

Jennett's Park CE Primary

Bereavement Policy



Date reviewed	June 2024
Date of Next review	June 2027
Published	Yes
Website Status	Yes

Jennett’s Park CE Primary School Bereavement POLICY

Contents

Contents	2
0.Rationale:.....	4
1. Aims.....	5
This bereavement policy aims to:.....	5
2. Objectives	5
3. Roles and responsibilities	5
3.1 The role of the governing body.....	5
3.2The role of the head teacher	5
3.3 The role of the Local Authority	6
3.4 The role of Inclusion Team (including Designated safeguarding Lead, Family support worker, Educational Psychologist, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant and SENDCOs)	6
Bereavement and Critical Incidents: A sequence of response for schools / settings	7
4. Immediate actions following a death	8
4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family.....	8
4.2 Sharing the news with staff	8
4.3 Supporting staff who are supporting bereaved pupils	9
Talking about death and grieving.....	9
When they talk to bereaved children	9
4.4 Sharing the news with pupils.....	10
If the bereaved child is struggling to express themselves.....	10
4.5 Informing parents/carers	11
4.6 Responding to specific causes of death	11
4.7 Responding to the media	11
Child Bereavement UK together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL) :	11
5. Follow-up actions and support following a death	12
5.1 Support for pupils and staff	12
5.2 Timetables.....	12
5.3 Tributes and condolences	12
5.4 Funerals.....	13
6. Support for pupils returning to school after bereavement.....	13
6.1 Reintegration meeting.....	13
7. Support for staff returning to school after bereavement	14
7.1 Reintegration meeting.....	14
7.2 Ongoing support	14
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	14
Appendix 1 Training resources for schools	15
Child Bereavement UK together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL) :	15
The NHS.....	15
Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.....	15
Appendix 2 What can help?	16
Appendix 3 Children’s understanding of death at different ages	17
Appendix 4 The process of grief.....	18
Appendix 5 Suggested templates for letter to parents	20
Appendix 6 Sample letter to bereaved parents:.....	20
Appendix 8 Sample letter on death of a staff member:	21

The above, along with more dos and don'ts, can be found on Cruse Bereavement Care's website..... 22

 Recognise that grieving is different right now..... 22

 Provide a virtual space for staff to come together in grief..... 22

Take care of yourself..... 22

School Background:

Jennett's Park CE Primary School is openly inclusive Christian school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities. At Jennett's Park CE we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole-learner physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. We wish for children to flourish and achieve under God's Love.

We promise as a staff and community to try to serve the common good with our work as part of the Church of England.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills	To help grow resourceful , resilient and reflective children who are equipped with the skills , knowledge and tenacity empower themselves, their learning throughout their lives.
Educating for Hope and Aspiration	To inspire and enrich lives beyond current opportunities and experiences in order to open minds to the potential their future holds
Educating for Community and Living Well Together	To be a multi-cultural, inclusive community of individuals loved by God who feel valued and involved where we create qualities of character to enable people to flourish.
Educating for Dignity and Respect	That children might know how much that they are loved and valued by so that they might show dignity and respect for themselves and others by carefully and safely thinking through their actions.

Rationale:

Any death can cause ripples of long lasting impact to families. Children should be supported with a long term view as to the anguish the loss of a loved one can give to children and the impact it has on remoulding their world.

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. In this recent National Crisis more children have suffered bereavement than at any point in recent years.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not 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 sensitive 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 in the links at the end of this document.

1. Aims

This bereavement policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how our school will respond to a death in our school 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
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement
- 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

2. 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 Academy, 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). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The role of the governing body

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through link governor report to safeguarding focusing on bereavement, who might have regular catch-ups with the headteacher or pastoral team
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair, or bereavement link governor if relevant
- 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
- To adapt budget in light of strategic recommendations

3.2 The role of the head teacher

- 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 and to be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death
- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.

- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested
- Lead reintegration meetings for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff
- To keep the governing body / Trust fully informed.
- To reach out to local religious leaders for children in school and also if family would like

3.3 The role of the Local Authority

- To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

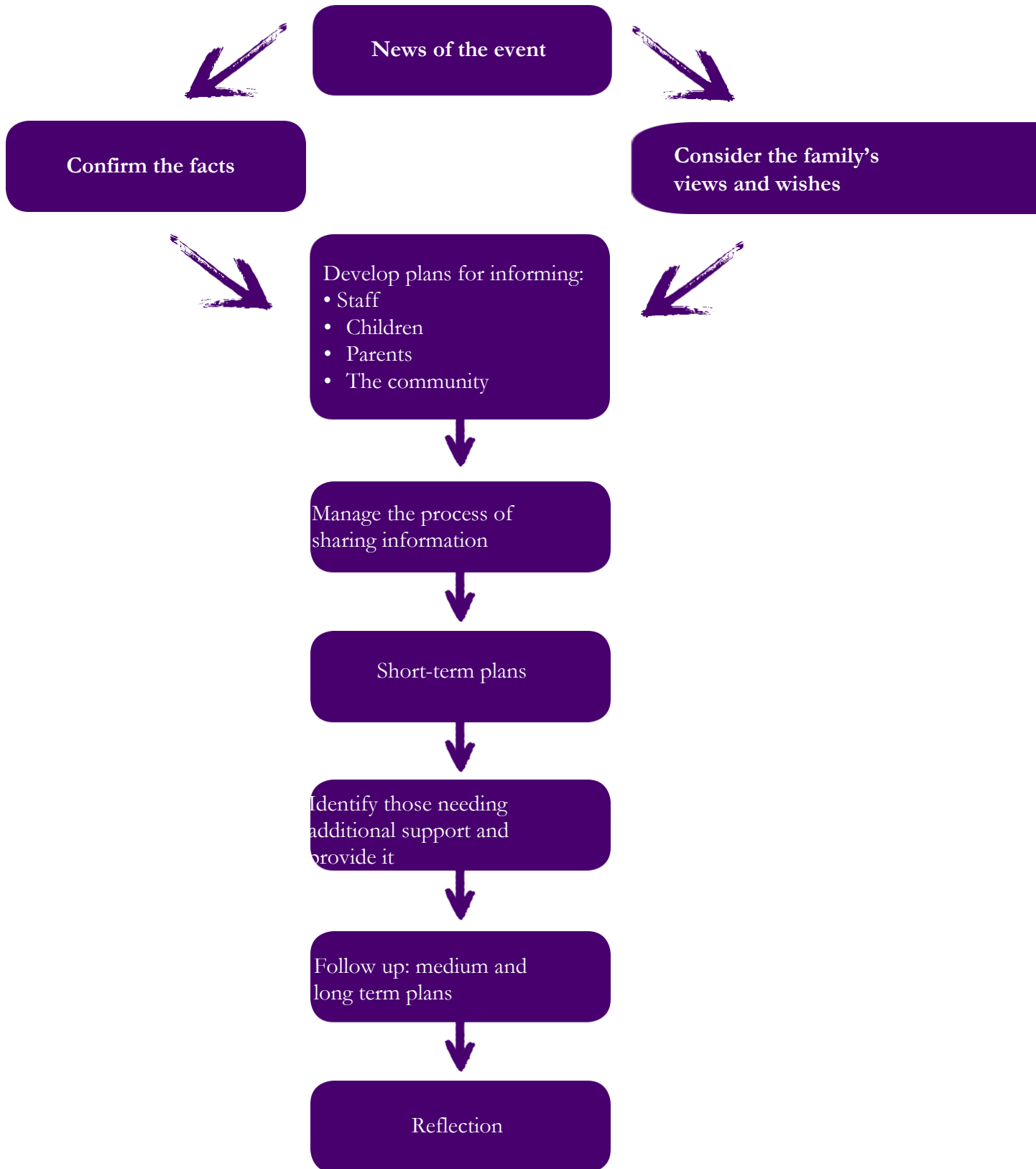
3.4 The role of Inclusion Team (including Designated safeguarding Lead, Family support worker, Educational Psychologist, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant and SENDCOs)

The Inclusion support team 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 Inclusion team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff
- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out
- Organise memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted)
- 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
- Provide additional support during significant transitions – for example, when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school
- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff

Bereavement and Critical Incidents: A sequence of response for schools / settings



4. Immediate actions following a death

4.1 Clarifying information and the wishes of the family

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

The school will immediately establish a line of communication with the family of the deceased, and agree with the family what information can be released about how the person died and what happened. (Via the Police Family Liaison Officer) The school will also consult with the family about what the school is doing and will respect the wishes of the family concerning any arrangements including involvement by the family. In the same way the school will respect the wishes of the family about involvement by the school in any arrangements being made by the family e.g. for the funeral.

Where the deceased or their family are from a minority or ethnic group, the school will ensure that staff understand and are sensitive to their cultural needs.

