



Bereavement policy

2025/26

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Section 1: Background and rationale

Mount St Joseph is committed to the emotional health and well-being of our pupils and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community. We continue to work towards this in all aspects of school life and are committed to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times and in times of bereavement.

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm. Whilst the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines children's rights, including the right to have their emotional needs met, all intentions of this policy endorse these aims as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

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.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, 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 was adapted from an exemplar from the national charity Winston's Wish and developed for Bolton schools to use by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) / Critical Incident Support Service (CISS) in collaboration with Bolton Hospice, Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and two Bolton primary schools (Egerton Primary and Evangelist RC Primary).

Section 2: Purpose of the policy and policy links

We understand that bereavement is an experience which will be faced by all our members of our school community at some point. It will be a more difficult experience when the loss is a member of our school community – a child or staff member. This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to both pupils and adults and for staff to have greater confidence and be better equipped to cope before and after bereavement. Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

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 (for example if it 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 wider community and the council's specialist services.

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

- Safeguarding policy
- Relationships and sex education (RSE)
- Anti-bullying policy
- Educational visits policy
- Equality policy
- Self-harm or other policies which support mental health and wellbeing
- Health and safety policy
- Leave of absence policy (staff)
- Behaviour policy

Section 3: Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#) and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.

V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

Section 4: 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, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in line with safeguarding procedures.

To retain the trust of pupils 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 regulation.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

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 to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

Section 5: The role of the governing body

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- review the policy every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- 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 values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection, and access to support if they need it

Section 6: The role of the headteacher and senior leadership team

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- liaise with outside agencies, Bolton Local Authority, CISS
- keep the governing body informed
- be the first point of contact for family/child
- record bereavements affecting children
- 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
- deal with media enquiries, the Press Office can be reached on 01204 331015, 01204 331021 on 01204 3334582 and acting as spokesperson for the school in collaboration with the Local Authority

Initial contact to the deceased family should be established by the headteacher to gather factual information regarding the death, if not already received from agencies such as the police. The family's wishes should be ascertained and respected regarding the sharing of information. The deputy headteacher or designed member of staff will assume the role in the absence of the headteacher.

Section 7: The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- 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 (see 'Children's understanding of death' in Appendix A and 'The stages of grief' in Appendix B)
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the headteacher and pastoral team
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of tutor (teachers only)
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

Our pastoral manager has had more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other members of staff etc.

Section 8: The role of the local authority

The Local Authority can offer support at times of bereavement. The first point of contact for support is the Critical Incident Support Service (CISS) on 01204 338060 who can offer support at the following levels:

Stage 1

Support would be offered when a school rings up for advice about an incident. At this level advice would be given over the telephone and the checklist 'Specific Actions to be taken in the event of the death of a pupil' in Appendix C is likely to be used to guide discussion.

Stage 2

Support would be offered if, following a request for involvement from a school, it was felt that a visit was necessary to provide support to senior management and staff. Support at this level would involve discussion with senior management about how the incident might best be handled and could, for example, involve attendance at a staff meeting in order to help co-ordinate the school response to a critical incident. One to one support may also be provided for individual staff who wish to talk confidentially.

Stage 3

Support focuses upon longer term needs of staff and pupils. This may include ongoing advice to staff and parents, individual counselling or referral to other agencies where appropriate.

Section 9: Responding to bereavement: death of a member of the school community

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 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 pupil
- 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 Bolton Hospice or Winston's Wish
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils 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 pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

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. We will refer to the CISS produced document 'Specific actions to be taken in the event of the death of a pupil' in Appendix D.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (headteacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- prepare a press statement, with support from the council's communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (headteacher)
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. 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. We will adapt the scripts and letters in Appendix D.
- inform pupils 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 (see Appendix D)
- 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

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 pupils 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 pupils
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the 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 pupils 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

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 providing emotional support as required. 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, see Appendix E for useful websites and resources
- 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.

Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide

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

We will seek advice from CISS. As a school community we will 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'.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/>

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the pupils 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:

- is 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 life' rather than 'committed suicide' or 'successful suicide' and saying 'attempted to end his / her life' rather than 'unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed attempt at suicide'

Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die and/or 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 – 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/>

Section 10: 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 pupils.

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

Section 11: 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 where appropriate.

Section 12: Supporting young people with additional learning needs

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 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
- 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, 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

Children with learning difficulties are no different to all other children and young people 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 in order that it is honest and understood, finding creative ways to communicate when words are sometimes not appropriate.

