



Friday 3rd May 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have some very sad news to share. Following a short illness, Verity Dowden, known to the children as Miss Verity, has died peacefully at home. Verity was a highly valued member of our school community, who served as a Midday Meals Supervisor for nearly 13 years. Her role was to ensure lunchtimes in the hall and playground were safe and joyful experiences for our children. Verity undertook her duties with care and compassion, making a real difference during meal and play times. She was a much-loved member of the staff team, always offering words of support and a listening ear when needed.

We have been in contact with the family to express how sad we are about this news and to offer our support. Understandably, Verity's family is still coming to terms with what has happened and has given us their permission to share this information with you. We know that the thoughts and prayers of our community will provide comfort to the family at this difficult time. If you do wish to express your condolences by bringing cards or letters to the school office in a labelled envelope, we can forward these to Verity's family.

In thinking about the most appropriate way to share this news, we prioritise the very best interests of our children. We have taken the decision not to share this information through class announcements. This is because we know it will affect children in a variety of ways, depending on their age and their own experiences of loss. With this in mind, we feel it best that you, as parents and carers, share the news in the way you feel most appropriate for your child taking into account their age, their familiarity with Miss Verity and any bereavements they may have experienced.

Below is some useful guidance from Child Bereavement UK on how to tell your child.

Use simple language: Use simple words appropriate for the child's age and understanding. It is important to use the real words such as 'dead' and 'died'.

Be led by your child's understanding: Only give as much information as a child wants. This is usually indicated by them asking a question – if they have asked the question, it usually means that they are ready to hear, or need to hear, the answer.

Don't give too much information: Try to answer only the question asked and avoid giving extra detail. Be honest, but avoid overloading a child with information or detail, which can always be added later if needed.

Expect questions: You are likely to have to repeat information and answer questions in subsequent days and weeks.

You can let your child know that at school, we will be talking about Miss Verity in the days and weeks ahead and that all adults are available to talk to should they need to.

The links below are to trusted sources of guidance that provide additional information and support should you need it:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/when-someone-dies/>

<https://www.hospiceuk.org/information-and-support/your-guide-to-hospice-end-of-life-care/how-talk-children-about-death-and-dying>

If you have concerns about your child and how they have responded to this news, please contact Ms Wyatt, Ms Anwar or me. Thank you for your help and understanding at this difficult time.

Anna Case