SURBITON

HIGH SCHOOL

Bereavement

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Aims and Ethos

Surbiton High School aims to **inspire, encourage and empower** all its students to discover and embrace their individual talents, within United Learning's core mission to bring out "the best in everyone". We combine an intellectually rigorous academic environment with outstanding pastoral care and outstanding co-curricular opportunities; through this provision, we encourage our students to live out our **School values**, and become compassionate, respectful, courageous, and inquisitive members of the community.

Our Values

We are compassionate:
We are kind and we care, in both thought and action. We consider those less fortunate and strive to support and offer aid. We are mindful of the gentle power of positive actions. We support and encourage those around us, living out the School's motto: *Amor nos semper ducat* (May love always lead us).

We are respectful:
We respect all people equally. We respect ourselves, our learning, our community, our environment, and the planet we all share. We strive to act with respect and integrity in all things. When we disagree, we do so respectfully.

We are courageous:
When challenged by our fears we are determined, not deterred. We call on resilience for strength when in the heat of the struggle. We bravely chase our dreams and fight for what we believe. When we fall, we pick ourselves up and forge forward.

We are inquisitive:
We understand that a thoughtful question is the key to unlock understanding. We believe where answers provide ends, questions pose exciting beginnings. We are eager to explore, we question to discover, we are curious to learn more of the world at large.

We are a community:
We are united - with a common focus. We value belonging to a wider community: our school community, our local community, our global community. We are inclusive of all, no matter our differences. We value and nurture the connections we form.

United Learning and the United Church Schools' Trust

Surbiton High School is part of *United Learning* and the *United Church Schools' Trust*. The School has an Anglican foundation, valuing its Christian heritage whilst welcoming staff and children from all faiths and none. We share with United Learning its core mission statement "to bring out the best in everyone". We are committed to the aims of United Learning, including its *Framework for Excellence,* which can be found at: www.unitedlearning.org.uk

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Policy Statement

At Surbiton High School we provide opportunities within our School for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses help them cope with difficult experiences. We believe that the ethos of the School, based on openness and mutual support, provides a framework in which pupils are better able to understand and cope with their emotional needs. Bereavement affects everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. This Policy is written using guidance from a number of sources and more information on supporting young people affected by bereavement can be found in Appendix G.

Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert', they need people who care. Schools, just by carrying on with their usual day-to-day activities, can do a huge amount to support a grieving pupil. By gently introducing death and grief into the classroom the fear is removed, and young people will develop coping skills should someone they know die now or in the future.

The nature of a child's understanding of death and bereavement will be different at different stages of development. Although a child's grief is individual, their understanding of the loss of a loved one progresses as they mature. (See Appendix C)

By adopting a planned and considered approach we aim to support the emotional well-being of our pupils, their families and staff.

A death can affect the School community in many differing ways. Adults and pupils benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances, or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

We recognise:

- That grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- That differing religions and cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives, and all viewpoints should be taken into consideration and given equal value in the School environment. (See Appendix B)
- That the death of a child has huge repercussions beyond the immediate family / friendship groups / teaching / pastoral team of that child and every effort should be taken to inform and deal sensitively with the far-reaching contacts.

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014[1] makes clear that local authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN) must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents/guardians;

[1] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/19/enacted

- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents / guardians, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions;
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents / guardians, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood. (See Appendix E)

Introduction

Bereaved pupils often comment that going to School gives them a sense of normality, and many choose to return immediately after a death has occurred. Others need to take a few days off but, the longer they are away, the harder it can be to return. Through this policy we aim:

- To provide a framework for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To meet the needs of all our children / young adults and staff and to be a place that both child and family can rely on and gain much needed support.
- For the whole School community to work together, with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.
- For staff to have adequate training, the time and space to support the pupils and manage their own emotional needs surrounding bereavement.
- For children / young adults to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by sensitive staff.
- To have clear expectations about the way School will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- For our families and pupils to feel supported and be given an opportunity to express their feelings of loss.

Death of a member of the Surbiton High Community

Surbiton High School places the emotion and well-being of the child(ren) / young person centrally to their needs and support.

- Cultural and religious considerations will be considered (see Appendix D sourced from CBUK).
- A clear communication process will be identified, taking lead from the family and asking who they may wish to communicate with at the School.
- The Principal will oversee the management of the death of a member of the School community. (See Appendices A and B)
- All information and communication will be via the Principal's Office and will be signed off by the Principal before being communicated.