In the event of the death of a pupil or member of staff, the school will immediately inform the Trust who will also play a role to notify and alert the relevant staff to the death.-

There are associated details in the emergency plan as to contacting HR for pension and pay if the death is of a member of staff. Where the deceased is a teacher the school may also need to make arrangements for other staff to cover their classes, arrange for temporary or supply teachers, and for making a new appointment to the post.

News of a death will be confirmed if the family can't be immediately contacted by contacting next of kin down the contact tree, then police and NHS sources and finally to social care.

What will be communicated to the school community if news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made is to be kept very brief as undue panic or rumour mongering can cause huge distress.

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 supported by Emergency team members.

4.2 Sharing the news with staff

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.

Teaching staff will be notified as soon as possible. They may also need to be briefed about what the school is doing, take time to prepare themselves to handle questions from pupils and parents, and to monitor pupils for any signs of emotional trauma. Arrangements will also be made to notify ancillary staff such as nursery, admin, catering and cleaning staff etc at the appropriate time in an appropriate way.

Staff may themselves be affected by the bereavement, and the Headteacher will talk to them collectively and individually over the coming days/weeks/months, monitor them, and ensure they receive the necessary support if they are unable to cope e.g. bereavement counsellors

The Chair of Governors and governing body may also have a role in monitoring the Headteacher and staff for signs of stress.

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

All staff to have training on bereavement via national college once every 3 years as part of safeguarding cycle.

To ensure that staff will be informed promptly on remote times we will calling using staff emergency notification systems to bring staff together virtually if your school is closed for a staff meeting,

4.3 Supporting staff who are supporting bereaved pupils

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

Working with bereaved children is painful, and those staff members who step up to the plate will also need our support.

- **Don't let them go at it alone** – make sure more than one staff member is assigned to each bereaved child. Not only will this share the load, but it'll also ensure that all staff assigned to a child have someone to talk to without breaching confidentiality
- **Check in with them regularly** – be proactive, and be the one reaching out. Staff may feel guilty about asking for your time right now
- **Be prepared to step in** – tell them to step back if it becomes clear they're overwhelmed
- **Make bereavement training available** – many organisations offer training for school staff,

Talking about death and grieving

When they talk to bereaved children

- **Listen and validate** – children often don't recognise their feelings as grief. Let them know that whatever they're feeling is normal and okay
- **Acknowledge their fears** – children's fears, no matter how irrational, are real and we can't take them away. Just knowing that someone they trust is listening to them is helpful
- **Reassure, but only as much as you can do so honestly** – for example, a child whose family member has died from COVID-19 will quite rationally be afraid of other family members dying. It's unhelpful to try to calm a child's fears by saying that won't happen when it already has, and it can diminish the child's trust in you. Rather, acknowledge the possibility but counter with facts about how rare this is
- **Check their understanding** – children can be very literal, and what might seem obvious to us may not be so clear to them. As they talk to them, regularly check that they understand what you've said
- **Share your own feelings** – it's okay to let children know that staff are also sad and upset. It can be reassuring that what they're feeling is normal

DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be caring and compassionate • Offer your condolences • Let them know that work comes second at this time • Be conscious of diversity – don't assume that someone else shares your beliefs
DON'T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore the situation • Assume you know how the bereaved person feels • Say anything that minimises the loss, such as 'we all have to go sometime' or 'she had some good innings' • Make light of the bereavement, such as 'time heals all wounds' or 'you have to be strong now'

4.4 Sharing the news with pupils

It is important for the school to carefully manage the way the news is given to pupils, which will be in a controlled way. Time will be taken to plan how to break the news to pupils, what to say, and who will say it. Ideally this will be by the Headteacher at morning assembly followed up by class time in tutor groups.

Pupils are identified as being high risk to be affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.

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.

Pupils will need to be told what has happened and how everyone is feeling about it. It may also be appropriate to tell them why it happened, and younger pupils may need to be re-assured that it will not necessarily happen again, and it will not happen to them. It may be necessary to explain to pupils that the school is grieving/mourning the loss of the individual, what this means, how this makes us feel, that this is a natural process we all go through, what will be happening in school because of this, and how they can participate.

It may be important for pupils, and especially younger pupils, to then be with the teachers and staff who they are familiar with so that they can feel safe to talk and share about how they feel about what has happened. This follow-up time is important to enable teachers to provide reassurance, answer individual questions and provide guidance to the class group about how they should be feeling, that it is alright to feel sad, or not to feel sad, and how to respond to what has happened.

Bereavement is a normal part of human experience and while it may be very sad, it is important not to over-play it, or make pupils feel traumatised or distressed.