Section 13: Supporting 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, www.1pointbolton.org.uk/ (Silver wellbeing Bereavement Service), Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>, or access to the school counsellor.

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

Staff 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.

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Bolton EPS offers training on bereavement and Covid-19 specific bereavement on request. Bolton Hospice also offers both teenage bereavement and child bereavement training – further information is provided in Appendix E.

Section 14: Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-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.

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-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.

Section 15: Social Media

If news of an incident or death is shared on social media sites, Mount St Joseph 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, until all the facts have been established and all family members, friends and colleagues have been informed. Respect and empathy are key to ensuring the bereaved do not face unnecessary trauma and Mount St Joseph will make every effort to handle the event and communication of this in a sensitive and efficient manner.

Section 16: Appendices

Appendix A: Children's understanding of death

Appendix B: The stages of grief

Appendix C: Specific actions to be taken in the event of the death of a pupil

Appendix D: Example letters and scripts to use with the school community

Appendix E: Monitoring school community matrix

Appendix F: Useful websites, resources and training details

Appendix A: Children's understanding of death

Adults and children feel the same loss when a loved one dies, but their reactions can be noticeably different.

Children themselves react in different ways to a loss, depending on their age and stage of development. The worst loss of all, at any age, is that of bereavement.

Age	Thought Processes	Emotional Responses	Behaviour Responses
Early years	Unable to grasp the permanence of separation. When a child experiences the loss or death of a primary carer the child will need help in coming to terms with the irreversibility of the situation. Children at this age may confuse death with sleep. Their view of the world is still highly egocentric and they need reassurance if they feel that they are in some way responsible. Questions they have are best dealt with honestly and factually and euphemisms for death are best avoided.	Children may become anxious about themselves or the lost loved one. There may be yearning and searching for the person who is not there although expression of sadness may be short-lived. Children at this age react strongly to the emotions of the adults around them. They may be very anxious when separating from the surviving parent.	Children may be clingy and/or regress in some aspects of their development and behaviour, eg thumb sucking, bed wetting, soiling etc. Sleep may be disturbed and children are believed to be more prone to infections and other illnesses following the death of a parent. More disturbed behaviour may be evident in children who have not yet developed language abilities to talk about and understand what has happened to them.
5 to 7	The permanence of death may still not be established and this is still a stage of 'magical' (irrational) thinking. Children may have clearer ideas of the concepts of 'life' and 'death', eg death means separation. They are likely to ask more relevant questions about death.	Children at this age may be more distressed and for longer periods, eg excessive crying. There may be anger or feelings of guilt. Many children may, however, carry on as if nothing has happened.	Children may act out death and dying. They may be particularly restless in school and at home. Psychosomatic symptoms, eg 'tummy aches' and sleep disturbance may be evident. The child may have fantasies about the lost loved one and daydreaming may be particularly apparent.
8 to 11	Children now understand the permanence of death but there still may be	There may be anxiety about self or other people dying. Feelings of sadness	There may be significant changes in behaviour, with children internalising or

	<p>confusion about metaphors and euphemisms used to describe death. There is now a realisation that death can occur to the child him/herself. The child has greater capacity to reason in a logical way about what happened and to be more objective.</p>	<p>may last longer. They are now more able to empathise with others and support them. The child may be anxious about separating from a surviving parent, eg reluctant to come to school and high levels of reassurance are needed.</p>	<p>externalising their feelings. Anger and aggression may be more apparent. Nail biting, sleep disturbance and physical illness may occur.</p>
Adolescence	<p>Adolescents can usually think in abstract terms and they may ask more detailed questions about death. They are now able to understand the longer-term consequences of death and now have a more adult understanding of death and life and death cycles in nature. They may develop their own theories about death and life after death. They may become interested in ethical issues such as abortion or euthanasia.</p>	<p>Bereavement at this age can generate a whole range of emotional responses. Teenagers' emotional reactions are often stronger and wider ranging. They may worry about the future and they may feel depressed and lonely. Boys may be less able to talk about their feelings. Teenagers can experience feelings of survival guilt.</p>	<p>Teenagers who experience bereavement may internalise their grief and distress, eg eating disorders, self-harm, physical illness, disturbed sleep, etc. Alternatively, the bereaved teenager may try to shut out or express their feelings by externalising their concerns through challenging behaviour, increased risk-taking behaviour, conflict, use of alcohol or drugs etc.</p>

Appendix B: The stages of grief

Grieving takes people through many different emotions; the grieving process will take its natural course. It is accepted that when we grieve, we may go through several different stages, though we can move backwards and forwards through them, or perhaps not go through all of them. These are:

- accepting the reality of the loss
- experiencing the pain of grief
- adjusting to the changes that have occurred
- being able to invest in new relationships.

