



Inspire. Believe. Achieve.

Bereavement Policy

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Contents

Section		Page
1	Introduction, Rational and Aims of the policy	3
1.1	Background and rationale	3
1.2	Policy links	3
1.3	Purpose of the policy	4
2	Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording	4
3	Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement	4
3.1	Role of the Governing Body	4
3.2	Role of the Headteacher	5
3.3	Role of Staff in our School - Pastoral Support Team	6
3.4	Role of staff in our School	6
3.5	Role of the Local Authority – the Education Psychology service	7
4	Procedures	8
4.1	Sharing News with Staff	8
4.2	Pre-bereavement	8
4.3	Following a bereavement	9
4.4	For the Funeral	9
4.5	Longer Term	10
4.6	Timetables	11
4.7	Tributes and Condolences	11
4.8	Following a sudden and unexpected death - suicide	11
4.9	Following a sudden and unexpected death - homicide	12
5	Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs	13
6	Young asylum seekers and refugees	13
7	Supporting staff	13
7.1	Support for bereaved staff	14
7.2	Staff training	14
8	Curriculum	14
8.1	Support for students returning to School after a bereavement	14
8.2	Student Reintegration Meeting	14
9	Responding to the Media	14
10	Ongoing Support	15
10.1	Ongoing Support to Student returning to school after bereavement	15

10.2	Ongoing Support for Staff returning to school after bereavement	15
11	Additional information and links	16
11.1	National support services and support resources	17
11.2	Guide on how to inform students	17

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Hollywater School is an inclusive school that strives to ensure that all children feel safe when with us. Our values focus on openness, honesty, inspiration, believing and achieving and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hours. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person¹.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time. The trauma of such a loss can be felt at any time no matter the distance of the event.

Hollywater School is committed to supporting the emotional health and well-being of its staff and students. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares students for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, students, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy is based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish and the National Association of Head Teachers. It has included input from our staff, our governing body, our school nurses, parents and carers and students

1.2 Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding policy

¹ Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

- Critical Incident Policy
- Curriculum overviews
- Anti-bullying policy for staff and pupils
- Offsite visits policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Equality policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Managing sickness absence (staff) policy

1.3 Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy helps us to provide effective support to students and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

Enhance effective communication at a difficult time

Clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services

Make best use of the support available in school, the council's families, children and learning department and the wider community.

2 Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, students will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of students and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience. Strategic Leaderships Team will make a referral to partner agencies such as Child and Adult Mental Health (CAMHS) or the Education Psychology Service for Hampshire County Council.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school systems for recording communications -CPOMS to record when a student has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

3 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

3.1 The role of the governing body is to:

- Be responsible for approving, monitoring and reviewing the implementation of this policy and supporting the Headteacher.
- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them – for example, through Safeguarding Reviews and Headteacher - Chair of Governor Meetings.
- Ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change.
- Monitor the Headteacher's emotional wellbeing – for example, through regular meetings between the headteacher and chair.
- Ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum.
- Ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural ethnicity related traditions, values and beliefs.
- Assist the Headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Where necessary, arrange for the Deputy Headteacher or another Pastoral Support Team Member to take the lead if the Headteacher is not available, to respond to a death immediately.

3.2 The role of the Headteacher is to:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased.
- Be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement.
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to students and staff as set out in this policy, or activate staff members to support a bereaved child or adult.
- Lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff.

- Contact the Hampshire County Council Local Authority (HCC) in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide of a student or staff member. Key professionals who would be expected to be involved include HCC Educational Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Workers, alongside relevant colleagues and managers.
- Record bereavements affecting children on school central reporting system: CPOMS.
- Ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death in line with Hampshire County guidelines and on advice from Hampshire Communications Team and Education Personnel Service.
- Lead reintegration meetings for students 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 students or staff.
- Designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate.
- Monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies.
- Keep the Governing Body appropriately informed.
- Participate in any multi agency meetings
- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

3.3 Pastoral Support Team (PST)

At Hollywater School, the pastoral support team for children comprises their Class Teacher, the Schools' Emotional Literacy and Supports (ELSA), the schools' mental health support worker and members of the Strategic Leadership Team including the Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENCo.

Members of this team have received training in Bereavement, Mental Health First Aid and Trauma informed practice.

Support for staff will be organised by the Headteacher with referral to the PST who may be delegated to support the staff member.

The pastoral support team (PST) has responsibility for:

- Monitoring and supporting bereaved students and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

- Providing direct support to bereaved students and staff.
- Signposting to external support which is available bereaved students and staff.
- Organizing safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.
- Organizing memorials, such as temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages.
- Arranging for the attendance and supervision of students or staff at funerals (where permitted)
- Maintaining a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved students 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.