Pupils may also need some practical way to focus how they feel about what has happened, and the school can provide ways to do this, e.g. writing cards, making floral tributes, planting a tree of remembrance, a plaque, a book of condolence, a book of remembrance, a special assembly, a memorial service etc. An appropriate quiet area could be set-aside in the school for pupils to come to talk to staff about what has happened.

The school will take advice from the Education Psychology Team when planning how to handle the pupils in this situation

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.

If the bereaved child is struggling to express themselves

Grief is overwhelming at any age, and children may struggle to express what they're going through. Staff can get the conversation started by:

- Sharing [Lost for words](#) – a free e-book of advice by grieving children for grieving children
- Sharing ['Thunks on death'](#) (about halfway down the page) – a set of cards designed to open discussion about death and grief
- Completing [memory books](#) (see under the heading 'Resources for children and young people')

4.5 Informing parents/carers

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 Headteacher in writing the letter to parents and carers to inform them about what has happened and concerning any arrangements that have been made, what additional support has been made available and where to go for more help and information. If the deceased is a member of staff, parents may need to know what arrangements the school is making to provide staff to cover their classes.

In addition the Headteacher and staff may need to make themselves available before/after school for parents and others to talk to. A follow up letter may be required to notify parents about subsequent events and arrangements e.g. special assembly, memorial service etc.

The wider school community will also need to be notified and involved in an appropriate way. They may also be able to provide useful support e.g. the PTA, extended school providers, early years providers, voluntary organisations, local churches, faith groups etc. and anyone who has links with the school. The school website and newsletter could also be used to carry the news.

4.6 Responding to specific causes of death

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation.

Three situations that will need a significant meeting of the emergency team to plan

- The death is the result of suicide (Samaritans provides a [step-by-step programme](#) to support schools if this happens)
- The death is due to homicide or family violence (Child Bereavement UK has a 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

4.7 Responding to the media

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

- The headteacher is responsible for responding to requests from the media after liaison with the emergency team as described in the emergency plan.
- Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to them.

Child Bereavement UK **together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL):**

[Managing a sudden death in the school community](#) – includes tips on managing social media and media relations

5. Follow-up actions and support following a death

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 will be made available in school from the pastoral care team, bereavement team, peer-to-peer support
- Pupils and staff will be signposted to external support, e.g. community mental health resources and bereavement charities

5.2 Timetables

- Any decision whether to adjust the timetable for some or even all pupils following a death will be made as a suggestion to the headteacher and planned with the inclusion team. The chair of governors will be informed.

5.3 Tributes and condolences

In cases of bereavement many people feel the need to express their feelings about what has happened, by sending cards, flowers, money or other items to the school, unless they are specifically told not to.

Each bereavement is personal but there should be time for the school community to come together to memorialise the deceased.

A physical memorial is often comforting eg a book of condolences or a temporary tribute. Dependent on need these can be in the school entrance hall, under the canopy or in entrance hall.

Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate

Cards could be put on a special pin board/display, forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance. They will not be thrown away because this might hurt the sender's feelings.

The school may need to designate a suitable place for people to put flowers where they are visible and can be perused. It may be appropriate to make them into a floral tribute, but ensure that flowers that may arrive later can also be included otherwise people may feel that their contributions have been rejected.

Pupils could help with displaying/arranging the flowers.

Remember flowers will quickly perish without water, and even with water flowers may wilt and become unattractive in time. But disposal of flowers may also be a contentious issue, and they will not be just thrown away.

The school may need to adopt an approach for this e.g. the flowers to be used at the funeral, or taken to the cemetery, or another appropriate location at an appropriate time. This may be an opportunity to discard any wilted stems, remake the floral tribute or make them into wreaths.

The small cards sent with the flowers may also contain written messages, and these could be forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance.

Items such as toys or photographs could also be forwarded to the family of the bereaved or included in a book of condolence or a book of remembrance.

Books of condolence or remembrance could be forwarded to the bereaved family at an appropriate time.

N.B. the family of the bereaved may not want to be bombarded with cards, flowers or other items, so the school will always ask first before forwarding these to the family.

A clear written record of money received and donors will be maintained by the school, and the money will be used for the purpose for which it was given. Money given for the family of the deceased will be passed on to them or donated to a charity instead if they prefer, and the school will respect their wishes.

In the case of multiple bereavements the school will carefully consider a policy on how such money will be distributed. The school will take specialist advice if it is considering setting up charitable trusts.