The grieving process for any loss can be the most difficult and painful stage to go through and a wide range of feelings and behaviours may occur, not always in any predictable order. Grieving can cover a wide variety of feelings.

Feeling	What do children need and what we can do to help
<p>Anxiety If a child loses someone on whom they are largely dependent for their wellbeing they can experience strong feelings of insecurity and anxiety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance that their world has not disintegrated • Information or honest answers to their questions • Patience and support from the people around them • Time to adjust to a new way of life • Routines and stability at home and school • Language which is straightforward and easily understood • Time to accept their emotions as well as time to express them
<p>Anger Feelings of anger are often experienced by children and young people after a loss and this can be externally directed or directed on themselves. Managing their feelings of anger can be particularly frightening for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe place to express their anger and confusion • Adults who are prepared to listen and who acknowledge their grief • Reassurance that they were not responsible for what happened • Time to adjust to what has happened • Familiar routines and lifestyles • Adults who will admit they don't know all the answers
<p>Denial & disbelief Such feelings often occur immediately when bad news is given such as the death of a significant person. Feelings of numbness can be an initial defence mechanism to protect the child from the emotional trauma they are experiencing. Shock and numbness may last for several hours before reality breaks through.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be told the facts about what has happened as clearly and concisely as possible and in language they understand • Familiar routines and safe surroundings • People who will help to keep the memory of the person 'alive' • To be allowed to express their responses in a way which is right for them as long as they are not endangering themselves or anyone else
<p>Strong visual association & sleep disturbance Research suggests that in experiencing emotional trauma sensory impressions can be more powerful and, particularly where language development is not complete, powerful sensory images may be associated with the trauma. Strong visual images may recur particularly at night. Sleep disturbances can also be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language that describes death in a way that is understood • Reassurance that they are 'safe' as they sleep • Opportunities to act out or role-play their anxieties or experiences • Information and honest answers to their questions

triggered by adults euphemistically referring to death as sleep.	
Sadness & longing Such feelings may last for only a short period but they can be very intense and painful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'safe' place to express their emotions • Opportunities to role-play their experiences and emotions • Continuity in care at home and at school • Adults who will comfort them and help them express how they feel
Children can sometimes experience feelings of guilt & self-blame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance that they were not to blame either through thought or neglect • Time to adjust to what has happened • Opportunities to express their anxiety, for example through counselling or therapy • Opportunities to give a 'last message' to say what they would like to have told the deceased person before they died, to 'repair' something they wish they hadn't said etc.

Appendix C: Specific actions to be taken in the event of the death of a pupil

Every school community is different, and the death of a pupil is a uniquely challenging event which will inevitably put a school community under considerable pressure.

The Critical Incident Support Service (CISS) has developed this checklist which sets out a number of actions which schools are strongly advised to consider in the event of the death of a pupil. Although situations where a pupil dies unexpectedly will be the most challenging, some aspects of this checklist may also be of use where a pupil has died after a lengthy period of illness.

The precise detail of the actions that will need to be carried out by schools in the event of the death of a pupil will vary depending on the individual circumstances of the death. Similarly, the order in which actions recommended under this guidance will vary according to the specific circumstances of the pupil's death. If help or guidance is needed schools can seek the support of the CISS, who can be contacted on 01204 338060.

Ref	Immediate Actions	Initials / date / notes
1	Identify a single point of contact within the school to receive queries. School may wish to establish a 'mini team' to support the Head Teacher and share out some of the roles and decision making.	
2	Contact the deceased's family to offer condolences and identify a family member to act as a point of contact and liaison between the school and the pupil's family. This would usually be the headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.	

3	Gaining parental / carer consent Confirm the wishes of parents / carers of the child who has died in respect of sharing information about the child's death.	
4	Take account of religious and cultural factors. Consider identifying a liaison or link person within the community for support in accordance with the wishes of the parents/carers of the child who has died.	
5	Send letter or card of condolence from headteacher and staff to family and individuals affected.	
6	Consider seeking support from the Critical Incident Support Service (CISS) on 01204 338060.	
7	Confirm whether the pupil has close family members at other schools and liaise with those schools to ensure that information about the death is shared with family members in an appropriate and timely way.	
8	Identify staff who need to be informed of the death and the most appropriate order to be told. This will be dependent on the size of the school and the specific circumstances of the death but you may wish to consider the need to inform the following staff alongside any wider notification to the staff group as a whole: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the headteacher and their deputy • the chair of governors • the child's form or class teacher and others who taught the child • the school's pastoral care staff • the school's administration staff 	
9	Inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as friendship groups), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and considering the expertise in the school. Inform the wider community in line with the wishes of the family – assemblies and / or letters to parents. In larger schools, you may wish to consider providing class or form teachers with a 'script' for use with their classes. See sample scripts in appendix D. CISS will be able to support you further support if required.	
10	Develop a plan for telling parents and carers of pupils at the school about the death. The way the plan will be structured will depend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the size of the school • the ages of pupils within the school • the specific circumstances of the death • the mechanism(s) that the school usually uses to communicate with parents 	