- All staff will be informed before pupils and be prepared and able to then pass on information to pupils/students. This includes contact to current staff members who may not be in School that day.
- The Principal will inform United Learning and the Chair of the LGB.
- Pupils who may be particularly vulnerable, such as friends of the deceased, tutor group of a staff member, or those who may have witnessed the event, will be identified and informed in a way most appropriate for them. The School Counsellor will take overall responsibility in helping the School identify and manage these needs.
- Any member of staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support, as appropriate, and will be a priority for the School.
- A letter to all School families affected will be distributed at the earliest opportunity and, wherever possible, the wording of this communication should be shared in advance with the bereaved family for their input.
- School staff, in consultation with the family, will attend the funeral; this is likely to be the Principal and/or a member of the SLT, the Head of Year or Tutor, any other member of staff requested by the family.
- Consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate for full or partial School closure in some circumstances.
- Where necessary, a press statement will be prepared by the Principal, Director of Communications, Marketing and Admissions and United Learning. Special care will be taken to avoid sensationalising the death in order to safeguard the School community and avoiding contagion.
- Consideration will be given to whether or not a book of condolence is appropriate. If so, this will be placed in a safe and sensitive place.
- The family and pupils will be asked for their views on how best to mark the death in an appropriate way for the School, which is relevant to the deceased and considerate of the nature of the death. Examples of these can be found in Appendix D.

Supporting children who are bereaved at Surbiton High School

Surbiton High School recognises that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. As such, care and support given to bereaved children / young adults will continue throughout the pupil's time at Surbiton High School. Information will be recorded on iSAMS and CPOMS and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

The Senior Vice Principal will oversee the management of bereavement within Surbiton High School.

The School will involve young people in decisions about how it manage issues relating to their loss, with liaison of their family.

The Senior Vice Principal and Lead School Counsellor will work with the Lead School Nurse, Head(s) of Year, Tutor and SLT to ensure an appropriate care plan is put in place for all bereaved children/young adults. This will include:

- Working with the family to consider how the child would like the news to be communicated to staff and pupils.
- Ensuring the child's voice is heard.
- Supporting the child and family as appropriate; this may be short-term 1:1 counselling support and sign-posting specialist help that may be available or, in time, joining a bereavement support group.
- Working with SLT, Heads of Year and Tutors to ensure support offered is appropriate.
- Monitoring the progress of the pupil and offering advice to the School as to how we can best support the child.
- The Principal and Lead School Counsellor will meet with the child on the day they return to acknowledge the death and discuss their wishes.

Where a member of the pupil's immediate family dies, this will be recorded with the date of the death on the pupil's details page on iSAMS.

Heads of Year will alert staff members to the anniversaries of deaths and staff will pay particular attention to bereaved pupils during the year e.g., birthdays, family celebrations etc.

What do bereaved pupils find helpful in School?

In its work supporting bereaved young people and children / young adults, 'Child Bereavement UK' has found that pupils find the following helpful:

- A chance to meet and talk to the teacher/ pastoral support/head/tutor to plan how their return to School will be managed.
- Being asked how they would like to break the news to their friends and classmates, and support with this, if needed.
- An acknowledgement about what has happened without making a fuss.
- Adults in School to talk to, ideally the pupil's own choice.
- A 'time out' system to have some space away from the hustle and bustle if they feel overwhelmed by powerful emotions. This should be shared with all staff to ensure support is consistent throughout the School.
- Being given simple choices, particularly with regard to managing their grief.
- Keeping a record of key dates, such as the anniversary of the death, which can often act as a trigger for pupils to revisit their grief.
- Some flexibility around deadlines for handing in work.
- Understanding that grieving is exhausting, and it can be difficult to concentrate on schoolwork.
- Adults who care and will listen to them; young people say this means more than anything to them

Bereavement Support Groups

We acknowledge that bereaved children and young adults need easily accessible, informal support, and that they often feel more comfortable receiving this from their peers or from trusted adults rather than parents and carers. Surbiton High School is ideally placed to offer this support. For this reason, the School counselling team runs bereavement groups to help our pupils:

1. Build their own coping strategies and naturally start to support one another;
2. Feel less isolated through meeting others in similar circumstances, normalising their experience;
3. Have an opportunity to express emotions in a safe place and in a safe way;
4. Appreciate an alternative to counselling which, for some children / young adults, is not what they need.

