

Penhaligon's Friends



Going Back to School with Grief

Many children get anxious about going back to school after a break.

It may be that they are facing a new year, new teacher or tutor group or they may be starting a new school.

This change can be particularly difficult for bereaved children and even more so for any children who have experienced the death of someone over the summer holidays or had some time off because of the bereavement.

What you can do to support your child

- If the bereavement has happened over the summer, then call school ahead of time and explain what has happened and what your child knows about it.
- Ask if you can bring your child in to meet with the teacher before school starts to discuss their return to school.
- Arrange to drop your child off earlier if you don't feel able to manage seeing other parents in the playground just yet.
- Ask school who is there to support your child if they need someone to talk to or seek comfort from.
- Your child may already have a preferred member of staff they would like to talk to.
- Ask your child who this would be (don't make them any promises in case that is not practical for the school).
- Talk to your child about what they will say to their friends about what has happened.
- If your child is starting a new school, then discuss with them what they might say to new friends.
- Talk to your child about difficulties they may have concentrating at times and ask them if they have ideas for what may help them.
- Let your child know it is ok to ask for help.
- Let your child know how important it is for them to still go to school even if they feel they don't want to.
- Give your child permission to still have fun.
- It doesn't make them disloyal to the person who died or mean they have forgotten them, even if they don't think about them all the time.
- Let your child know that you are ok when they are at school as they may be worried about leaving you.
- Keep in regular contact with school and ask them to let you know if they have any concerns about your child.
- If the bereavement happened some time ago then gently remind the school about what happened. Let them know that your child's understanding of what happened has changed with their age and natural development and they may be exploring their grief in a different way.
- Let your school know that they can call Penhaligon's Friends for advice and guidance if they are anxious or unsure about how to support your child with their grief.