	<p>You may wish to consider whether parents or carers are informed about the death before pupils in the school.</p> <p>You may also wish to consider the extent to which information about the death may be circulating among parents and carers of pupils at the school. See appendix D for example sample letters for parents / carers and families. CISS will be able to provide further support on request.</p>	
11	Consider how to support the needs and wellbeing of the children and staff affected e.g. one or two quiet rooms might be set aside for pupils to withdraw to talk to each other about how they feel.	
12	Consider how the school will respond to parents who wish to show support to the bereaved family by bringing flowers or gifts to the school to be passed on.	
13	Ensure that the child's death is recorded on the school's pupil database and inform Bolton Council Information Management Unit by calling 01204 337461 (NB, this needs to be done on the day the child dies if possible, to ensure that the child is removed from school and council mail lists immediately. Instances where school or council mailshots include correspondence to or about children who have died may be extremely distressing for families).	
14	If the child is a Looked After Child, or subject to a safeguarding intervention, inform Business Support on 01204 332010, who will inform the relevant Assistant Director(s).	
15	Consider the need to manage the media or public interest in the death from Bolton Council's Press Office. The Press Office can be reached on 01204 331015, 01204 331021 or 01204 333582. You are reminded of the need to ensure that all public statements are in accordance with the wishes of the parents / carers of the child who has died.	

Ref	Short Term Actions	Initials / date / notes
16	Encourage messages from friends to write a last goodbye to the deceased person (what they would like to have said to the person).	
17	Identify how to pass on condolences as a class / school - letters, condolence book, memorial, obtaining a collective view.	
18	Prepare class / school for siblings return to school if appropriate.	
19	Staff to be aware of friends/pupils struggling and someone to be available to offer them support.	

20	Support for child's family. Involve them in remembering the child in school. Maintain link between family and school.	
21	Support for staff. Look out for staff who may be affected (sometimes those not directly involved with the deceased person can be strongly affected).	
22	<p>Develop a plan for providing staff and pupils in the school with access to emotional support. Use the monitoring school community matrix to identify pupils and required support (see appendix E).</p> <p>The way the plan will be structured will depend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the size of the school • the ages of pupils within the school • the specific circumstances of the death <p>CISS will be able to support you in the development of a plan.</p> <p>Issues that you will wish to consider in developing an emotional support plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the availability of resources within the school • help that may be available from external sources • how you will identify pupils or staff who will need additional support – CISS will be able to discuss the operation of "triage" systems for ensuring that pupils or staff who need additional support are identified appropriately with you. 	
23	Consider the need to identify a 'quiet space' or 'community space' that pupils, parents / carers or staff can go to if necessary.	

Ref	Medium Term Actions	Initials / date / notes
24	Consider the implications of the death for any extra-curricular activities such as celebration evenings or school shows.	
25	If necessary, inform UCAS and examination bodies of the pupil's death. If parents wish to have examination results sent to the school rather than to their home address, make the necessary arrangements.	
26	Consider the extent to which staff supporting pupils will be unavailable for their normal duties and consider whether it is necessary to provide staff cover for this.	
27	The person identified as liaison, to contact the family of the child who has died to confirm arrangements for the funeral and the extent to which the family wants the school community to take part in the service. This may involve managing the expectations	

	of either the family or of pupils and families within the school community.	
28	<p>Consider any practical arrangements that will need to be made in respect of the funeral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arranging transport for staff or pupils attending the funeral if a group of pupils will be attending as part of a school day. • in schools with 6th forms, staff may wish to ask pupils who have passed a driving test and who drive to school to consider the advisability of driving while they are distressed if they plan to drive to the funeral. • arranging cover for staff attending the funeral. • liaison with the parents or carers of pupils who will be attending the funeral. • ensuring that support services such as school catering are aware of any change to the numbers of pupils who will be in school (NB, for any services bought in from Bolton Council, you should contact policyandperformance@bolton.gov.uk who will inform support services on your behalf). 	
29	<p>Consider how best to gather the pupil's/child's possessions and return them to the family. Ensure that lockers/drawers/trays are emptied with respect and items are checked (e.g. exercise books, learning journals) and returned to the family. This may mean returning artwork displayed in the school and PE kit to the family as well as the contents of the child's personal storage space.</p>	
30	<p>Review the plan and ongoing need for pupils and staff in the school to have access to emotional support.</p> <p>Issues that you will wish to consider in developing an emotional support plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the resources available within the school • whether outside agencies can offer support 	