5.4 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 will be emailed to ask if they wish request leave to attend
- Considerations will be made in granting permission, e.g. availability of cover

If pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so. Pupils carers and parents should request leave to attend using normal leave of absence procedures

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

The headteacher 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:

- 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
- 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 pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed
- 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. We will hold a confidential bereavement team calendar.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will prioritise ELSA and FSW counselling sessions and any external professional sessions. We will closely monitor and create bespoke plans for each child in consultation with the family- led by the FSW as to how they wish them to be supported.
- 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

The headteacher 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:

- Internal and external sources of support include time to meet with FSW for bespoke counselling and outreach to our own counsellor.
- Other adjustments may be made, e.g. provisions for flexible working or reduced timetables

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Inclusion team. At every review, it will be approved by the governing board.

Appendix 1 Training resources for schools

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 • https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us • Supporting a bereaved pupil • Supporting pupils who've been affected by coronavirus • Supporting a bereaved child in an early years setting • Supporting a bereaved pupil in a primary school • Supporting a bereaved student in secondary school
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 08088 020 021 • https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/ • Bereavement support for schools • Talking to children about coronavirus • How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible • Supporting bereaved children with SEN
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline: 0808 808 1677 • https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us • Children and young people's physical responses to grief • Children and young people's emotional responses to grief •
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 • Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/
Child Bereavement UK together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL):	<p>Managing a sudden death in the school community – includes tips on managing social media and media relations</p>
The NHS	<p>Children and bereavement – includes lots of resources for parents and children, including helplines and tips for creating a memory box</p>
Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On My Mind is a resource for children to learn how to support their own mental health and wellbeing. It stresses the important of self-care

Appendix 2 What can help?

While every child and young person will respond slightly differently, there are things which you can do to help them to understand what has happened, process their own feelings and emotions and, in time, move through the grieving process.

- Be honest and open; explain why the person died at an age-appropriate level. Answer questions as truthfully as you can in a way the child can understand. It's okay not to have all the answers and to say that you don't know.
- Use clear language such as "dead" and "death" rather than what we may perceive as more comforting language such as "gone to sleep" or "loss". These phrases can be confusing for children and may cause them to believe that if someone is lost then they can be found, for example.
- Don't force your child to talk about what has happened but create an atmosphere where they know they can talk about their experience of the death and that you will listen to what they have to say. Reassure them if they blame themselves in any way, which can be common.
- Talk about the person who has died and share happy memories of them.
- Don't be afraid to express your own emotions and explain to your child that this is a normal part of the process when someone dies. However, don't expect them to look after you as much as you look after them.
- Reassure your child that it is okay for them to be upset too and help them to find ways of expressing difficult feelings which are not disruptive or destructive. Help them to understand that their behaviours may be as a result of feeling angry because they miss the person who has died and don't understand why it happened. Talking this through will help them to better understand their own emotions.
- Continue with established routines as much as possible, encouraging children to engage with their usual activities and interests so that some there is a sense of familiarity.
- Don't expect your child to grieve in exactly the same way that you do or that a sibling does.
- Reassure your child that it is still okay to laugh and have fun.
- As the death of a loved one can hugely impact a family routine and structure, you should prepare your child in advance for changes they may face.
- Help your child to say goodbye; include them in discussions about the funeral and allow them to make some choices in how they would like to take part. At the moment, when funerals are likely to be much more restricted, find alternative ways to help them say goodbye such as gathering photos, making a memory box, letting off balloons or planting some seeds.
- Allow yourself time to grieve so that you are best able to support your child.
- On the child's return to school, share information with their teacher so that they are aware of what they have experienced and how they have dealt with it. Returning to a different situation may trigger some feelings and emotions which you felt they had dealt with.

Appendix 3 Children's understanding of death at different ages

Children under 2 years of age

Babies and young children have no understanding of the concept of death yet, long before they are able to talk, babies are likely to react to upset and changes in their environment brought about by the absence of a significant person who responded to their needs for care and nourishment on a daily basis. They will also be impacted by the emotional withdrawal that may happen if a parent or main carer is bereaved.

Up to the age of 6 months, babies will experience a sense of abandonment and insecurity which may result in increased crying and disruption of sleep and feeding. From around the age of 8 months or so, babies begin to develop a 'mental image' of the person who has died and have a sense of 'missing them'. Babies at this age may cry more or become more withdrawn; they may lose interest in toys or food and, as they develop motor skills and language, may call out for or search for the person who has died. You can help by giving lots of reassurance, and by keeping to normal routines as much as possible.