The groups offer a semi-structured approach with each session centred around a loose theme with a simple related activity but with the freedom to allow pupils to do as much, or as little, of the bereavement work as they feel able to cope with.

The groups are open to anyone who has been affected by the death of someone important to them. It is the shared grief experience that is important rather than the circumstances of the death, so a mixture of experiences is usually not a problem, even when traumatic such as a death by suicide. Whilst the groups may vary in size and age of pupil, we aim to have no more than 4 pupils per group.

Supporting pupils with additional learning needs

Children / young adults with learning difficulties are no different to all other children and young adults, in having their grief recognised, hearing the truth and being given opportunities to express their feelings and emotions, but may need extra help with their understanding and ways to express feelings.

Support for each child/young person should be dependent on their needs and suitable resources utilised for communication to be honest and understood, finding creative ways to communicate when words are sometimes not appropriate.

Further information can be found in Appendix E and the useful resources section at the end of this Policy.

Social Media

If news of the incident or death is shared on social media sites, Surbiton High School will act quickly to establish the facts and communicate effectively to the School community, as previously described, to avoid rumour and speculation as well as alleviating complexities and unnecessary trauma to the bereaved family.

It is our policy that no information regarding the death will be shared using social media by staff or pupils.

Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma and we will make every effort to handle the event and communication of this in a sensitive and efficient manner.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Immediate response following the death of a pupil at Surbiton High School

- Principal to speak to the family of the child to ascertain the facts.

- The Principal will convene a 'Core Group' meeting with the following people:
    - Senior Vice Principal
    - Head of Prep Schools
    - Lead School Counsellor
    - Lead School Nurse
    - Assistant Principal(s) as appropriate
    - Director and Communication, Marketing and Admissions
    - Head of Year as appropriate

- Following the meeting of the 'Core Group', the Principal will convene SLT to outline what has happened and how the School intends to manage the situation.

- The Principal will inform United Learning and the Chair of the LGB to be informed

- The Senior Vice Principal will liaise with the appropriate Head(s) of Year to ascertain likely pupils needing support and will be responsible for the creation of a support group, which is likely to include:
    - The Lead School Counsellor
    - The Lead School Nurse
    - The Safeguarding Team
    - Head of Year

- The Senior Vice-Principal is responsible for liaising with Children's Services, the Police and all other outside agencies and will represent the School, should it be part of a multi-agency review.

- The Principal / Head of Prep School will speak to pupils via assemblies and support will be offered to those needing it in agreement with the families wishes. Wording will be agreed, where possible, with the family. When doing so, the following will be considered:
    - 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 sad and that is OK.
    - Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.

- The Principal will write to parents, in agreement with the family, outlining the facts and support that has been put in place.

- The School Counsellor will offer a quiet place for pupils to manage their emotions and pupils will be offered the opportunity to talk.

- The Senior Vice-Principal and Lead School Counsellor will oversee staff well-being and advise the Principal as necessary.

- Consideration will be given to whether or not a book of condolence is appropriate. If so, this will be placed in a safe and sensitive place.

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Appendix B: Immediate response following the death of a member of staff at Surbiton High School

- Principal to speak to family of the member of staff to ascertain the facts

- The Principal will convene a 'Core Group' meeting with the following people:
    - Senior Vice-Principal
    - Head of Prep Schools
    - Director of HR
    - Vice Principals
    - Lead School Counsellor
    - Lead School Nurse
    - Head of Communications and Marketing

- Following the meeting of the 'Core Group', the Principal will convene SLT to outline what has happened and how the School intends to manage the situation.

- The Principal will inform United Learning and the Chair of the LGB

- School Counsellors will be available to speak to staff affected.

- The Senior Vice-Principal is responsible for liaising with Adult Services, the Police and all other outside agencies and represent will represent the School, should it be part of a multi-agency review.

- The Principal / Head of Prep School will speak to pupils via assemblies and wording will be agreed, where possible, with the family. When doing so, the following will be considered:
    - 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 sad and that is OK.
    - Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.

- The Senior Vice-Principal and Lead School Counsellor will oversee staff well-being and advise the Principal as necessary.

- Consideration will be given to whether or not a book of condolence is appropriate. If so, this will be placed in a safe and sensitive place.

Appendix C: Children's understanding of death

The following information is based on developmental chronology and is taken from CRUSE bereavement care website. It is helpful to consider these developmental levels when thinking about how children / young adults with special needs may experience grief.

