

Change, loss and bereavement



Karen Summers
karen@pshe-association.org.uk

***We cannot prevent the birds of sorrow
from landing on our shoulder but we
can prevent them from nesting in our
hair.***

(Old Chinese Proverb)

Change, loss and bereavement

- In the PSHE curriculum and wider
- Whole school approaches
- In the classroom
- Useful organisations

Ground Rules (Working Agreement)

- Mutual respect
- Honesty
- Confidentiality (*not identifying colleagues, in group work only share your own 'things'*)
- Participation
- Timekeeping
- Mobile phones
- Enjoy

Where does it fit in?

PSHE education Programmes of Study (Key Stages 1 – 4)

Education legislation, OFSTED expectations and other places!

- Duty to safeguard & **promote the welfare** of children (s.175 Education Act 2002)
- Children Act (2004) – statutory obligation to **promote pupils' wellbeing**
- Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 (applies to every school) provide a curriculum which: *prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life*
- DfE SRE guidance (2000) & SRE for the 21st Century (2014) – **puberty, menstruation + changes in our bodies**

OFSTED

- SMSC: *gain a well-informed understanding of the options and challenges facing them*
- The extent to which the education provided by the school *meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school*
- Overall effectiveness: must take into account the destination of pupils when they leave school and *consider how well they have been prepared for their next steps*
- Supplementary subject specific (PSHE): *developing discernment and resilience’, ‘taking into account full range of pupils’ needs’, ‘all pupils engage fully in activities to promote their personal and social development’*

Other curriculum areas

- **Maths** – calculating life expectancy, comparing ages of death
- **Science** – changes in plant and animal life, medical advances re life expectancy
- **History** – social responses to loss, war, plague
- **Geography** – life expectancy in different populations/nations, interdependency humans & natural world
- **Art** – colour symbolism in mourning, painting a response to loss, change
- **D & T** – designing memory boxes, floral tributes
- **RE** – exploring faith/secular approaches to loss, change, death, artefacts and imagery, lives of saints/martyrs, mourning rituals

Recent surveys...

- 4 – 7% (16 year olds) bereaved of a parent
- 20, 000 bereaved of a parent in UK every year; 53 each day, approximately one child every 30 mins
- Similar numbers to above re those bereaved of a sibling (including baby siblings)
- 42% marriages end in divorce (2012)

Recent surveys...

- Bereaved pupils/families **visit their GP more frequently**
- **78%** (11 – 16 year olds) said that they had been bereaved of a close relative or friend
- Mortality rates vary by social class/geography, *children living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be bereaved*
- **Mortality rates** among disabled young people with complex health needs **are higher** than among the general population
- Pupils attending special schools **more likely to be bereaved of a peer** than peers in mainstream

What are the main needs of bereaved pupils ?

Grief/loss/change – how might it look in school?

- **Behaviour** - pupils may swing between wanting attention and support and normalcy and routine
- **Routines**, expectations may change if parent/carer has changed
- **Families** - may move after a death, may mean changing schools/having to make new friends
- **Families** - adults new to the pupil may move in/or out of the family home
- **Families** - parent/carer may take a new partner/pupil change of name
- **Families** - Mental health/grieving of parent/carer

What might be the physical & emotional consequences if it is denied?

Whole school approaches

Paperwork for schools

- **Strategic school plan** (what we will do if/when x happens), share purpose with all staff
- **Co-ordinated** by – designated staff/govs/parent reps/community/faith reps/members of School Council where appropriate
- **School staff** co-ordinating need cpd – from organisations/agencies
- **Consultation** for strategic plan, disseminated, responsibilities apportioned
- **Regular review** of plan to take into account DfE/national/local guidance