Ref	Longer Term Actions	Initials / date / notes
31	<p>Consider the best way to hold an act of remembrance. The way this will be structured will depend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the size of the school • the ages of pupils within the school • the specific circumstances of the death <p>Any act of remembrance must be in accordance with the wishes of the family of the child who has died.</p> <p>CISS will be able to support you in the design of an act of remembrance.</p>	

	Issues that you will wish to consider may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the form that the act of remembrance will take which pupils should be invited to take part if the act of remembrance is not being opened up to the whole school 	
32	Review the plan again and the 'monitoring school community matrix' (see appendix E) to consider the ongoing need for pupils and staff in the school to have access to emotional support. Issues that may arise that you will wish to consider on review include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of, and response to, complicated or prolonged grief. the resources available within the school whether outside agencies can offer support 	
33	Identify key future dates where you may need to pay particular attention to the needs of the school community, such as birthdays or anniversaries. You may consider contacting CISS and the family of the child who has died to discuss their wishes on a permanent memorial to the child who has died within the school	
35	Monitor the emotional needs of pupils and provide listening time and ongoing support as appropriate. Consider their peer and friendship groups as peer support during this time can be particularly important at this time.	
36	Monitor the emotional needs of staff and ensure that members of staff are aware of the support available to them through the school's Occupational Health provision. Schools taking up the Occupational Health SLA offered by Bolton Council will have access to a 24 hour helpline on 0800 1116 387.	
37	Signpost families to bereavement support including www.Kooth.com , 1pointbolton.org.uk and Winston's Wish.	

Appendix D: Example letters and scripts to use with the school community

Example 1 – When a pupil has died. Script to use with children / young people (as part of a class/form get together / assembly)

"Some of you may already have heard that (name) died. S/he suffered from (consider what information you need to give the children – in agreement with the family). Some of you may be feeling shocked at this news or it may make you feel sad or cross / angry by what has happened. Or you may not feel anything at all. It is ok to have any of these feelings. One minute you may be feeling upset and then the next you may be feeling ok and want to go outside and spend time with your friends. Having different feelings throughout the day is normal. It may make you think of people in your family who have died and this may make you upset and this is normal too. If you want to talk about how you feel,

or cry or laugh about your memories of her/him, then this is ok and we will be here for you. If you don't wish to talk, you may prefer to draw a picture or write a poem.

We will try and answer any questions that you have but we may not be able to answer all of them as we may not have all the information. We are going to remember by having (e.g. a memorial)." You will have the opportunity during (class / form time) to write and draw memories of"

Example 2 – letter to parents / carers when a child's in the school community has died

Dear parents / carers

"We have some sad news to share. We heard today that [name] in Year [X] has died. S/he died suddenly/had been ill for a long amount of time. We are in touch with the family and have expressed our sadness and our support. The family would appreciate any condolences which can be sent to [contact details] / At the moment, the family would prefer some time to absorb what has happened but will appreciate your condolences in a while.

If you have concerns about your child, please contact their class teacher / tutor.

As a school and a community our thoughts must go to 's family. It is at times like this when a school community comes together to show our support for others in our community who may need it."

(Adapted from Winston's Wish)

Example 3 – when a member of staff / governor has died (letter)

Dear parents/carers

"I know some of you will be aware that (name), (job title) at the school has been ill for (length of time). suffered from (state only confirmed facts in agreement with the family). S/he had worked at the school for ...years and was a well-respected member of the school community. S/he was a (information about his / her role at the school; class / year group s/he taught in / supported). contributed widely to..... (any areas s/he was interested in). will be sorely missed. We will consider as a school, how we will remember

If you have any concerns about your child, please contact their class teacher / form tutor. Please can you ask your child to not post anything on social media out of respect for 's family. I would be grateful for your support with this.

As a school and a community our thoughts must go to 's family. It is at times like this when a school community comes together to show our support for others in our community who may need it."

