

COMPTON ALL SAINTS' C OF E PRIMARY

Compton All Saints' aspires to the highest possible attainment for all of its pupils and is committed to constant improvement across all areas.

All its work is underpinned by its core values of compassion, gratitude and honesty.

BEREAVEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Responding to a death within the school community

At Compton All Saints' we acknowledge that children's experience of death whilst at primary school will be wide-ranging. Some may have no experience of it at all from Year R to Year 6; some will lose pets and be distraught; others will lose relatives they hardly knew and shed few or no tears. Occasionally, children (and adults) in school lose someone who is extremely important and significant to them and their lives. This document is a framework on which the school's support for those children and adults can be built.

All situations where a death has occurred will be treated by staff at Compton with sensitivity and will be tailored to the needs of each individual or family. We acknowledge, however, that the communication of a significant death within our community must be planned and handled carefully. Whilst recognising the need to act speedily, we will ensure that the immediate family of the deceased have been consulted prior to any wider communication through the school website, text, telephone, email, or social media sites.

If considered necessary, we will establish a School Bereavement Team to be chaired by the most appropriate senior member of staff in school. Members of the team will include the head teacher, Chair of Governors, a teacher, member of the admin team and the school's Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA).

We acknowledge our responsibility to all those who grieve as a result of a life-changing, significant loss in their lives. We will provide opportunities for pupils to share their feelings in the school environment supported by the school's ELSA and, when required, by external agencies – eg 'Simon Says' - a local organisation supporting child bereavement. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Education Psychology service also offers support/advice to schools following a sudden traumatic or serious incident which impacts on the whole school community. Appropriate support will also be offered to staff.

The Bereavement Team will ensure all staff and governors are aware of our policy and procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures will be reviewed every three years or in the event of a death within the school community.

SAMPLE PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

We will ensure that school office staff are prepared to receive the news of a death within the community and respond in an appropriate manner.

Should we receive the news of a death, in **ALL** cases the person receiving the news will:

- Confirm the information, check it, record it and check it again. (*It is essential to have the facts confirmed*)
- Share the news as soon as possible with an appropriate senior member of staff and a member of the Bereavement Team.
- The senior member of staff and the members of the Bereavement Team will:
 - a. consider the action required,
 - b. follow the agreed procedures,
 - c. take notice of the guidance and examples and
 - d. be sensitive to the impact of shock on each other and on the wider community.

THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A PARENT OR CLOSE RELATIVE

We acknowledge that in the case of the death of a pupil's parent or close relative, it is best that a family member break the news with the support of an appropriate member of staff. If this is not possible the head teacher will ensure someone suitable to break the news to the pupil or member of staff concerned.

The news of the death will be given to all relevant staff as soon as possible.

THE DEATH OF A PUPIL

Should we receive the news of a pupil's death, we will call appropriate colleagues together, having consulted with the family of the pupil to ascertain their wishes.

We will:

- Encourage staff to voice their concerns they have about telling the rest of the pupils/students.
- Consider the most appropriate way of communicating the news within school; be that a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group.
- Give pupils opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available.
- Inform parents the same day in the most appropriate way via text, website, email, phone or newsletter depending on the circumstances
- Ensure time for corporate grieving amongst the staff and enable them to share how they feel about what has happened.

THE DEATH OF MORE THAN ONE PUPIL

Should we receive such news, members of the Bereavement Team will be called together to be briefed with the salient facts and to decide what steps are to be taken. Information may already have been 'sent' from the incident.

We will consider:

- Who will contact parents, if necessary?
- Who will meet with parents who arrive at school? Where?
- Who will inform the staff? When? Where?
- Who will inform the pupils/students? When? Where?

It is imperative that rumours and interpretations of the truth be avoided. In a case of multiple deaths there is bound to be some media interest. Members of the Bereavement Team responsible for dealing with the media will contact HCC for guidance and assistance in preparing all necessary statements. Such statements should deal only with facts and in as sympathetic a way as possible. We will agree a format of response to telephone inquiries, including approaches from the media.