Paperwork for schools

- **Strategic plan:** steps/priorities for the management of : traumatic/critical incident in school/other scenarios: refugees/asylum/adoption, divorce, separation, carers, looked after pupils/death of a teacher/parent/pupil
- **Timescale:** what will we do within hours/same day/as soon as possible/next few days/weeks/as required
- **Personal loss situations:** pupils/parents: breaking sad news to individuals, groups (Who? What? When? Where?)
- **Agreed steps/response:** school will take, identifying vulnerable pupils/groups of pupils/staff, routines, on-going tasks, external liaison agencies/support
- **Rituals:** memorials, ceremonies, assemblies

Practical stuff for schools

- **Liaise:** pupils **AND** parents/carers – discuss support they would like/appreciate
- **Encourage:** bereaved pupils involve in the school community (monitors, prefects) **now, later on**
- **Create:** opportunities for pupils to talk/share their feelings, e.g. circle time, 1:1 time, small groups
- **Make:** counselling available, signpost (pupils/friends/parents/staff) to organisations
- **Give:** pupils opportunities to work through issues in other areas of the curriculum

Practical stuff for schools

- **Foster:** pupils **aspirations** for the future
- **Help to re-build:** self-esteem, 'new kind of normal'
- **Facilitate:** visits outside speakers who have experienced bereavement/loss/change
- **Awareness & support:** difficult times, Christmas, anniversaries, birthdays, transition to different class/year group, change of teaching staff
- **Look out for:** bullying, self harm, friendship issues
- **Foster:** links with outside organisations who can support school

Practical stuff for schools

- **Some pupils:** benefit from circle of friends / support network within school/dedicated adult/pupil mentor/ in school
- **Ensure:** all relevant staff, (including supply teachers?), aware of current situation or forthcoming difficult times/dates (confidentiality kept but staff well-informed)
- **Agree:** with pupil how they will let friends/teachers know how they are feeling/agreed sign/symbol to indicate

Practical stuff for schools

- **Signpost:** books/films/prose for pupils to read independently, help them recognise & understand feelings, identify with characters expressing similar feelings
- **Ensure:** pupils receive an informed choice re what might be helpful to support them with their feelings
- **Continue:** to keep in touch with parents/carers on a regular basis to assess difficulties at home, help to monitor homework levels, talk about difficult days, etc.
- **Appoint:** 'dedicated' adult - act as a contact for parent/carer & pupil

Change, loss and bereavement

Looking after
YOU!

- **Anticipate:** YOU may experience an emotional reaction
- **Share:** feelings/offload (friends/colleagues)
- **Keep** professional **boundaries with pupils**
- **Have information:** relevant resources & organisations for **you and staff**
- **Staff:** colleagues may be deeply affected by loss/death/change

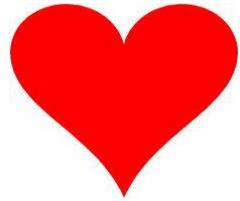
- **Offer:** something that you can deliver (small, realistic, regular chats/liaison with pupil/parents)
- **Do not need to be an 'expert'** to offer effective help!! (being there for them whilst they are in school)
- **Recognise:** when you are running on empty (doing a “good enough” job is perfectly ok!)
- **Be good to yourself:** (time out, stress relieving activities)

Useful organisations

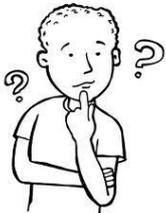
- <http://www.macmillan.org.uk>
- <http://www.cruse.org.uk/Children/teenagers-understanding-death>
- <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk>
- <http://www.winstonswish.org.uk>
- <https://www.willowfoundation.org.uk>
- <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>
- <http://www.griefcounter.org.uk>
- **Liaison with faith communities/representatives**

Useful organisations

- <http://www.teenagecancertrust.org>
- <http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/>
- <http://www.samaritans.org/>
- <http://www.supportline.org.uk/> (signpost to other bereavement charities)
- <http://www.loss-uk.org/>
- <http://www.sads.org/>
- <http://www.muchloved.com/>
- Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Service [tel:0207 403 5969](tel:02074035969)



Something that I felt



Something that made me think



Something that I will throw away



Something that I will take away with me