

Supporting children in primary school when someone has died

- **Chance to ask questions**
 - Emphasise it is unusual for a child to die
 - Don't avoid the topic of death
 - Remember that when a child asks a question it's a good thing. Try not to be scared. It is ok to not know the answer to a question and to be honest about it, as death and dying is about the unknown
 - It can help to have some story books, information leaflets which look at the topic of dying, death and loss for them to look through

- **Chance to say goodbye**
 - What can the children do to say goodbye after someone has died?
 - Cards, letters, pictures, scrap book, planting something?
 - Have a space for it, and prepare the children for when it will not be there

- **Space for feelings**
 - It is important to let the children know that you have been told about what is happening and give them permission to talk to you and named others in the school – tell them who these are
 - It's important to emphasize to the children that it's their choice if they want to talk about it or not
 - A child may need to take time out of class or an activity if feelings overwhelm them (especially the days and weeks after the death). You could have a designated person, area to go to, box of toys for them to use, a card to show to the teacher to indicate time out is needed as the child/ren may find telling what is wrong too hard at that time as well as not wanting attention drawn to themselves
 - Encourage children to keep to normal routines. Sometimes school is the safe, consistent place for the child (although the family may be struggling to get them there)
 - concentration and behaviour may lapse, you may need to repeat instructions more than usual
 - Changes in circumstances in the school (new teachers, timetables etc) and transitions into new classes or schools can be hard for children who are having to cope with many unwanted changes
 - Children may experience; guilt, anger, low self-esteem, desire for attention
 - Learning may be affected; it can become hard to process information, they often feel tired, emotional, withdrawn, anxious and overwhelmed
 - Think about the topics you may be covering in class as there are certain subjects that could provoke emotions such as: topic around things being alive or not alive, biology around breath and organs, religious conversations, the war and people dying, certain pieces of music being used. Mother's Day/Father's Day/Christmas cards being made. You may want to prepare the children for these sessions



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Useful websites

<https://childbereavementuk.org/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

<http://childdeathhelpline.org.uk/>

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/home.aspx>