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF STAFF

We acknowledge that if such a death occurs it is doubly traumatic for the staff; supporting the pupils but also grieving on a personal level for a colleague.

Should we receive the news of the death of a member of staff; the appropriate senior member of staff will call together colleagues from the Bereavement Team.

We will use the guidance notes below:-

- Gather together the staff and inform them of the news.
- Allow time for shared grieving amongst the staff.
- Allow the staff to share how they feel about what has happened.
- Inform the teachers that they may need to address what has happened in their classes.
- Impress on the staff what facts are to be announced to the pupils/students. To avoid rumours, exaggerations and development of the event, the agreed facts should be stated simply.
- Communicate to the staff how the announcement will be made. Should it be a full school assembly, year groups, or a class/form group?
- It must be remembered that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotional feelings. Some will deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may be tears and distress; everyone will react in their own way.
- Under such circumstances some staff may have difficulty coping with the loss themselves. Colleagues will need to be aware of those staff who seem particularly affected by the death.

BREAKING SAD NEWS

Should we need to break sad news to children or young people we will first refer to the *"Guidelines for Breaking Sad News of a Death to a class or assembly"* (See Appendix 1)

MEMORIALS and FUNERAL SERVICES

Should we need to consider our involvement with any funeral services or memorial services or memorials, we will first refer to the *“Guidelines for Memorials and Funeral Services”*

RETURN TO SCHOOL

We acknowledge our responsibility to ‘keep a special watch’ on pupils who have been bereaved, especially on their return to school, but also for the rest of their time at Compton. This includes times of transition when we would share any relevant information with the receiving school as appropriate. We further acknowledge our responsibility to prepare staff and pupils appropriately before a bereaved member of our community returns. Members of our Bereavement Team will advise an appropriate response, depending on the individual’s circumstances. (See appendix 3)

MANAGING ANTICIPATED DEATH AND THE TERMINALLY ILL

We acknowledge that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst very difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death.

We acknowledge our responsibility to support adults, children and young people within our community who have to face the painful reality that a parent or someone close to them is terminally ill.

When supporting children and young people who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Confirm the facts concerning the pupil’s sick relative or friend;
- Communicate the information as appropriate (in line with school procedures and the family’s wishes);
- Never give false hope to the child or young person ;
- Discover what the pupil has been told of the illness;
- Allow the pupil to talk freely about the sick person in an appropriate setting;
- Enable the pupil to talk freely about how he/she is feeling;
- Be honest! If we do not know the answer to a question we will say so;
- Not inform the pupil about any progression concerning the illness unless the family have given permission and requested us to do so.

IMMEDIATE AND LONG TERM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

The school’s ELSA will provide a bespoke programme for children, drawing on specific ELSA bereavement training and the access he/she has to case-by-case support from the Hampshire Educational Psychology department. This programme will provide ongoing strategies and a point of contact beyond the initial block of ELSA sessions.

According to the wishes of the families involved, the rector of Compton (or other local faith leaders) will be available for prayer support and/or funeral planning. We will also access the support available from a wide range of organisations some of which are identified in appendix 5.

COMMEMORATING DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT

We acknowledge the importance of remembering anniversaries of death – for example on Martin Luther King Day and Armistice Day. The Compton, Hursley and Otterbourne Benefice also holds an

annual memorial service where members of the local community can be remembered and in which the school can be involved, if required. The death of a member of the school community will be addressed through assemblies and/or a service. A decision about whether to commemorate annually will be made collectively by staff and with regard to the specific circumstances and context.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF WHO SUPPORT BEREAVED PUPILS AND COLLEAGUES

We will ensure that all staff are familiar with this policy and these procedures for responding to bereavement.

