



Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to let you know the extremely sad news that, very recently, children in our school have suffered the tragic loss of a parent. These times are both upsetting and as an adult, very sobering. We must take nothing for granted as life is precious. As professionals, we also consider what we can do to strengthen our curriculum and give children some tools for these unpredictable times.

Because of this, and as part of developing children's emotional health and well-being in school, we will be running a programme of lessons and activities called 'Elephant's Tea Party'. The programme has been developed by the highly respected national charity, Child Bereavement UK, which has over 22 years' experience supporting bereaved children and families, and training professionals who work with bereaved families. The programme reaches approximately 500 schools per year and is continuing to grow across the UK.

Elephant's Tea Party is designed to help all children, whether bereaved or not, to begin to develop coping skills should anyone important to them die now, or in later life. It will help pupils explore bereavement and emotions in an age-appropriate, straightforward, and sensitive way. Widely depicted as a fun, lovable character, the elephant was chosen by Child Bereavement UK as the perfect symbol for this event '—there's an elephant in the room' is an apt metaphor for bereavement and many people are often at a loss to know what to say or do to help a child when someone close to them has died. Elephants have a strong sense of family and are known to express grieving behaviours. They are also reputed to 'never forget'; grieving is about remembering, not forgetting the person who has died. If you would like to read more, visit their website: www.childbereavementuk.org and click on 'For schools'.

Children have a natural curiosity about death and the life cycle and are usually happy to talk and discuss feelings associated with loss. However, in order to ensure their well-being, it is essential that we know about any information that you think may relate to this event, including the deaths of any pets or people important to your child, or any illness in the family which may lead to a bereavement. The sessions will provide opportunities for children to share their experiences if they wish to, and being aware will help us respond in a supportive and helpful way.

Please inform the school of any recent bereavement that your child has had, or any other significant deaths or traumas that your child has experienced. This will ensure that we are fully prepared for any issues that might crop up during or following the lessons. Any details will be treated sensitively.

If you would like a bit more guidance or information, including information sheets and a suggestion of books, Child Bereavement UK has an excellent website where you can download information sheets on subjects including: children's understanding of death at different ages; how children and young people grieve; what helps grieving children and young people; building resilience in bereaved children; and explaining to young children that someone has died. Or you can email the charity directly: support@childbereavementuk.org or call the charity's helpline (Mon-Fri 9-5pm) on 0800 02 888 40.

Please do contact me if you have any concerns, questions, or would like more information.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Jackman