Example 4 – when a child's family member has died

Dear parents / carers

"We have some sad news to share. We heard today that the [relationship e.g. father] of [name] in Year [X] has died. . S/he died suddenly/had been ill for a long amount of time. We are in touch with the family and have expressed our sadness and our support. The family would appreciate any condolences which can be sent to [contact details] / At the moment, the family would prefer some time to absorb what has happened but will appreciate your condolences in a while.

If you have concerns about your child, please contact their class teacher / tutor.

As a school and a community our thoughts must go to’s family. It is at times like this when a school community comes together to show our support for others in our community who may need it."

(Adapted from Winston’s Wish)

Appendix E: Monitoring school community matrix

The Monitoring Matrix is a tool that can be used in order to identify and monitor children and young people who may require additional support following a critical incident. The information recorded on the matrix will include the child’s name, year group and the reason you consider them to be vulnerable following the incident. This will also include the name of a nominated member of staff who will be responsible for monitoring the child’s wellbeing and the action agreed as an educational setting to support the child or young person. The matrix includes a way of rating your level of concern about the child, with 3 being your highest level of concern and 0 being no concern and you’ll monitor these ratings regularly. If the concern ratings stay high, it will be important to evaluate and adjust your level of support. When making this adjustment, it will be helpful to consider your own support from within the setting and, in some cases, the need for support from external services.

It’s important when planning your action to support your vulnerable children to:

- **Build on systems already in place** in your school/setting
- Start from where the young person is – **using their voice**

Appendix E: Monitoring school community matrix

Name of student	Year group	Reason for vulnerability	Named adult	Action to support student	Concern rating 0 - 3 (0 – some concern - 3 most concern)				
					Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Appendix F: Useful websites and resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Local support services

Bolton Bereavement Service for Children and Young People:

<https://boltonladsandgirlsclub.co.uk/targeted-youth-services/bolton-bereavement-service-for-children-and-young-people/>

Bolton Lads and Girls Club provide a single point of access for children, young people (8 – 18 years) and their families who have experienced bereavement and are identified as requiring extra support. Referrals are made to bereavement@blgc.co.uk using the referral form on their website.

Chat Health (Tel: 07507 331753)

A confidential texting service for anyone aged between 11 and 19 (25 if a Care Leaver or have SEND) who lives or goes to school in Bolton. Young people can text a Bolton Public Health Nurse anonymously for support on a range of topics including mental health, bullying, smoking, drugs, sexual health, bereavement, relationships and much more. To use Chat Health they simply text their message to the number above and will get a reply within 24 hours.

Kooth www.kooth.com

Kooth is for young people in Bolton aged 11-25 and offers anonymous 1:1 text-based counselling, self-help support, moderated peer support forums and 24-7 messaging function available 365 days a year. Schools in Bolton can also request virtual or face to face sessions for pupils and / or staff by contacting Heather Hook (Kooth's Integration and Participation Worker for Bolton) hhook@kooth.com

SHOUT (Text: 85258)

24/7 free crisis text line available to anyone across Greater Manchester. By texting 'SHOUT' to '85258' a texter will be put in touch with a trained crisis volunteer who will chat to them using trained techniques via text. The service is designed to help individuals to think more clearly and to take their next steps to feeling better.

Greater Manchester Bereavement Service: <https://greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk/> (Tel: 0161 983 0902)

Support for anyone in Greater Manchester that has been bereaved or affected by a death. The website includes an interactive map which displays all the bereavement support service available in a particular area in addition to a page dedicated to resources and materials to download.

National support services and support resources

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org (Tel: 08088 020 021)

Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Helpline available 9 am – 5 pm Mondays – Fridays.

On-line chat available Wednesdays and Fridays 12 pm – 4 pm.
Crisis Messenger: text 'WW' to 85258

Child Bereavement UK: www.childbereavementuk.org/ (Tel: 0800 02 888 04)

Supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age is dying or when a child is facing bereavement. A large number of resources are available to download and purchase including an 'information for schools' pack.

National freephone helpline: 0800 02 888 40 Mon – Fri 9am – 5 pm

Cruse Bereavement: www.cruse.org.uk (Tel: 0808 808 1677)

Offers support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies.

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

National freephone helpline: 0808 808 1677 9.30 am – 5 pm (Mon and Fri), 9.30 am – 8.00 pm

Dedicated website for young people: www.hopeagain.org.uk

Young person e-mail: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

Grief Encounter: www.griefencounter.org.uk (Tel: 0808 802 0111)

Provides support for bereaved children and has many useful resources on the website. This also offers a helpline 'griefftalk' for children, young people and adults (available Mon – Fri 9 am – 9 pm (access via homepage).

