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| **Communicating News about a Critical Incident in Writing**Guidance for Essex schools and education settings**Essex Educational Psychology**September 2024 |

You may use these four sample letters as a basis for a written communication from your school. You can adapt and change it to your particular circumstances. You may also want to write a completely different letter, but the following might be useful to consider. In some circumstances it may not be appropriate to share the name of the person who died with the whole school community.

1. **Informing Parents/carers of a sad incident**
2. **Informing parents/carers about the sudden death of a CYP/ member of staff**
3. **Communicating to bereaved parents/carers**
4. **Communicating about the death of a staff member:**

**Informing Parents/carers of a sad incident**

Dear Parents/Carers,

You may have heard........./ It is with sadness and regret that I have to inform you………

(known facts of the incident)

As a school community, we are all deeply affected by this tragedy/

I am sure that you will wish to join me and my staff in offering our condolences and sympathy to those affected/to …………..

(refer to individuals/families affected only where it is appropriate to release this information)

I have now spoken to all CYP and staff in school about what has happened and you will need to be aware of the following arrangements that we have now made:

*(Details about:*

* *Any changes to timings of school day / organisation of the school*
* *lunch time arrangements*
* *changes to staffing*
* *arrangements for specific classes/year groups*
* *emotional support has been arranged for school staff to assist us in supporting the children and our wider school community including yourselves as parents/carers*
* *provision of further information as relevant)*

(If appropriate, advice about media contacts)

I think it is very important that we all take the time to talk with and reassure children about what has happened. This is likely to be a very difficult time for us as a school community and we will all need to support each other. We have some information in school about loss and bereavement and how to support children and each other so please ask if you would like to have any of this.

We appreciate the expressions of concern we have received, however it would be helpful if parents did not telephone the school during this time so we can keep phones and staff free to manage the situation.

Yours sincerely

**Informing parents/carers about the sudden death of a CYP/ member of staff**

Dear Parent/Carer,

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you about the (sudden) death of xxx (name if possible), one of our pupils/members of staff in Year x. The children were told this morning by their class teacher.

Xxx (or a child/member of staff in our school/ in year x) died as a result of …………the full detail surrounding the death are not known at this stage – but children have been reassured that this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it, but it is likely that he/she will need your special care, attention and reassurance at this difficult time.

We are all deeply affected by the death, but we are trying to keep the school as normal as possible over the coming days, whilst allowing the children opportunities to talk about xxx (the person who died) if they want. We have access to professionals who are providing guidance and support; enabling us to give emotional support to the children and each other through this difficult time. If you feel that your child needs extra support, please let us know.

Our thoughts are with the family at this difficult time, and the whole school community sends them our most sincere sympathy and support.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Communicating to bereaved parents**

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of [Name] death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through. Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him/her/them very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to their friends and classmates. They will be remembered as a much loved member of our school family. If we can do anything to help as you plan ……….. funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of [Name] that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system. Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

**Communicating about the death of a staff member:**

Dear parents/carers,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff, [name] has died. The children have been appropriately and sensitively told today and we have been supporting them throughout.

Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has more questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at: [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known and if this is in keeping with the family’s wishes.

We are very aware that an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. We are very grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely,

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