



# **When a Child Loses a Parent**

## **Some Thoughts From a Personal Perspective**

1. As soon as the death is known to the school have a senior member of staff talk to the immediate classmates about what has happened. Stamp out any gossip and offer support for those who may be affected
2. Send a card and encourage classmates to do the same – saying ‘I didn’t know what to do’ and doing nothing is a form of moral cowardice (and why should you be let off the hook. No-one else knows what to do either)
3. When the child comes back to school talk to them (but don’t patronise. Ask them what they would like their teachers to do)
4. Teach other children to know what to say and how to handle things
5. School can be the place to escape from what is going on at home (‘Home is home and school is school’). Respect that wish as much as possible
6. Grieving is mentally and physically exhausting
7. Be tolerant of homework and other work commitments – evenings may well be spent grieving and talking, not working. Agree work commitments with the child, though, and be firm but caring as you try and ensure they don’t get too far behind (and add a feeling of failure to their grieving)
8. Talk to the spouse if they come to the school – show them you know and care and are there to help. Don’t just ignore them because you don’t know what to say – that’s more moral cowardice
9. Keep on talking to them and letting them know you still remember, even just in small ways
10. Remember the anniversaries
11. Be aware of areas that you may cover in the curriculum that may bring back memories (Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, birthdays, life after death in RE, areas that touch on any illness such as cancer or mental illness...)
12. When another parent dies in the school, make sure you are mindful of other children who have lost parents as it will bring memories back
13. Learn about helping children cope with bereavement from various agencies out there such as [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)
14. Time heals in bereavement as much as it does following an amputation. It is just what you go through to come to terms with things better
15. And thank you for taking the time to read this. You can make a terrible situation a bit less stressful for a grieving family

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