National freephone helpline: 0808 802 0111 Mon – Fri 9 am – 9 pm.

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> (Tel: 0808 808 1677)

A website from Cruse for young people coping with bereavement and living with loss.

Once Upon a Smile: www.onceuponasmile.org.uk/ (Tel: 0161 711 0339)

Provides opportunities for children to understand and express their emotions in a fun and safe environment.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> (Tel: 0800 068 4141)

Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> (Tel: 116 123)

A helpline for individuals having a difficult time or if they are worried about someone else. The website offers a range of guidance and support for schools.

Adult support

1 point www.1pointbolton.org.uk/ (Tel: 01204 917745)

As part of the wider counselling offer, 1point also provide IAPT bereavement counselling which is open to all registered with a GP in Bolton.

Silverwellbeing Therapy Service silverwellbeing@1pointbolton.org.uk (Tel: 01204 917745)

Provides telephone / online therapy for all forms of bereavement and loss for people aged 16 years and over for anyone living, working or studying in Bolton. It also provides couples counselling.

Bolton Hospice Education@boltonhospice (Tel 01204 663066)

Bereavement support is available for users of Bolton Hospice's services and is currently being offered via membership of a bereavement WhatsApp group and phone/video 1-1 support: 01204 663066.

Bolton NHS Foundation Trust's Bereavement support group (Tel: 01204 3900448) Telephone support is currently available for bereaved families of both Covid and non-Covid patients who have died in the Trust.

SilverCloud <https://nhs.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

This is support for health & care staff and their families. Use access code: NHS2020 or Non-NHS/Public sector workers: GMCA2020

For the general public: <https://gm.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/greatermanchester/>. No code is required.

Greater Manchester Suicide Bereavement Information Service helpline (Tel: 0161 983 0700 Mon – Fri 10am-4pm) www.shiningalightonsuicide.org.uk

This is a confidential information service for people bereaved or affected by suicide:

NHS Bereavement Helpline (Tel 0800 2600 400)

Supports bereaved families during pandemic.

Greater Manchester Bereavement Service (Tel: 0161 983 0902)

<https://greater-manchester-bereavement-service.org.uk/>

This offered support for anyone in Greater Manchester that has been bereaved or affected by a death. The website includes an interactive map which displays all the bereavement support services available in a particular area in addition to a page dedicated to resources and materials to download. For those unable to access the website they can ring

GM Victim' Support (Tel: 0161 200 1950) <https://www.gmvictims.org.uk/>

Call the support line on between 9am- 7pm Mon-Fri or Saturday 9am-5pm or visit the website to live chat or request a call back. Outside of opening hours, call the 24-hour line on 08 08 16 89 111.

Training

Bolton Hospice

The education team at Bolton Hospice provide training and support to both primary and secondary school staff. This training offers a time to discuss, reflect and share ideas and experiences in a safe and confidential environment identified by groups of staff working in palliative and end of life care education.

The course includes discussions surrounding the social taboo of death, conversations around loss, grief, exploration of grief theories and provide a toolkit with regards to supporting young people through loss and bereavement. The toolkit incorporates memory work such as creative outlets, expression of feelings and remembrance activities which are age appropriate.

Bolton Hospice also offers bereavement support and a family bereavement programme to any individual or family that has been previously known to the hospice during a loved ones care.

Bolton Educational Psychology Service

Bolton EPS (as part of CISS) offer training to schools though their traded offer. Course content includes exploring what 'loss' and 'bereavement' means to different people; developmental stages of grief; how children and young people may experience the grieving process; supporting your school community; looking after yourselves and developing a toolbox and resources. The EPS can be contacted on 01204 338060 to discuss this further.

The Critical Incident Resources (TCIR) www.tciresource.co.uk

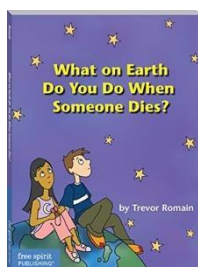
This website includes a set of training materials to equip senior leaders with knowledge and skills when responding to a critical incident.

Books on Bereavement – Secondary

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?

Trevor Romain (Free Spirit Publishing (ISBN: 9781575420554)

(8-14 years)

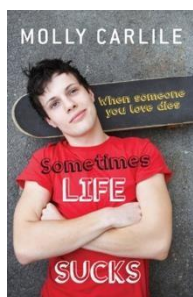


Written by Trevor Romain after his father died, this book suggests ways of coping with grief and offers answers to questions such as 'Why do people have to die?' and 'How can I say goodbye?' Friendly, accessible text and illustrations.