Children aged 2 to 5 years

Young children are interested in the idea of death in birds and animals. They can begin to use the word 'dead' and develop an awareness that this is different to being alive. Children of this age do not understand abstract concepts like 'forever' and cannot grasp that death is permanent. Their limited understanding may lead to an apparent lack of reaction when told about a death, and they may ask many questions about where the person who has died is and when that person will come back. Children at this age expect the person to return.

Young children tend to interpret what they are told in a very literal and concrete way; therefore, it is important to avoid offering explanations of death such as 'lost', 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep' that may cause misunderstandings and confusion.

Provide honest answers to their questions but do not feel you have to tell them everything in detail or all at once. Information can be built on over time.

Children may have disrupted sleep, altered appetite, less interest in play and may become more anxious about separation even when being left with familiar adults. There may be regression in skills such as language or toilet training.

Children of primary school age

Between the ages of 5 and 7 years, children gradually begin to develop an understanding that death is permanent and irreversible and that the person who has died will not return. Children who have been bereaved when they were younger will have to re-process what has happened as they develop awareness of the finality of death.

Children's imagination and 'magical thinking' at this age can mean that some children may believe that their thoughts or actions caused the death, and they can feel guilty. Not being given sufficient information in age-appropriate language can lead them to 'make-up' and fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Children increasingly become aware that death is an inevitable part of life that happens to all living things. As a result, they can become anxious about their own, and others', health and safety.

Children at this age need honest answers to their questions that can be built on over time, and opportunities to express their feelings. They can need reassurance that they said or thought caused the death.

Teenagers

Adolescence is a time of great change and grief impacts on the developmental task of moving from dependence to independence. Young people are moving from familial ties to increased involvement with

peers. It can be difficult to ask for support while trying to demonstrate independence. Young people do not like to feel different to their peers in any way and being a bereaved young person can be extremely isolating. The support of peers with similar experiences can be very powerful.

Teenagers will have an adult understanding of the concept of death but often have their own beliefs and strongly held views, and may challenge the beliefs and explanations offered by others.

Some young people may respond to a death by becoming more withdrawn, some may ‘act out’ their distress while others cope with the awareness of their own mortality through risk-taking behaviour. Others may take on adult responsibilities and become ‘the carer’ for those around them. Keeping to the usual boundaries of acceptable behaviour can be reassuring for bereaved young people.

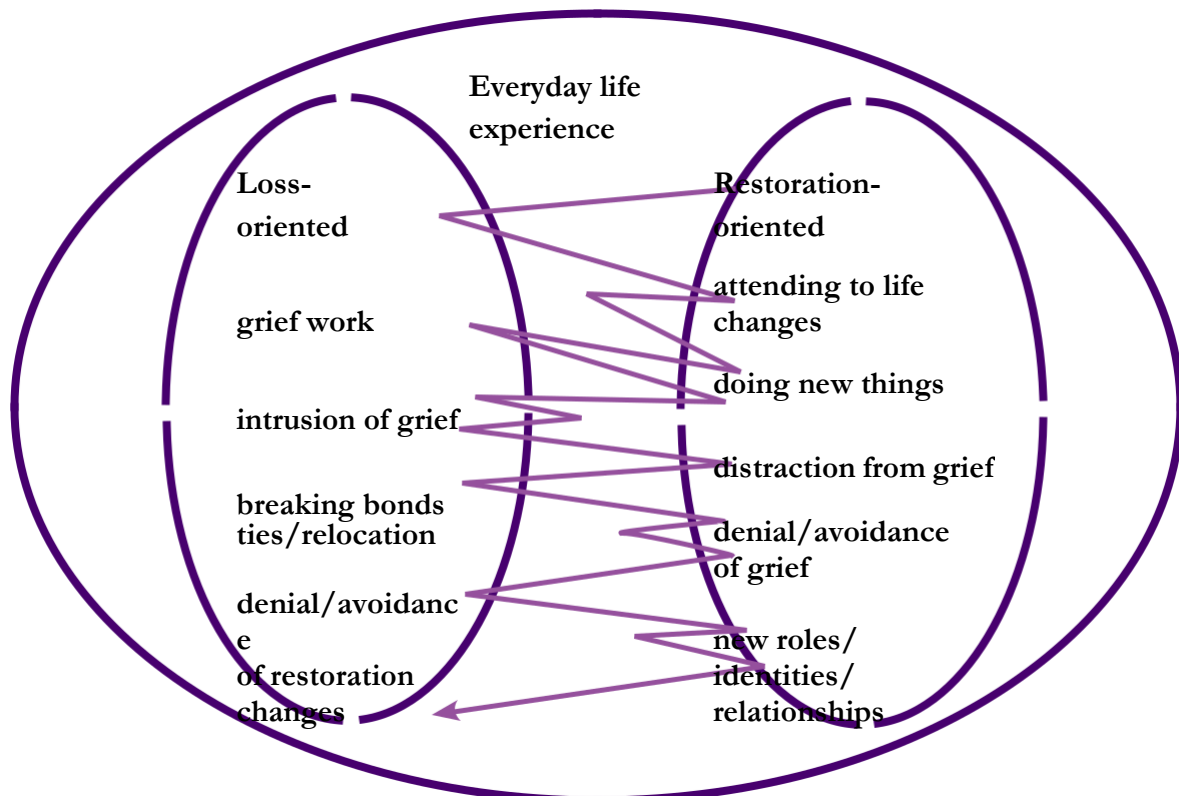
Young people who have been bereaved at an earlier age may need to re-process their grief as they think about and plan for their future and fully understand the impact of life without the person who died.

