

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June

**Re: Grenfell One Year Anniversary**



Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to write to advise you that, in line with many of our neighbouring primary schools, we will be running a special programme of events next Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June, the one-year anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The full programme is included overleaf for your reference. Also some advice put together and shared by the Bi-Borough Educational Psychology Service, about how parents might want to support students through this period. Two important things to note about the day are:

1. Activities will be provided for students until 3.45 as normal, however we are giving students the chance to leave at lunchtime, either to be at home or attend other events in the community. We hope parents will understand why we want to give students this flexibility.
2. It is a “non-uniform” day where students are invited to go “Green for Grenfell”. Anyone wearing green is invited to make an optional £1 donation to the Family Action charity which has been doing great work in our community since the fire.

It will be an extremely sad day for our students, parents and staff alike, but I want to reassure you all that we will mark it appropriately and do our very best to look after students, just as we always have done. The quote below is perhaps overused, but I haven't found any other that expresses how I feel more clearly:

*“Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.” Vicki Harrison*

Thanks to all parents for their ongoing support,

Best wishes,



**David Benson, Principal**



## Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June: KAA Programme

<b>Green for Grenfell day. Students invited to pay £1 and wear Green outfits. All proceeds to go to Grenfell Family Action charity.</b>	
8.45 - 9.00	<b>Extended Breakfast Club</b> , outdoor play
9.00 - 10.15	<b>Tutor Time</b> <i>“Make &amp; Talk” activities in small groups, put together by the KAA therapy team and the Educational Psychologists. The activities will be facilitated by Form Tutors, with members of the therapy team, DoLs, SLT, and SEN staff. Squash &amp; biscuits in form bases.</i>
10:15 - 10.45	<b>Extended Break</b>
10:45 - 11:00	Students line-up as normal and go back to form rooms to leave coats and bags in form rooms
11:00	<b>Whole School Anniversary Service</b>
11.45 - 12:00	<b>Tutor Time</b> Form Tutors to dismiss students from form rooms and remind students of option available for students if they wish to stay at school for the afternoon
12:00 onwards	<b>Students will be dismissed and can either leave school or take part in activities including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch available in the main hall with therapy support on hand</li> <li>• Sports events taking place on the Scrubs organised by PE department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basketball and table tennis available in the playground</li> <li>• Art therapy activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Food class with Miss French (20 students max)</li> </ul>



## Supporting children to stay strong – one year on Preparing for anniversary reactions

### What is an ‘anniversary reaction’?

It’s natural and very common to have a negative reaction to a traumatic anniversary. This is known as an ‘anniversary reaction’. No matter how well children may have been trying to put memories of the fire away and only think about them when they choose to, the anniversary will be a powerful reminder.

Research tells us that the greatest distress and highest levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms can occur during the month in which the trauma took place. It’s important to note that not everyone will experience an anniversary reaction, however, knowing what to expect in advance may be helpful.

### Why does an ‘anniversary reaction’ happen?

A reaction to the anniversary signals that we are still working on moving through the trauma of the experience. It is a normal part of the grieving process. The brain pulls us back into old thought patterns that elicit painful emotions.

Even if we have a sense of starting to manage and cope better, we could begin to experience strange symptoms days or weeks before or after the anniversary and not know what is happening to us. This could threaten to undo any feelings of being able to move on and so it’s important for us to understand how our minds and bodies are reacting.

### What sort of reactions can we expect?

The most common reaction one year on from a major trauma is a repeat of the feelings, bodily responses and thoughts that occurred at the time of the event.

For the local community affected by the tragedy, the period of time around the anniversary is likely to bring up even stronger memories of the extraordinary fear and pain that they suffered: remembering feelings of helplessness, despair, shock and anger, and experiencing renewed emotional and physical distress. There could be intense frustration relating to, for example, still being in temporary accommodation, and the effect of this on feelings of recovery.

The memories might become so intense and vivid that it can be difficult to sleep or concentrate. Some people might feel nervous and on edge, or become more irritable and jumpy. Others might feel they have to be more on their guard to protect their loved ones from further distress.

### How might my child react?

Children’s reactions will vary from individual to individual. They could react in very unexpected ways on the anniversary date. They might expect to feel sad but instead feel angry and frustrated. They might be surprised that they don’t feel any emotion at all, and might feel guilty as a result.

Children might experience feelings of fear and anxiety, or grief as they are reminded of their possessions, homes or classmate and loved ones they have lost.

Children could experience the return of extreme emotional reactions. This could include feeling helpless, frightened, experiencing disturbed sleep, bedwetting, nightmares and not wanting to spend time apart from family members. They might find it hard to sleep, and concentrating on learning might be especially difficult.

Our bodies can remember trauma as well as the brain so there may be an increased chance of your child experiencing some sort of physical illness over the anniversary period.



Children may want to avoid events, places, situations or people connected to the Grenfell tragedy, as the feelings triggered by the anniversary may feel overwhelming for them. Some children may need as much time, patience, understanding and emotional support to cope during this period as they did during the immediate aftermath of the fire.

### What can adults do to help?

It can be helpful to prepare and plan ahead as much as possible. Find time to talk about the approaching anniversary with children – talking about what might happen and how they might feel can help to release some of the anxiety and pressure surrounding it.

### Tips for speaking about the anniversary

“When something terrible happens, like the Grenfell fire, our brain and body holds on to the memory of what happened and how we felt at the time. Sometimes you might notice that the memories might not be so strong, or so upsetting. But at other times something will remind our brain and body of what happened – it could be something small like a smell, a noise, a picture or even the word ‘Grenfell’ – and the painful memories will become really strong all over again. It might feel like a big wave crashing over you.

This is also much more likely to happen on dates connected with the fire – such as the one-year anniversary on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Lots of people will be getting worried about how they might feel. Even if you have been able to not think so much about the fire, when we get near to the date, you might not know what is happening to your feelings. You might feel really angry and upset, or worried and frightened. You might feel numb and not feel anything at all. All these feelings are normal feelings one year on from a terrible disaster. It’s important to understand that these feelings won’t last forever – it will be a tough time but you will probably start to feel better a week or two after the date.”

Be honest with your child. Children will notice that you and other trusted adults in their lives are more upset than usual over this period. It’s okay to share some of your own reactions and worries. Reassure them that the period around the anniversary could be a difficult time to get through but that you, and they, will be okay. Share your own feelings to help them to label and name their own. Children learn from watching their parents and this can help them to show and share their own emotions.

Be aware that there will be lots of distressing imagery shown again on TV, the internet and social media. Try to limit your child’s exposure to distressing scenes as this may heighten their anxiety and distress. Look for websites or news programmes that present images and news in an age appropriate way<sup>1</sup> and encourage children to ask questions and discuss what they have seen and heard.

Help children learn healthy and positive ways to express themselves and their feelings through dance, exercise, sport, play, music, art, writing etc.

Let children acknowledge the date in their own way. Some children may show interest while others may choose to try to ignore the anniversary. Don’t force children to participate in ceremonies or overload them with information. Take your cue from your child. There is no one right reaction.

Remind children that this difficult time is almost always temporary. They are likely to feel better within a week or two and symptoms will fade away on their own – knowing there is light at the end can make the tunnel seem less frightening.

***For more information on how to support your child through the anniversary period, including Arabic, Tagalog, Amharic and Farsi translations, please visit [www.kaa.org.uk/students-parents/letters-to-parents/](http://www.kaa.org.uk/students-parents/letters-to-parents/)***