



Monday 22nd November 2021

Dear Parents & Carers,

It is with the heaviest of hearts that I write to inform you that a much loved and highly respected member of our staff, Lorraine Currie, has passed away. She had been off school due to illness since the summer and very sadly passed away, peacefully at home, at the weekend surrounded by her family.

Lorraine has been a dedicated member of our staff at Cavendish for 25 years and has made such a positive impact on so many young people and supported so many families during that time.

She was such a popular, professional, caring teaching assistant who also gave her time both after school in the week and at the weekends working for Halton Play Council as their short break services leader. She was instrumental in the set up and running of the Mencap R club after school in the bungalow on a Tuesday and on a Saturday.

Over the years Lorraine became the very heart and soul of Cavendish. I hope in the weeks to come we will find an appropriate way to honour her memory and celebrate the life that she had with us here at our school, together with the significant contributions she has made.

For now, our priority is to respond sensitively and thoughtfully to the family of Lorraine (who she was so very proud of) and all of the staff and students she worked with.

On behalf of the school community I have expressed our sympathy to Lorraine's family and told them our thoughts are with them.

As ever with our students we have used our discretion in terms of telling them this sad news. We have told most of older upper school students and will support them as best we can to cope with this distressing news. Although most students will have an opportunity to talk with staff today they may have questions and issues they want to discuss with you when they get home. I attach some advice from Child Bereavement UK about how parents can support children who experience bereavement.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about this matter.

Thank you for your support at this difficult time for our community,

Yours sincerely,

MRS ELAINE HAVER PRINCIPAL HEAD TEACHER

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When supporting a bereaved family, or informing other families of a death within the school community, parents and carers may appreciate guidance to help them respond to questions and better understand reactions from their children. Below is information you can give to parents which they may find helpful and reassuring.

Most children and young people affected by a death just need adults who care about them. You cannot take away their sadness, but you can acknowledge it and support them through the experience. Reactions will vary. If they were not close to the person who died, they may be unaffected. However, it is best not to make assumptions. Any death may make children and young people anxious, as they become more aware of their own mortality and that of those around them.

Questions are healthy, as is curiosity. A good approach with any age is to acknowledge what has happened and then answer questions as they arise. Having accurate information will enable you to answer questions with facts rather than rumour; try to obtain this from a reliable source so that information is both accurate and sensitive to the wishes of the bereaved family.

Young children often do not have adult inhibitions surrounding death and you may be taken aback by some of their comments and reactions. It is their way of trying to make sense of what has happened. Teenagers may become withdrawn and difficult to engage with. Respect their need for personal space whilst gently reminding them that you are there if they need you.

Children often have a surprising capacity to deal with the truth, if given information in simple, straightforward language, appropriate for their age and understanding. Young children tend to make up what they do not know and their imaginings are often worse than the reality. Adolescents and teenagers will resent a lack of honesty in the adults around them and the resultant loss of trust will be difficult to regain.

Maintain routines, such as going to school. Familiar situations and contact with friends brings security and a sense of normality. Continue to expect the usual rules of behaviour. Normality with love and compassion is what to aim for. Do not think that you have to hide your own sadness. Seeing adults expressing emotion can give a child of any age 'permission' to do the same, if they feel they want to. Hearing how you are feeling may help them to consider their own feelings. Be ready to listen but don't expect your child to always want to talk. They usually will when ready, and often to people who are not immediate family. One way to create opportunities for sharing thoughts and memories is with a joint activity. Young people especially, tend to talk when they do not feel under pressure to do so.

You may notice some of the following which are all normal as long as they do not continue for too long:

Change in behaviour, perhaps becoming unnaturally quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive.

Anger is a common response at all ages and may be directed at people or events which have no connection to the death.

Disturbed sleep and bad dreams.

Anxiety demonstrated by clingy behaviour and a reluctance to be separated from parents or carers. Older children may express this in more practical ways, for example by expressing concerns over issues that adults may perceive as insensitive or unimportant. • Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them.

Difficulty concentrating, being forgetful and generally 'not with it.' This makes school work particularly difficult and academic performance may suffer. Older children may feel that there is no point in working hard at school and they might lose a general sense of purpose in their lives.

Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be run down and prone to minor illness.

Grief is a natural and necessary response to a death. However, if concerned about your child, do not hesitate to seek advice.

Carers and parents looking for support and information may call our Helpline: 0800 02 888 40, access Live Chat via our website, or email: support@childbereavementuk.org

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people>

