**SEN5 Managing the death of a pupil**

You have to come to terms with yourself. I think you have to grieve yourself for the child that's gone. You have to be able to talk to people about it. I don't think posters and pictures and names should be torn down right away, and I think the children need time to come to terms with what happened as well.

Staff members who may be working one-on-one with these pupils can form very strong bonds, and it can naturally, they will grieve if something happens to them, if they die, and that can be really, really difficult. Often, they feel that they're not entitled to grieve because, actually, it's not they're not family. However, they've built up this relationship with the pupil maybe over several years, which means that they will grieve. And having that grief acknowledged, having someone to talk to about how they're feeling is really important.

I can remember once in my career when I spoke to people outside of the school, outside of education, and said what had happened in my school community at the time to be met with, well, you must be used to that in the sector that you work in.

I think that that's really sad that there is that level of expectation and we need to make sure that we don't desensitise ourselves to death and the process of grief after death, even if in our careers it is something that has happened more than once, if we've experienced it more than once, that we don't become desensitised to it, that there isn't an expectation that because you work in special education, you'll be dealing with death more and actually looking at every individual case as a school community and dealing with that process of grief that's appropriate for the school at the time that it happens.

Overall, a school needs to prepare for something like this and although we don't want to think about it, being prepared is so important. Having a policy where you think out what's going to happen, how you might respond, what might happen, which roles might be done by whom, can be a really good way of getting yourself in a state where you are perhaps a little bit more prepared.

You can never be fully prepared, but actually this can ease the difficulties, the challenges, some of the emotions that you might be feeling. When you're feeling very emotional, it's very hard to make some of these difficult decisions.

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