Appendix 4 The process of grief

There is no set pattern or time limit to the complex emotions and processes of grief. It is something which everyone will experience in slightly different ways. However, understanding some of the suggested processes can be helpful in understanding your own grief and, in turn, that of your child. While there have been suggestions of linear models, most try to depict the complexity of the process.

Strobe and Schut’s (1995) Dual Process Model is dynamic and shows the bereaved person alternating between “loss-orientation”, which focuses on the loss of the person who has died, and “restoration-orientation”, which avoids focusing on the loss. Both of these are needed for future adjustment and it is normal to move between the two modes.

This is represented visually below:

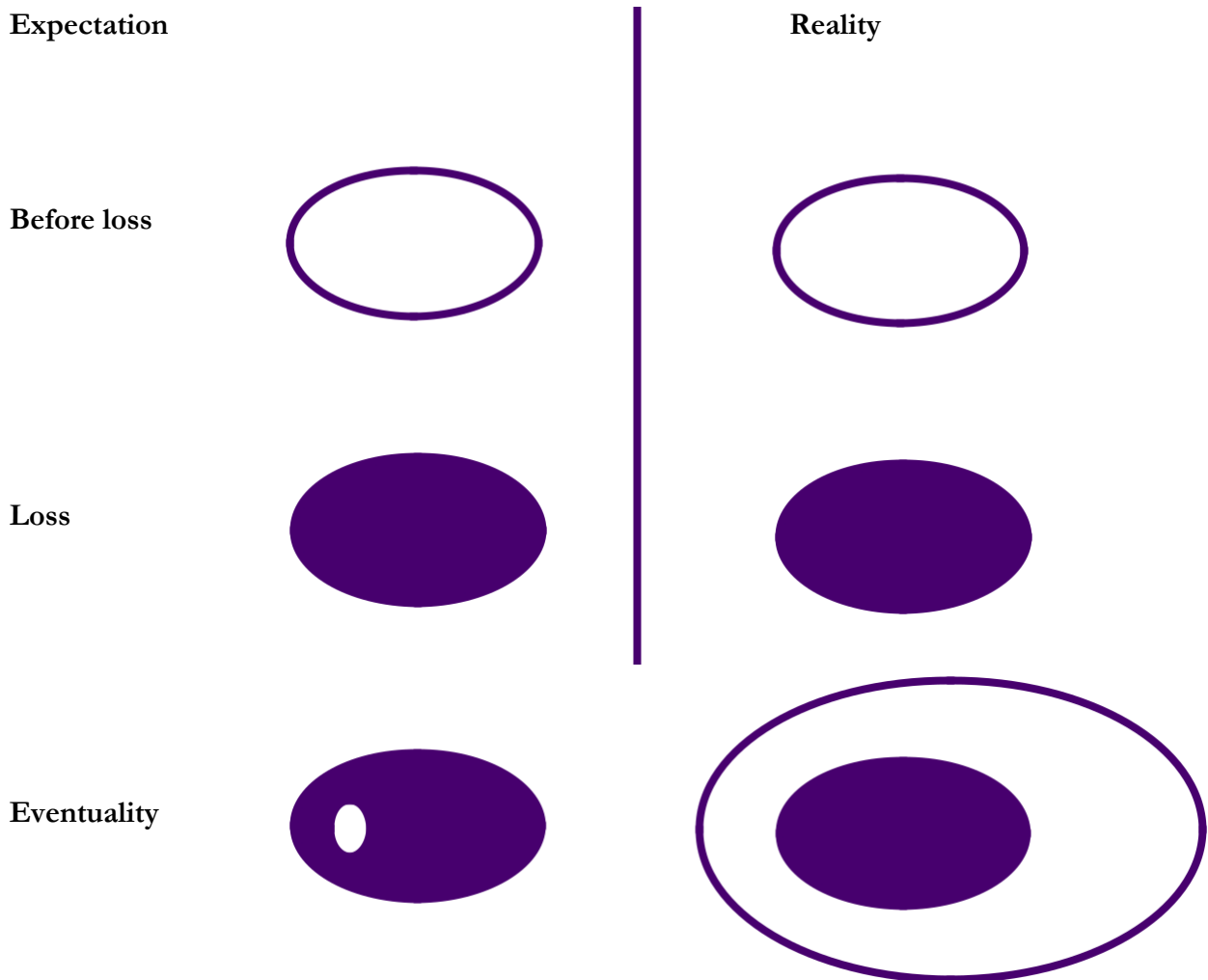


Another model is described by Worden (2008) where he sets out the tasks of mourning. These are not linear stages but rather part of an active process where bereaved people need to:

- Accept the reality of their loss

- Feel and process the pain of their grief
- Adjust to a world without the person who has died
- Maintain an enduring connection with the person who has died, even when moving forward with their life

Tonkin's (1996) model of Growing Around Grief suggests that grief does not lessen over time or become smaller. Instead the person adjusts their lives to accommodate the pain. This in turn leads to the grief being less dominant and all-encompassing in their lives; other people and new experiences help the person to live with the grief, although it is not forgotten. Making new friends, having new experiences are all examples of "growing around grief".



None of these models fully explain the process of grief but may be helpful in recognising that for children there may be multiple times when they experience the recurrence of feelings of loss. Moving between grief and getting on with life is normal and daily ups and downs for a period of weeks or months after a significant loss can be expected.

Appendix 5 Suggested templates for letter to parents

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents or carers. The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

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> Head Teacher

Appendix 6 Sample letter to bereaved parents:

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of Toby'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 very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his friends and classmates. He was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan Toby's funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of Toby's that remains in school is 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.

With sympathy,

Headteacher

Appendix 8 Sample letter on death of a staff member:

Dear parents,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours.....

The above, along with more dos and don'ts, can be found on [Cruse Bereavement Care's website](#).

