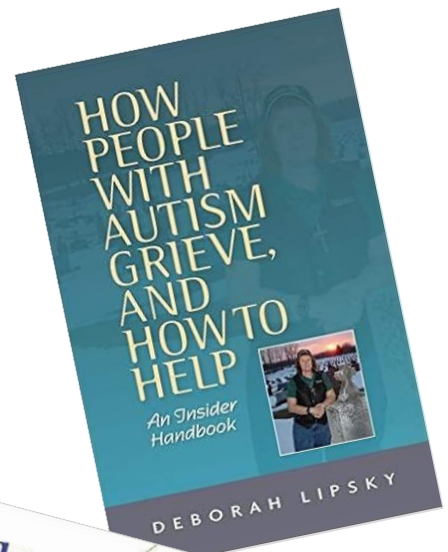
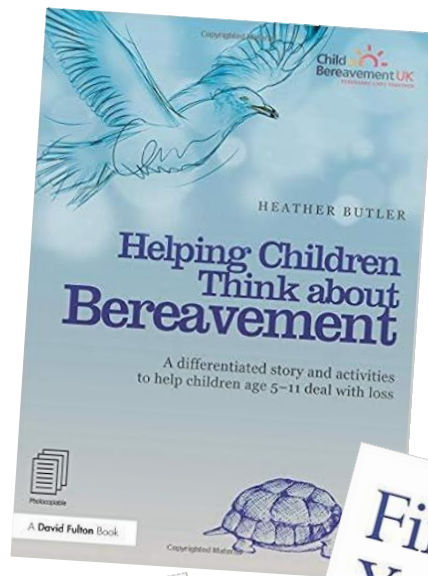
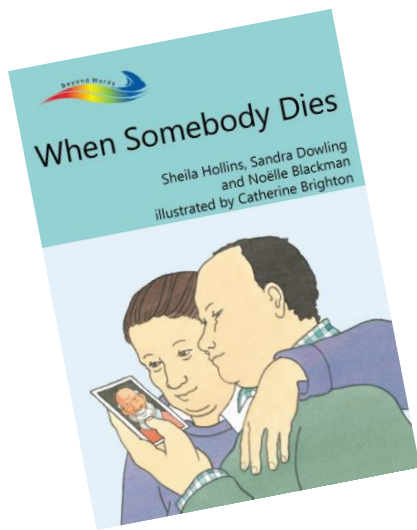
Books to support your child with loss in EYFS



Books to support your child with loss in KS1/2



Books to support children with SEND dealing with bereavement



Appendix 4: Resources for Staff to use in planning and supporting pupils

For further training and support, staff members are encouraged to complete the following modules:

Supporting a bereaved pupil

Managing a sudden death in the school community

These units were created in collaboration with the London Grid for Learning to offer information and guidance for education professionals (www.childbereavementuk.org)

Use of the Elephant's Tea Party Resources produced by child bereavement UK

Log in details:

Email address: etp@childbereavementuk.org

Password: **Etp13579**

This is an activity workbook with lesson plans to help pupils to develop coping skills for loss and bereavement.

Activities for working with bereaved young people by Mark Denney in partnership with Child Bereavement UK

Activities developed and used while working with young people in the UK bereavement support services. Includes activity session plans with photocopiable resources.

Professional training and conferences run by Child Bereavement UK

If further support or guidance is needed with a specific issue, Mr Cassem as DSL may contact Child Bereavement UK on: 0800 02 888 40 (9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: support@childbereavementuk.org.