Whenever necessary we will request additional support from colleagues or from external support agencies.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Breaking Sad News of a Death to a class or assembly

A special assembly or remembrance service after a death in a school community is a helpful thing to do. It can put back a sense of normality into what may have been a very unsettled time. Below are some ideas to help you organize something appropriate.

Why Hold A Special Assembly?

- To bring the school together to acknowledge what has happened;
- To reflect on, and remember, the life of the person who has died;
- To normalise and share grief;
- To give the message that it is OK to be sad but equally OK to not be affected;
- To inform learners and staff of any support that is available.

Who Should Attend?

- Anyone who wishes to be there, staff (teaching and non-teaching), learners and any family members who feel able to do so;
- In a very large school it may not be possible to get everyone together and a year group assembly may be more appropriate;
- Many families find comfort in other people organising something special and appreciate being there;
- Other may not wish to participate but should be given the opportunity to do so.

Who Should Be Involved?

- Anyone who wants to;
- Learners have produced some very moving assemblies about friends who have died; it helps them to feel included and gives a sense of doing something positive;
- Very young children will need greater amounts of adult input but can still participate in a way appropriate for their age and understanding.

How to structure a Special Assembly

- Have a clear beginning, middle and an end;
- Begin by explaining the purpose and length of the assembly;
- Follow with a brief, factual reminder of the circumstances surrounding the death and when it happened.

The Middle Section could include:

- Lighting a special remembrance candle;
- Favorite songs or poems of the person who has died;
- Learners or staff taking it in turns to recount stories or memories;
- Photographs of the person or child who has died to give a visual reminder, but remember, a large image can be too much for a grieving family;
- Placing objects associated with the dead person into a special memory box. This can then be given to the family;
- Talking about a memory tree or collage previously made from a collection of drawings that

learners have created and stuck onto a large sheet of paper. This can be added to during the assembly.

Suggested scripts to use when someone dies:

“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. _____, NAME, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday in hospital”.

“Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.

BEREAVEMENT FLOWCHART

This flowchart will support you to build your school plan to respond to a bereavement:



GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING A BEREAVED STUDENT RETURN TO SCHOOL

When the child or young person returns to the setting they may want to get straight back into friends, work and routine. They will have been surrounded by grieving family members and often a chaotic household of visitors. School maybe their break from that.

Have some action plans in place to help the child and young people return by:

- Identifying a member of the team who will be the main contact point for them and their family.
- Ensuring **regular** contact, this may be daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family. This helps you understand how they are coping, what support they may need now and in the future, to discuss concerns and worries and plan strategies to cope.
- Remembering them if they stay at home. Have cards and messages sent to them from appropriate people (peer group and staff they have good relationships with). Activities such as these will give the other children the opportunity to discuss their own concerns or experiences with the family and help them to feel they are doing something positive to support them; you may want to collate them into a book. This death may remind others of their own experiences and so be prepared to support them. You may find out information about a child in your class that you didn't know before. Be ready to listen to them all.
- Making sure all staff are aware of the bereavement and the possible effects on them, their behaviour and their learning **before** they return, so that appropriate care and support can be given throughout the setting. Remember bereaved children and young people have 'physical' illness, such as headaches, tummy aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, being disorganised and feeling tired, angry and frustrated. These emotions will have an impact on work load and learning. Monitor how things are going on their return and maintain communication with all staff involved.
- Maintaining normal rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important for the children and young people within the setting and the child or young person who has been bereaved. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure. Remember the impact of bereavement on the whole family when giving sanctions and the impact the sanctions may have on the whole family
- Considering 'time out' strategies that suit the child or young person and the setting. Time out cards, signals or signs can help them to exit the room quickly if they are feeling vulnerable or emotional. Make sure they have a safe place to exit to.
- Remembering that there is no set pattern or time limit to grief – it is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one. At different ages and during new or transitional times they will have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a re-visit of what happened; to develop a better understanding and acceptance.