Recognise that grieving is different right now

Every community in the world marks death by coming together to observe funeral rites, and that process is severely disrupted right now. It's possible that someone's inability to see a body or attend a funeral can lead to a sense of disbelief that the death has actually occurred.

This can delay grief, so someone can appear unaffected for some time until reality hits. On a practical level, this means you should:

- **Check in with bereaved staff regularly**, even if they say that they're fine – let them know you're there to listen and let them lead the conversation
- **Ask if they need some time off**, but don't push it – if funerals and memorial services are delayed, staff may prefer to carry on with working for now and take time off later. Or grief itself may be delayed and it might take some time for reality to hit. Let them know that you'll be flexible about when staff can take bereavement leave
- **Signpost to any support that's available to them** through your school's bereavement team or your local authority's or trust's HR department

Provide a virtual space for staff to come together in grief

It's said that 'grief shared is halved'. Grief is communal, and sharing grief is a necessary part of recovery. Attendance at funerals is limited to immediate family right now, so rituals can take on even more significance when we can't come together to mourn.

- **Hold a virtual memorial service** – this can be as formal or informal as suits your school community
- **Create a memorial page** – you can do this on your school website, or set up a page with e.g. Google Site or WordPress (make sure this is only accessible to your school community)

Of course, grieving is a process rather than an event, so ongoing support is vital.

Take care of yourself

Supporting staff through bereavement can take a toll on you emotionally. Even bereavement professionals have regular debriefs to help them talk through what they're experiencing and monitor their mental health. You're no different.

If you don't take the time to consciously slow things down and process what's happened, you're not going to get the time later. The greatest responsibility you have as a leader is to stay well.

- **Set limits** – now, more than ever, set working hours and stick to them. Let staff and parents know that you won't be available outside of those hours. If you can't do it for yourself, do it for your staff. Model what self-care looks like
- **Delegate** – don't look at delegation as fobbing off your own work on someone else. Use this time to give a staff member the opportunity to show they can step up
- **Ask for help** – don't suffer in silence. Talk to friends, call a helpline, or talk regularly with your chair of governors
- **Encourage your staff to check in with each other** - it's not all on you to monitor and support the staff. Supporting one another builds community, which in turn builds resilience, according to a report from the British Psychological Society about [teacher resilience during school closures](#)