The nature of a child's understanding of death and bereavement will be different at different stages of development. Although a child's grief is individual, their understanding of the loss of a loved one progresses as they mature. In this section you will find the most common understandings of death by children / young adults at certain stages of their development.

Do bear in mind that a child's understanding of death during their development will differ in circumstances where the child may be experiencing educational difficulties.

- Birth to six months

Babies do not cognitively understand the notion of death; however, that does not mean to say that they do not respond to the loss of someone close, or that they don't experience grief. A baby up to six months old experiences feelings of separation and abandonment as part of their bereavement. The bereaved baby is aware that the person is missing, or not there and this can cause the baby to become anxious and fretful. This can be heightened if it is the baby's primary caregiver who has died and the baby is able to identify that the one who is now feeding them, changing them and cuddling them is not the deceased person. Similarly, if it is the baby's mother who is grieving a loss, the baby can pick up on these feelings and experience grief too.

- Six months to two years

At this developmental stage, the baby is able to picture their mother or primary caregiver internally if she/he is not present. If it is the primary caregiver who has died the baby will protest at their absence by loud crying and angry tears. It is common for babies to become withdrawn and lose interest in their toys and feeding and they will likely lose interest interacting with others. At the more mature end of this developmental stage bereaved toddlers can be observed actively seeking the deceased person. For instance, if granddad spent much of his time prior to death in his shed the toddler might persistently return to investigate the shed in the hope that they will find him there.

- Two years to five years

During their development between the age of two to five, children do not understand that death is irreversible. For instance, a four-year-old child may be concerned that although nanny was dead, she should have come home by now. This example illustrates how children at this stage do not understand the finality of death and nor do they understand what the term "dead" actually means. It is common for a young child to be told that their aunt has died and still expect to see them alive and well in the immediate future. Children do not understand that life functions have been terminated and will ask questions such as:

“Won’t Uncle Bob be lonely in the ground by himself?”

“Do you think we should put some sandwiches in Grandpa’s coffin in case he gets hungry?”

“What if Nan can’t breathe under all that earth?”

“Will Daddy be hurt if they burn him?”

As the cognitive understanding of children in this age range is limited, they can sometimes demonstrate less of a reaction to the news of the death than might be observed by an older child and might promptly go out to play on hearing the news of the death.

Children aged between two and five years old have difficulty with the abstract concepts surrounding death. For instance, they might be confused as to how one person can be in a grave and also be in heaven at the same time. They will become further confused if they are told that the deceased person is simply sleeping and this in turn could make them fearful of falling asleep or seeing anyone else asleep. They might insist on waiting for the person who has died to wake up or similarly if they have been told that the person who has died has gone on a long journey, they may await their return.

At this age bereaved children can become involved in omnipotence or magical thinking. This refers to the concept that bereaved children believe that their actions, inaction, words, behaviours or thoughts are directly responsible for their loved one’s death. This form of thinking is not exclusive to this particular age group and can be experienced by many bereaved children and young people of older ages. It is essential that you explain to the bereaved child that the death was not in any way their fault or responsibility. The need to reassure the grieving child that nothing they said / didn’t say, did or didn’t do caused the death is paramount.

- Five years to ten years

Children at this developmental stage have acquired a wider understanding of death and what it entails. They begin to realise that death is the end of a person’s life, that the person who has died won’t return and that life functions have been terminated. By the age of seven the average child accepts that death is an inevitability and that all people including themselves will eventually die.

This understanding can also increase a child’s anxieties regarding the imminent deaths of other people who they are close to. Children of this age are broadening their social networks by attending School and are therefore open to receive both information and misinformation from their peers and social circles. With this in mind it is important that the cause of death, the funeral and burial process and what happens to the deceased person’s body are explained in a factual and age-appropriate manner to the bereaved child. Children will ask many questions and may want to know intricate details pertaining to the death and decomposition of the body. Again, it is vital that children have such details explained to them clearly so that they understand.

At this developmental stage children can empathise with and show compassion for peers that have been bereaved. Children aged between five and ten often copy the coping mechanisms that they

observe in bereaved adults, and they may try to disguise their emotions in an attempt to protect the bereaved adult. The bereaved child can sometimes feel that they need permission to show their emotions and talk about their feelings.

The important thing is to let them do this. Avoid remarks such as, “Come on be a big brave girl for mummy” or “Big boys don’t cry”, such comments, however well-meant, can make children feel they need to hide their feelings or that what they are feeling is wrong. This can cause complications as the bereaved child develops.

