



REINTEGRATION OF THE BEREAVED CHILD IN SCHOOL

Some suggestions are offered here which may help prepare the school and the bereaved child for their return to school. They will help to ensure that the individual, the other students and the staff feel more comfortable and at ease.

- Visit the bereaved student at home to see what s/he would like to happen when they return to school.
- Talk to the student's class about how people are affected by grief and encourage them to share their own feelings. Ask about how they have coped with bereavement in their own lives and what has helped.
- Discuss how difficult it may be for their classmate to come back to school. Ask how they would like to be treated if they were returning to school after a death. This might be done in pairs or small groups, thus encouraging all to be involved. It will also ensure that a range of preferences are expressed, reinforcing the fact that different people will have different preferences as to how they are treated. Some people may want to discuss what has happened, while others may want to be left alone. In general bereaved students say that they would like others to treat them as before rather than being 'over-nice' to them. However, it is a delicate balance as they don't want people to behave as if nothing has happened at all.
- It may help if, in advance of the student's return to school, classmates have sent cards or notes or drawn pictures for the bereaved classmate. This will let her/him know that they are in their thoughts.
- When they return, acknowledge their loss "I'm sorry that (name of deceased) died. I know that you are sad. It is ok to cry". (In Post-Primary schools, check that this is done in the first class of the day and not in every class.)
- Teachers can express their own sympathies separately once the general re-entry to class has been managed.
- When the student returns, they may have difficulty concentrating or joining in class activities. Be understanding.
- Allow them access to a 'quiet room' where he/she can go to be alone. You might suggest: "We can set up a signal for you to use if you need to leave the class at any time". (Ensure supervision).
- Link the student in with the guidance counsellor for support if needed.
- Listen when they want to talk: "If you need to talk at any time, I am here to listen."
- Carry on normal routines and normal approaches to discipline.
- They may have difficulty completing homework and assignments: "If you are having difficulty doing your homework it is ok to do as much as you can for a while."

- Allow them as much time as they need to grieve.