



**St Hugh's School**

Bereavement Policy

## **Bereavement Policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances. It seeks to reflect the values and philosophy of St Hugh's School.

Every death and the circumstance in which it occurs is different and a policy that will cover every possible contingency would be excessively long.

In order to be ready to act professionally, sensitively and compassionately, staff are encouraged to read at least some of the recommended material and/or visit some of the websites listed in the section "Resources" at the end of this document.

### **Our Aims**

At St Hugh's we seek to meet the needs of all our children/pupils and staff in all situations. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family all around is 'different'. We need to be a place that both the child and family can rely on and gain some much needed support.

If the death occurs of one of our pupils or of a member of staff, we will work together with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

### **Procedures**

We always work in partnership with parents or carers. We will always listen. We sensitively support and encourage parents, carers or their family to tell us of any happenings in their child's life that may affect their child's emotional state but we will never be told everything.

Every death and the circumstance in which it occurs is different. Sometimes we will only get to know that someone important to one of our pupils has died because of the depressed emotional state, disturbed behaviour or other signs of distress we have seen and needed to respond to in the child. Sometimes a family member or friend of the family will tell us. Sometimes it will be a friend of the child.

If there has been a bereavement or significant loss in a family we will seek their help and advice to help us avoid saying anything that could confuse or upset the child or add further to the distress of those family members most affected.

The fact that the child is bereaved should be recorded prominently on the child's profile to make sure that professionals are aware should the child change school- Key Every Child Matters information.

**If the death occurs of a close member of a pupil's family the following procedures should be followed.**

The head teacher or most senior member of staff available will be informed immediately a member of staff is informed of a bereavement or loss.

All staff should then be informed as quickly, quietly and sensitively as possible.

A named member of staff designated by the head teacher will make contact with the family. This member of staff will explain the desire to be supportive and to avoid saying or doing anything that would add further distress. For this purposes/he will endeavour to ascertain information about the situation and how much the child knows in as unobtrusive a way as possible.

The same member of staff will act as a link to the family to ensure good communication and facilitate implementation of the bereavement policy.

Advice will be obtained about any cultural and religious issues if necessary.

The family should be asked if they want the school community to be told formally and if so the sort of arrangements that might be made to let other families know the circumstances. This might be necessary in order to alleviate any risk of rumour circulating which may not be factual and could be upsetting for the family. In some circumstances it will not be appropriate to do this, for example if the death occurred in circumstances likely to stimulate gossip.

If information is to be given to other parents formally, this is best done by letter home to the children's parents in envelopes. For young children it would be preferable for this to be given to the parents at the end of the school day when they collect their children.

If a child has not attended school for a period following a bereavement, plans for the child to return to school should be agreed and reassurance given that the family will be contacted if the child is distressed. It may be desirable to include a visit to the child at home by the child's teacher prior to the return.

Outside agencies should be contacted if appropriate or if in doubt.

A suitable place in school will be identified for pupils who need some space if too upset to stay in the classroom and people to whom they can go for support.

Good communication between school and home is extremely important.

#### **If the death occurs of a pupil or a member of staff.**

This is likely to cause considerable distress to everyone in the organisation and the following additional actions should be undertaken.

Discussions should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account on how and what to tell the school community.

Arrangements should be made for counselling to be available if necessary. This is more likely in cases of unexpected or violent death. Appropriate agencies outside school will need to be contacted.

Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period. There should be systematic observation and monitoring and any signs of complex grieving, followed through by professional agencies.

### **Resources**

Books for adults

Books for children

It often helps to explain difficult concepts to children with books and stories

### **Websites**

Winstons wish

Child bereavement trust

CAPS North Lincs.