- Teenagers

Young people or teenagers have developed a greater understanding of death and the long-term implications of losing someone close and are more keenly aware of the emotional aspects than their younger counterparts.

Due to the developmental changes taking place within the young person at this time their reactions to death are likely to be extremely intense. Many young people will reflect on the injustice of the death asking why the person who has died had to die and they will be considering in greater depth the notion of fate.

The bereaved young person is likely to become concerned about who will pay the bills or care for them if the person who has died was their primary caregiver. The bereaved young person is likely to have a wider social network which they are more likely to seek support from than their immediate family, as they struggle to create an identity independent from that of their family.

The young person’s tasks of grieving are very similar to that of an adult, but the young mourner is often unable to manage the strong emotions that bereavement entails and can therefore present as being extremely angry and even end up in physical fights. Some bereaved young people can revert to childish behaviour in order to relocate some security and normality in their lives whereas others might try to “grow up too fast” and see themselves as taking on adult roles.

It is essential to remember that young people are not adults and should therefore not be burdened with adult roles. Like all children and young people, bereaved teenagers need to be allowed and encouraged to share how they are feeling and what frightens them.

There can be a tendency for young people to try and avert their emotions or bottle them up by avoiding the family or by assuming the role of an adult. If this happens, gentle encouragement is needed for the young person to open up and communicate their feelings. Sometimes a bereaved young person may become involved in risky behaviours in an attempt to manage their grief and its associated emotions. For example, some bereaved young people may use alcohol or drugs as a way of self-soothing. Often the alcohol / drugs act as an anaesthetic to the pain they are experiencing. Self-harming can also be employed by bereaved young people in an attempt to help them cope with their sadness. If the bereaved young person is self-medicating or harming themselves help should be sought.

Appendix D: Cultural and religious considerations

Schools function within an increasingly multi-cultural society, in which various beliefs, religious and non-religious, need to be considered. Respect for the differing needs, rituals and practices is essential when acknowledging a death. It is this diversity that enriches our lives. The following descriptions give an overview of the major religions and belief systems that are found in the UK.

Judaism
In the Jewish religion, death is seen as a natural process and as part of God's plan. Jewish practices following a death aim to ensure respect is shown to the dead but also aim to provide comfort to the living. When a Jewish person dies mourners will recite the prayer Dayan HaEmet, which recognises God's power as the true judge.

According to Jewish law, it is believed that the body should be interred as soon as is practical after the death, which means that funeral planning begins immediately. It is believed that when a Jewish person dies, their body should not be left unattended. The rabbi or the funeral home can help coordinate a shomer (guardian) who can stay with the body. This may be a family member, a friend or a member of the congregation. There may be more than one shomer, or people taking turns in acting as shomer to ensure someone stays with the body at all times. The shomer may just sit with the body although it is traditional for the shomer to recite tehillim (psalms). Open caskets are forbidden, and bodies are buried, not cremated.

There are several periods of mourning beginning with aninut, which is generally just a day or two. After the burial, a close friend or relative will prepare a first meal for the family of the person who has died. Shiva is the period following the burial which lasts until the seventh day afterwards. Shloshim is the next period of mourning which lasts until the 30th day after the burial, during which time the mourners do not attend celebratory events. Avelut is the final period of formal mourning which is observed only for the death of a parent. This period lasts for 12 months after the burial and for 11 of those months, starting from the time of the burial, the son of the person who has died recites the mourner's Kaddish daily.

Christianity
Christians believe that there is just one God and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They believe that Jesus died on the cross (The Crucifixion), and that three days later, God raised him from the dead (The Resurrection).

Christians believe in an afterlife and also the idea of resurrection but the details around what actually happens at the time of death and afterwards, varies within the different denominations. For some, as soon as a person dies, he or she is judged by God and will immediately go to Heaven or Hell, dependent on how good or bad a life they led. For Roman Catholics, there is a process called Purgatory, where an impure soul can stay until fit to enter Heaven. Others believe in the Day of Judgement, when the world will end, and the dead will return to life to be judged by God.

Within the different Christian denominations, there are many variations on what happens at a funeral. When someone dies, the body is taken to an undertaker who will carry out the necessary preparations for the body to be laid out. This is to enable those who wish to view it before it is placed in a coffin.