3.4 The role of all staff in our school is to:

- Access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate. All Hollywater staff will complete the online Winston's Wish training as a starting point.
- Know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed.
- Know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm.
- Know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed.
- Have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change.
- Provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral team.
- Teachers and class leads will teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of tutor.
- Inform the Headteacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

- Our Home School Link Worker, ELSA, SENCo and Headteacher will have more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other members of staff as necessary.

3.5 The role of the Local Authority

- Hollywater School has access to the support of Hampshire Local Authority Education Psychology Service which may be engaged to support bereaved students.
- In addition, all school staff have access to the **Employee Support (Employee Assistance Programme)** If applicable these services are available to staff while they work for the service and for up to 3 months after they have left.
- Initially meeting with the head teacher and key lead staff in the school to discuss the immediate plan of action, with timeline outlined where possible for follow up actions.
- Inform appropriate colleagues within the local authority on a need-to-know basis.
- Advise and support staff who are supporting bereaved children and young people including offering and providing training on request.

Advise on referral pathways and offer triage to support pathways of support, through identification of those requiring more specialist support and those whose needs can be met through the Whole School Approach on request

- Ensure that any staff significantly affected by a death are made aware of the support that's available to them.
- HCC Health assured can be contacted 24 hours a day 365 days a year. [Home | Health Assured \(healthassuredeap.co.uk\)](http://Home | Health Assured (healthassuredeap.co.uk))

4 Procedures

The following guidelines will provide a framework for informing staff, governor and students following a death.

Informing staff and governors of a death in the school community

4.1 Sharing the news with staff

- The Headteacher or the DSL / Deputy Headteacher will be responsible for sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.
- A staff meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable and absent staff will be identified.
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement with factual information including all part time staff and support staff.

- Arrangements will be made to inform absent staff over the telephone or by use of the school's phone tree system.
- If school is closed we will ensure that the admin team and Strategic Leadership Team will activate the schools' phone tree or by using Teams systems to bring staff together virtually.
- Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) will be prepared for reactions to this news including visibly upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, trauma and loss. As a result, feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is a perfectly natural response.
- SLT will be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Advice for families will be given to direct them to support services available to them.
- Bereavement support or counselling will be made available to all as necessary.

4.2 Pre-Bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the headteacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- Contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- Identify a key point of contact Headteacher / Home School Link Worker in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- Ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the student.
 - Keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
 - Explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice or National Support Charity such as Macmillan Nurses.
 - Look to involve support specialists such as Educational Psychologists, faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family.
 - Explore what support for the students affected might look like in practice.
 - Arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the student/s.

- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the student/s class mates.
- If appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

4.3 Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

As an immediate response we will:

- Contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours. This is the responsibility of the Headteacher.
- If the family are not contactable the next of kin contacts on school systems will be contacted for advice.
- If news of a death is spreading via social media before confirmation can be made, staff will be advised that the information must remain confidential, until family confirmation is received.

Where possible discussion should take place with family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the staff in school.

- Find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school.
- Consider any religious beliefs or cultural traditions that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process.
- Send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected.
- The Headteacher, will if required and with due regard to the family affected, prepare a press statement, with support from Hampshire County Council's Communications team.
- The Headteacher will inform staff of the death before students are informed, recognising that some students may have found out through other means such as social media. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.

- Inform students who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school.
- Inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- Make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

4:4 For the funeral we will:

- Find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not.)
- Identify which staff and students may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school.
- Organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and students.
- Be sensitive to religious, ethnicity, traditions and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- Consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school.
- Ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person.
- Continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time.
- Monitor the emotional needs of staff and students and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support.
- Consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed.
- Continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.

4:5 Longer term we will:

- Be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- Signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- Ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

4.6 Timetables

In the event of a death of a student or staff member it may be necessary to adjust the timetable for some or even all students.

The Headteacher together with members of the strategic leadership team will discuss modifications and advise class staff so that they can prepare resources to support students' understanding of the changes.

4.7 Tributes and condolences

The school community may come together to memorialise the deceased via a class commemoration service or a whole school assembly. The PST and Headteacher, will discuss the format of these memorials and work with school leaders and the bereaved family to commemorate a student or staff member.

Memorial Objects such as a book of condolences, a memory scrap book or a temporary tribute may be considered and these will be located in an appropriate place within the school reception area.

Any religious/cultural considerations will be taken into account as appropriate and authorised by the Headteacher.

4.8 Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 3.5 we will seek advice from HCC Educational Psychology Service. As a school community we will formulate and make a response to a sudden death within two school days.