It is not unusual for bereaved pupils to take time off school during the early stages of their bereavement. For some, the need to be with their families will be strong, and indeed they may suffer from separation anxiety when the time comes for a return to school. For others the familiarity, stability and routines of school life may prompt an early return. The time away from school will vary from pupil to pupil but when they do return, they may have a number of concerns – you will only know what these are and how they might be resolved if you ask. Some of the more common concerns might be:

How will staff and peers react– who has been told, what do they know, what will be said, how much will I have to say to people?

You can help by meeting with them to welcome them back, acknowledging the death and talking through their concerns. Saying something simple like *“I am sorry to hear that your dad died – sometimes it helps to talk about it and if so, who would you like to be there for you?”* is usually much appreciated by them. If possible offer them choices about how things should be handled and what support would be helpful. Let staff and classmates know how they want to be received and supported.

Fear of sudden emotional outbursts – anger, distress, panic...

You can help by normalising grief reactions and giving them choices about what strategies will help them to cope in the classroom e.g. able to leave lessons without fuss – “exit card” system, where they can go, who they can talk to.

Fear when they realise they may not remember what the deceased person looks like

A laminated photo of the deceased person may give enormous comfort when the visual image begins to disappear. A special teddy or other memento will often give great comfort in times of distress and upset. They may also want to show this when talking about the person who died. It should be stressed that whatever helps the child within reason should be encouraged.

Fear of being behind with work and unable to catch up

You can help by clarifying with other staff what is essential to accomplish and what can be left, and offering appropriate help to achieve what needs to be done.

Inability to concentrate and feel motivated or sit still

You can help by reassuring them that this lack of motivation and concentration is normal and will pass. Offering shorter more manageable tasks, writing down the task, giving encouragement for achievements and minimising difficulties can often help.

Family grief impacting on normal family functioning

Disrupted routines, sporadic meals and chaotic bedtimes are possible reasons why they may be inadequately prepared for school, do not have the necessary equipment and may be tired or hungry.

You can help by talking with them to ascertain where areas of difficulty lie and trying to work out strategies with them and their family to help keep things on an even keel in school. Identify their strengths and help them build on them.

Unable to meet homework/project deadlines because of altered responsibilities within the family and home

You can help by helping them work out and meet priorities. Be flexible where possible and offer additional support where needed.

Appendix 4

TEMPLATES

These are two examples of a letter to parents. Please change them according to the needs of the situation.

<Name of School>

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

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

The children were told that <Name> died from an <asthma attack> on <Date>. A number of pupils have been identified as being asthmatic and <Name>, the School Nurse has today reassured them that it is unusual for a person to die from asthma.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from contacting Simon Says a Hampshire based child bereavement support charity. Their contact details are 02380 647550, email info@simonsays.org.uk or visit their website www.simonsays.org.uk.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's tutor.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Head Teacher

< Name of School >

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

They were told that <name> died from an illness called <cancer>. Sometimes people who have cancer can get better, but other times people die from it. <Name> had been ill with <cancer> for a long time and died at home yesterday.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion - these are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from contacting Simon Says a Hampshire based child bereavement support charity. Their contact details are 02380 647550, email info@simonsays.org.uk or visit their website www.simonsays.org.uk.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's tutor if this is the case.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Head Teacher

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents/children-and-young-peoples-emotional-responses>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents/children-and-young-peoples-physical-responses>

simonsays.org.uk - Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.

autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

childbereavement.org.uk – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk - Childhood bereavement.

childline.org.uk - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

crusebereavementcare.org.uk - All aspects of bereavement.

griefencounter.org.uk - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

hopeagain.org.uk - Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

papyrus-uk.org - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

seesaw.org.uk - Grief support service for children and young people.

sands.org.uk - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

teenissues.co.uk – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

theredlipstickfoundation.org – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

uk-sobs.org.uk - Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.

Widowedandyoung.org.uk – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

winstonswish.org.uk - Help for grieving children and their families.