The funeral, organised by an undertaker, is about one week after the death. This usually takes place in a church, but sometimes a crematorium, or a combination of the two. The coffin will remain closed. Wreaths or bunches of flowers may be placed on the coffin. It is traditional to wear black, but this custom varies. If held in a church, the funeral service may include a Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass. The body will either be buried or cremated, dependent on the wishes of the deceased and the family. A churchyard grave is often marked by a headstone but for a cremation, the family may choose a more informal way to mark where the ashes are buried or have been scattered.

Islam
Muslims believe in life after death when, on the Last Day, the dead will come back to life to be judged by Allah. The good will reside in Paradise, the damned in Hell.

The Prophet Muhammad teaches that all men and women are to serve Allah and that they should try to live perfectly, following the Qur`an. Devout Muslims believe that death is a part of Allah's plan and open expressions of grief may be viewed as disrespectful to this belief.

As cremation is forbidden, Muslims are always buried, ideally within 24 hours of the death. Ritual washing is usually performed by the family or close friends at the undertakers or mortuary. They will wrap the body in a clean cloth or shroud. The coffin is often very plain as traditionally one would not be used. The grave is aligned to enable the head of the deceased to be placed facing the holy city of Mecca. Muslim graves are unmarked but to meet UK requirements, a simple headstone is used as a compromise.

There is an official mourning period of three days when the family will remain at home and be brought food by friends and relatives. For forty days after the funeral relatives may wish to make regular visits to the grave on Fridays.

General points for Eastern Faiths:

Within a faith there are often many variations, and it is wrong to be prescriptive; beliefs can also be moderated by life in a Western Culture. This is especially so for the younger generation, who may find it difficult to fit in with the stricter requirements of older members of a family or community. Families tend to be much more involved in preparing the body and the funeral arrangements than in Christian faiths.

Due to belief in an afterlife, it is important that the whole body is retained. Post-mortems therefore tend to be viewed as unwelcome procedures. The coffin is likely to be kept at home until the funeral and may well be open. All who wish to pay their respects will be very welcome.

Hinduism
Hindus believe in reincarnation and a cycle of rebirths. When a person dies, the soul is reborn in a new body, returning to earth in either a better or worse form. What a person does in this life will influence what happens to them in the next, the law of Karma. Those that have performed good deeds in this life will be reborn into higher order families, those whose behaviour has been bad will be born again as outcasts.

A Hindu funeral is as much a celebration as a remembrance service. Hindus cremate their dead as it is the soul that has importance not the body, which is no longer needed. White is the traditional colour and mourners usually wear traditional Indian garments. If attending, it may be worth asking what appropriate dress will be.

During the service, offerings such as flowers or sweetmeats may be passed around and bells rung so noise is a part of the ritual. The chief mourner, usually the eldest son, and other male members of the family, may shave their heads as a mark of respect. In India, the chief mourner would light the funeral pyre. Here, he will press the button to make the coffin disappear and, in some instances, may be permitted to ignite the cremator. Ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered on the River Ganges. In the UK, some areas of water have been designated as acceptable substitutes. The mourning period lasts between two and five weeks.

Sikhism
Sikhs believe the soul goes through a cycle of rebirths, with the ultimate objective being to reach perfection, to be reunited with God and, as a result, break the cycle. Thus, death holds no fear and mourning is done discretely. The present life is influenced by what happened in previous ones and the current life will set the scene for the next.

The deceased is cremated as soon as possible after death. The coffin is taken to the family home where it is left open for friends and family to pay their respects. It is then taken to the Gurdwara where hymns and prayers are sung. A short service follows at a crematorium, during which the eldest son presses the button for the coffin to move behind the curtain. In India, the eldest son would light the funeral pyre and no coffin would be used. After the funeral, a meal may be held at the Gurdwara. The ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered. Here they may be sprinkled in the sea or river.

The family remain in mourning for several days after the funeral and may listen to readings from the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book).

Buddhism
Buddhists believe that nothing that exists is permanent and everything will ultimately cease to be. There is a belief in rebirth but not of a soul passing from one body to another. The rebirth is more a state of constantly changing being rather than a clear-cut reincarnation. The ultimate objective is to achieve a state of perfect peace and freedom.

Buddhists try to approach death with great calmness, and an open-minded attitude of acceptance. There are few formal traditions relating to funerals and they tend to be seen as non-religious events. Cremation is the generally accepted practice, and the service is kept very simple. It may be conducted by a Buddhist monk or sometimes family members.