Sometimes Life Sucks: When Someone You Love Dies

Molly Carlile (Allen & Unwin, ISBN: 9781742371887)

(12+ years)

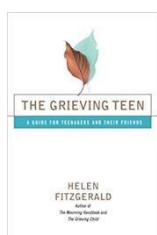


Teenagers can experience death in all kinds of ways. Full of tips and stories, this will help them to make some sense of their shock and grief.

The Grieving Teen

Helen Fitzgerald (Simon & Schuster Ltd, ISBN 978-0684868042)

(13-17 years)



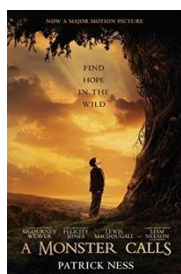
Written about, but also for teenagers, this book covers the entire range of situations in which grieving teens and their friends may find themselves. It offers explanations and guidance in a very accessible format.

The Fault In Our Stars (also a film)
John Green (Penguin, ISBN-13: 978-0141355078)
(13+ years)



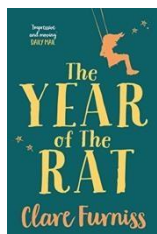
The story follows the main character, Hazel Grace Lancaster, as she battles cancer. Not only is Hazel trying to live the normal life of a 16-year-old girl, but she is also struggling with what it will be like for her parents after she dies.

A Monster Calls (also a film)
Patrick Ness (Walker Books, ISBN 13: 978-1406339345)
(13+ years)



Connor's mum has cancer and life is irrevocably, disturbingly changing. First there is the nightmare, filled with screaming and falling; then there is school, where people avoid him (not knowing what to say), or persecute him.

The Year of the Rat
Clare Furniss (Simon & Schuster Children's UK, ISBN-13, 9781471120282)
(14-18 years)



Grappling with grief is hard enough without repeat visits from the deceased. Pearl deals with death, life, and family in this haunting, humorous, and poignant debut. The world can tip at any moment, a fact that fifteen-year-old Pearl is all too aware of when her mum dies after giving birth to her baby sister

Further Recommended Reading for Teenagers from Child Bereavement UK:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=db5dae32-469b-4087-8220-08f015aa7a34>

Further Recommended Reading for Children and Teenagers from Barnardo's

<https://www.educators-barnardos.org.uk/themes/bereavement/books-to-help-children-and-teenagers-going-through-bereavement>

Social Stories - These can be adapted for children with social communication difficulties and ASD:

Lion King Themed Social Story

This example uses Mufasa's death from the Lion King to link in the idea that others watch over us when they have died

<https://www.pathfindersforautism.org/docs/social-story-about-death.pdf>

Loss of a Family Member Adaptable Social Story Twinkl Resource

Story from Twinkl (subscription needed) which can be adapted to the child when they lose a family member

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-s-3686-loss-of-a-family-member-social-stories>

Autism Little Learners Someone I Love Died Social Story























Social story outlining when people die, what might happen and how we might feel.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19jv-lkS5JcqEZpMMuvWXXP_q_VOoXFXQ/view

Example Social Story Resource

(credit to Barb Fogarty - <https://elunanetwork.org/resources/supporting-grieving-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorder>). See overleaf.

My Special Person Died

Most people are alive and healthy.	<div> <div>alive</div> <div>  </div> <div> <div>healthy</div> <div>  </div> </div> </div>
I am alive and healthy.	<div> <div>I</div> <div>  </div> <div> <div>alive</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>healthy</div> <div>  </div> </div> </div>
But sometimes people die.	<div> <div>die</div> <div>  </div> </div>
People die from a sickness, accident, or when they are old and their body stops working.	<div> <div>sick</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>accident</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>old</div> <div>  </div> </div>
When people die, they do not come back.	<div> <div>die</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>come back</div> <div>  </div> </div>
My special person died and is not coming back.	<div> <div>person</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>die</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>come back</div> <div>  </div> </div>
This makes me very sad and I may cry. That is OK.	<div> <div>sad</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>cry</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>OK</div> <div>  </div> </div>
I can think of the happy times I had with my special person.	<div> <div>happy</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>times</div> </div>
Soon I will feel better and be happy again.	<div> <div>happy</div> <div>  </div> </div>
I know my special person will always love me and I will always love them!	<div> <div>person</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>love</div> <div>  </div> </div> <div> <div>me</div> <div>  </div> </div>



Created by Barb Fogarty, MS