It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the students and their cognitive ability and Special Educational Needs (SEND) but should be based on and reinforce:

- Facts (not rumours).
- An understanding that death is permanent.
- An exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal.
- An understanding that, with support, people can cope.
- An understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual.
- An awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help.
- An understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is:

- Age appropriate and appropriate way with parental / carer approval.
- Factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death.
- Does not include details of any suicide note.
- Does not include speculation over the motive for suicide.
- Takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as ‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended his / her/ their life’ rather than ‘committed suicide’ or ‘successful suicide’, and saying ‘attempted to end his / her /their life’ rather than ‘unsuccessful suicide’ or ‘failed attempt at suicide’.

:9 Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston’s Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them.

Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area or into care – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston's Wish recommend taking an honest and consistent age-appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston's Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

5 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support students and families.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make students aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

6 Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services and educational psychologist where appropriate.

7 Supporting staff

7.1 Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice via Education Support.

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the council occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

7.2 Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers [training courses](#) and also a [free online training course for school staff](#).

8 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE PDL (Personal Development) -curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident. This will include both written, verbal, pictorial and supported by MAKATON language.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-and cognitively appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

8:1 Support for students returning to school after bereavement

Whether a student 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.

If the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our Local Health Protection Team.

8:2 Student Reintegration meeting

The PST Team will meet with the bereaved student 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 student 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 student and their parents/carers have about the return to school
- Consult with the student about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Open lines of communication between the student and relevant staff to ensure support should the student feel overwhelmed
- Open lines of communication between the school and the student's parents/carers to coordinate support
- Consider any additional support needed for a student who is vulnerable and how their additional special educational needs (SEN) can be supported at this time.

9.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 or the Chair of Governors will contact Hampshire Communications Team and EPS for advice on drafting a response.
- Other staff members should not respond to media requests, and should instead refer enquiries to the Headteacher.
- No member of staff should make comments or responses on Social Media Platforms that may affect the young person or their family.
- Requests from the media will be referred to Hampshire County Councils Communication Team for a response.

10.Ongoing support 10:1 Ongoing Support to Student returning to school after bereavement

- We will maintain regular contact with the student's parents/carers to monitor how the student is coping. This will in the first instance be via the class teacher and ELSA.
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult. As part of their work with the ELSA we can create an individual calendar that will be used to monitor these dates and ensure additional support is available, e.g. bereavement team calendar.
- We know that grief may impact a student's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will undertake regular monitoring of progress and provide any
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved students by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions

10:2 Ongoing 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. • The policy will be monitored and updated every two years.

11. Monitoring arrangements

- resources will be reviewed at regular intervals to enable any new resources or information to be included.

12 Additional Support and links

12.1 Appendix Details of National Bereavement Support Organisations

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement Network UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0800 02 888 40• http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk• A bereavement support service for children who have suffered a loss. Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.
Winston's Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 08088 020 021• www.winstonswish.org• A useful website offering practical ideas for helping those bereaved in the family and school community and for those caring for bereaved families.
Cruse Bereavement Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline: 0808 808 1677• https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us• Support for anyone who has been bereaved.
Simon Says	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bereavement Support for Young People - SimonSays
Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393• https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guidestosupport-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/

British Heart Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bhf.org.uk/smallcreature - site to help children come to term with loss using carton creatures.
Hope Again:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://hopeagain.org.uk/ • A website for young people who have been bereaved.
Papyrus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://papyrus-uk.org/ • Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.
Samaritans:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.samaritans.org/yourcommunity/supportingschools • A range of guidance and support for schools.
Books on Bereavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granpa – John Burningham • When Dinosaurs Die – L & M Brown • Liplap’s Wish – Jonathan London And Sylvia Long • The Memory Tree – Britta Teckentrup
Class resources	<p>The Memory Tree – Britta Teckentrup ‘The Memory Tree’ pack will be available for classes to use. The pack contains a story book and resources linked to the story.</p>
Hampshire County Council	<p>0800 028 0199. Freephone Staff Support Services Home Health Assured (healthassuredeap.co.uk) online support</p> <p>Outside the UK +44 161 836 9498 (calls will be charged)</p>
Education Support Foundation	<p>Helpline: 08000 562 561</p> <p>Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff</p>

12:2 Appendix 2

Guide for how to inform students

- Be honest
- Respect the wishes of parents /carers
- Use clear language
- Use supportive visual Communicate in Print

- Expect questions
- Recognise every death and reaction to it is unique
- Don't assume
- Allow time
- Acknowledge that some days will be better than others
- Work with Communication and Interaction Leads to create a simple social story to cover a short script:
- Record actions /interactions on CPOMs