



# **ST BERNARD'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

## **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

**Advent 2018**

# **St Bernard's Preparatory School**

## **Bereavement Policy**

### **Mission Statement**

**With God as our shelter and Christ as our guide, the mission of St Bernard's Preparatory School is to educate towards love and service to God, each other and the wider community. Through our broad balanced curriculum we will develop an understanding of each faith and the values we share. We will treat each person with respect, knowing we are special and unique.**

**St Bernard's is part of the St Benedict's family of schools. All schools in the group share a similar Catholic and Benedictine/Bernardine ethos.**

### **Introduction and Background**

From time to time, every school experiences the death of a pupil, member of staff or an extended family member. As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, members of staff will be the primary source of care and support. Individuals and families react to bereavement in their own very unique ways. The trauma of bereavement has a profound effect on the school community. It is important for our school to reflect upon appropriate support for bereavement and to develop flexible plans that reflect how the school will respond in a tragic situation. The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to support those involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion. It is important to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible, that effective communication takes place and that each member of the school community has access to support as and when required.

### **When a death occurs**

The Headmaster will be the primary point of contact with a family when a death has occurred. The Headmaster will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the school community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumour are not spread. It is essential that relevant staff are informed as soon as possible, ideally before pupils. Pupils, when relevant, should also be told. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. Staff will need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable. The school offers Rainbows, Chaplaincy and Drop In sessions for those children in need of support

### **The death of a pupil**

In the case of the death of a pupil, appropriate support should be provided for the whole school community. A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. If appropriate, a Mass or Liturgy to celebrate the child's life will be held. Support for staff that are directly involved with grieving pupils is important, and staff should have the opportunity to meet to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. If the press are involved, the Headmaster will consult with the Trustees and Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the school. In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the school timetable. The structure of the school day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required.

### **The death of a member of staff**

In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate support should be provided for the whole school community. A book of remembrance may be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. A Mass or Liturgy of remembrance will be held. Special support including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who worked closely with the deceased. The Headmaster will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. If the press are involved, the Headmaster will consult with the Trustees and the Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of the school. In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the school timetable. The structure of the school day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care will need to be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually in accordance with the school's rolling policy review programme.

### **The death of a member of the school community**

In the case of the death of a family member of a pupil, if the death happens while the child is at school, a representative from the family, preferably a parent, should come to the school to inform the pupil. Before notifying fellow pupils, the school should speak with the bereaved pupil's family to determine what information should be given to peers. Peers should be informed how the bereaved pupil wants to talk about what has happened (i.e. speak openly and take initiative, or let the bereaved pupil decide when to talk about the death.) Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved pupil/member of staff may have a reduced capacity for school work. The bereaved pupil/member of staff may need extra help at a later time, when working capacity becomes normal again.

### **Funeral Procedure**

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that the school is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of the school community but equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Headmaster will give permission to those staff and pupils who wish to attend and make arrangements for the practicalities of staff cover and transport. The Headmaster will also consult with staff and pupils in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and or a more permanent remembrance.

### **Applies to:**

Whole School including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

### **Availability:**

A copy of this policy is made available to parents on request, from the school office.

**Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headmaster. The Trustees will undertake a formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed by:

Headmaster \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_