Humanist
Humanists are non-religious. They follow the principle that this life is the only one we have and, therefore, when you are dead there is no moving on to another one. The focus of a Humanist funeral is on celebrating the life of the deceased. The person is talked about, stories shared, and memories recalled. Their favourite music may be played, whatever it is. This is done by friends and family who

are supported by an Officiant. The ceremony, usually a cremation, will be tailored to meet the family's wishes rather than following a set pattern.

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Appendix E: Talking about death to children / young adults with learning difficulties

When talking about death and bereavement with a child with learning difficulties it might be helpful to consider: -

- WHO should be the key worker working with the child and family - inform parents who this person will be and keep in contact.
- WHERE is the child most receptive to new ideas? – quiet room, pool, outside. Use this space for talking with the child.
- WHAT should be talked about? (as agreed with parents). Ensure that you use the same language and ideas as the family to avoid confusing the child.
- HOW is new information normally given? - signs, verbally, pictures. Use the same format to talk about illness and death.
- HOW is new information normally reinforced? – you will probably need to repeat information a number of times over a long period.
- PROCEED at a level, speed and language appropriate to the child
- BUILD on information given – small bites of the whole, given gradually will be easier to absorb.
- REPEAT information as often as needed.
- WATCH for reactions to show the child understands – modify and repeat as needed.
- FOLLOW child's lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.
- WATCH for changes in behaviour to indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed.
- LIAISE with other agencies involved with the child to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

All children / young adults benefit from being given simple, honest "bite size" pieces of information about difficult issues - often repeated many times over. For some children / young adults with special needs, it might be more appropriate for symbols to be used to convey ideas rather than language. This can include the use of 'talking mats' or other symbol support resources.

Appendix F: Memorialisation ideas

Memory boxes can be constructed to contain mementos and items of significance.

- Art and craft work - memory mobiles, decorating photo-frames, creating a collage – helps to express feelings and assist understanding for the child(ren).
- Memorial or remembrance book for students / pupils to leave a message.
- Pebble pool with messages or names.
- Displaying a piece of work of a subject the deceased pupil / student enjoyed (art, design, music, English).
- Family trees and life story work can help to reiterate and reinforce the child's Experiences.
- Collate group responses to a loss to help the understanding of shared grief.
- Plant flowers; create a memory garden, memory tree.

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Appendix G: Useful resources and websites

Child Bereavement UK - supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement. Large choice of resources available to download and purchase including an "information for school's" pack. **Helpline 0800 02 888 04**

Cruse Bereavement Care – offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies. Section for schools and professionals as well as parents, military families and young people (see Hope Again). **Helpline 0808 808 1677**

Support around suicide and bereavement by suicide

Papyrus UK – Provide confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone who is worried about a young person via their helpline **HopelineUK 0800 068 4141**. Engage communities and volunteers in suicide prevention projects and deliver training programmes to individuals and groups

Samaritans – "We're working together to make sure fewer people die by suicide. Every six seconds, we respond to a call for help. No judgement. No pressure. We're here for anyone who needs someone". **Call 116 123**

Survivors of Bereavement By Suicide (SOBS) – "We exist to meet the needs and overcome the isolation experienced by people over 18 who have been bereaved by suicide". Includes support groups, contact via email, forum or **helpline 0300 111 5065**

For children and young People

Hope Again - is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care. It is a safe place where you can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief, and feel less alone. You will find information about services, a listening ear from other young people and advice for any young person dealing with the loss of a loved one

Winston's Wish – Offer support for children and young people after the death of a sibling or parent – **Helpline 08088 020 021**

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Appendix H: Exemplar letters

Template letter to parents and carers (if they are dealing with a death of a child in the family)

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of <Name's> 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/highly-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

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a pupil

Dear parents and carers,

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/head teacher/head of year had the sad task of informing the pupils of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>. <Name> died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term.

He/She was a <valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly> member of the class/School community and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal. We have tried to answer their questions in School, using age-appropriate and honest language.

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our School will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

Sign-off

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Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff

Dear parents/carers

I am sorry to inform you that a <well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/ well-known> member of our staff, <Name>, died <suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness>.

The pupils were told today by their <class teacher/tutor/head of year/in assembly> and many will be reacting to this news. When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal. We have tried to answer their questions in School, using age-appropriate and honest language.

Our thoughts are with <Name's> family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our School will celebrate/remember <Name's> life.

Sign-off

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