



## Supporting school staff

The death of a pupil is one of the most painful experiences a school community can face, and teachers often carry a unique emotional burden. They're grieving while also feeling responsible for holding their pupils, colleagues, and the wider school environment together. Having the right support is essential for the stability and wellbeing of the whole school community.

Understanding the emotional landscape helps you respond with sensitivity.

### What Education Staff Often Experience

- **Shock and disbelief** — especially if the death was sudden
- **Guilt** — wondering if they “missed something” or could have done more
- **Fear of saying the wrong thing** to pupils or parents
- **Pressure to stay strong** while managing their own grief
- **Exhaustion** from emotional labour and disrupted routines

Teachers and support staff need to give themselves permission to grieve, having access to support is essential.

### Understanding Their Feelings

Teachers and support staff often worry about what to say to pupils. Provide:

- agreed language for the class
- scripts or talking points
- clarity on what information can be shared

### What support can be helpful?

- Acknowledge the loss directly and allowing time for staff to process and reflect
- Acknowledgement and validation of feelings is important
- Thinking about workload, cover duties lighten planning demands for staff directly impacted i.e. class teachers support staff
- Allow teachers to step out of class if needed, adjust timetables
- Providing a safe space to talk which is confidential and allows expression without judgement this maybe a group debrief or 1-1 meetings

This reduces anxiety and prevents misinformation. Ensure all school staff have this information as children have different key/safe people they feel comfortable speaking with.



## Ongoing Support

It's important to remember grief doesn't follow a timetable, and support shouldn't either.

Support should be on going and not just in the first few days following the death of the pupil.

### Having regular check-in with staff

- Access to counselling
- Supervision sessions
- External bereavement specialist support - head to our website to find out more about our Bereavement Education Support Service for schools [www.bodiehodgesfoundation.co.ukbereavement-education](http://www.bodiehodgesfoundation.co.ukbereavement-education)
- Colleagues often understand the experience most deeply, facilitated peer groups or informal buddy systems can be beneficial
- Anniversaries, empty chairs, class activities can be very difficult

### They may need:



time to rest



permission to  
step back



reassurance that  
their reactions are  
normal



reminders that they're  
not responsible for  
fixing everything

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