

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

*At St Joseph's we work, learn and grow together guided by Jesus' teachings*



## **CRC Article 29(goals of education)**

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

## **Bereavement Policy**

The rationale of Bereavement in our school is:

The death of a child, a close relative of a child, or a member of staff can be traumatic for staff and children alike.

For some children this can be their first real contact with the death of someone known to them.

For teachers, it can be the first time they have needed to respond professionally to the shock and sadness experienced by those in their care.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School believes in adopting a holistic approach to the care of both its children and staff. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people, in addition to the family concerned. We aim to ensure that the appropriate members of the school community are given sufficient support and advice at such times.

The management of a bereavement situation will be a central role for the Executive Headteacher and Head of School who will be supported by other members of the Leadership and Management Team. Throughout the process the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will oversee the process and offer advice and provide resources if required.

### **Introduction**

This policy is intended to reflect St Joseph's positive Catholic faith and ethos and should contribute to the caring community we endeavour to nurture. The main aim of the policy is to ensure that all children and staff faced with bereavement are provided with a level of quality support, which is commensurate with their needs and wishes. This support includes the opportunity for them to express their feelings in a safe environment, to be given space and time to come to terms with their loss and to access specialist support if necessary. Furthermore, the situation for the individual and the school community will be monitored over a period of time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our

community as an environment where individuals can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead. This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing Quality First Teaching as a basic entitlement for all learners. As a school, we value the needs of all learners. We aim to teach all learners how to build on their strengths and minimise their weaknesses by bypassing their barriers to learning so that they are empowered to achieve to the best of their abilities.

## **1 Death of a Close Relative of a Child**

1.1 Depending on the closeness of the relationship between the child and the deceased the degree of support required may vary.

In general the following guidelines will be followed:

- Executive Headteacher and Head of School to discuss proposed approach by school with appropriate family member.
- Executive Headteacher and Head of School to advise appropriate staff of the situation and give an indication of the length of absence (if appropriate) of the child.
- Advice may be given to staff on how to support child on his/her return to school.
- It may also be appropriate to speak to classmates and/or school friends in on how best they might help in supporting the child on his/her return to school.
- The Parish Priest will be informed of the death

1.2 The Executive Headteacher and Head of School will carefully consider whether appropriate members of staff should visit or contact the family during their period of mourning. They will also consider whether or not the school should be represented at the funeral.

1.3 The Executive Headteacher and Head of School will meet with child on his/her return to school and offer appropriate support where required.

1.4 The Executive Headteacher and Head of School will regularly monitor child over the next few months.

## **2 Death of a Child**

2.1 On hearing of the death of a child the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will meet immediately to plan the school's response. Decisions as to which group(s) of pupils should be informed will need to be made. e.g. classmates, close friends, year group, friends of brothers and sisters of the deceased.

2.2 With great sensitivity, one of the above staff will be assigned to ascertain the circumstances of the death. Where possible he/she should discuss with a close family member how the school will be dealing with the bereavement.

2.3 As soon as possible the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will inform all staff about the child's death. Staff will also be given details as to which groups of children will be informed, and when and how this is to occur. They will be advised of the details that the

children can be told. In addition the parish priest will be informed, if not already cognizant, in order to provide additional support.

2.4 It is strongly emphasised that normal school routine will be maintained as much as possible. Obviously, if the death occurs near the end of term then consideration should be given as to whether certain extra-curricular activities should be suspended (e.g. Merit Award activities, School Show etc.)

2.5 Staff will also be asked to be especially vigilant and provide immediate information to Executive Headteacher and Head of School about children who may be showing signs of distress and who may need support. Executive Headteacher and Head of School will be made available to offer support. Other specialists such as the school nurse or the school talking counsellor will also be asked to assist.

2.6 Executive Headteacher and Head of School will decide as to whether appropriate members of staff (2 persons) should visit the family of the deceased.

2.7 The Executive Headteacher and Head of School will also consider a selection process as to which members of staff and which pupils will, if applicable, attend the funeral. In this matter the wishes of the family will be taken fully into account.

2.8 Staff attending the funeral must be prepared to offer comfort and support as required. Obviously it is essential that the school has adequate staff to supervise the children not attending the funeral. This may limit the number of staff who can attend.

2.9 Should the death be of interest to the media then the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will formulate any response in conjunction with the Local Authority Press Office.

2.10 It may be necessary to advise staff, children and their families not to speak to the media and to avoid making innocent comments that might be misconstrued.

2.11 Where appropriate the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will inform relevant external groups where appropriate.

### **3 Death of a Member of Staff**

3.1 On hearing of the death of a member of staff the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will meet to plan the school's response. At this meeting the method of informing other staff will be decided. Executive Headteacher and Head of School will also immediately inform the Chair of Governors and Parish Priest.

3.2 Decisions as to how and when pupils will be informed will also need to be made.

3.3 Adequate support for staff and pupils will be available. The expertise of the school nurse and talking counsellor should be more than adequate to provide support for pupils.

3.4 In general staff members will be able to support each other

3.5 Attendance of staff and pupils at the funeral will be discussed with the deceased's family.

3.6 Executive Headteacher and Head of School, will ensure that as many staff as possible are able to attend the funeral. This may involve the school having to put special timetabling arrangements in place.

#### **4 Death of a Close Relative of a Member of Staff**

4.1 The death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff needs to be dealt with sensitively. It is essential that the member of staff is supported throughout the immediate period of mourning and on his/her return to school.

4.2 On hearing of the death the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will meet with to decide how other members of staff are to be informed. The Parish Priest will also be informed in order to provide additional support. The Chair of Governors will be informed also.

4.3 Executive Headteacher and Head of School will contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.

4.4 It is unlikely that many of the pupils will have to be informed but if so the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will decide on the appropriate method(s) to be used.

4.5 Attendance of Staff at the funeral will be discussed with the staff member.

4.6 On his/her return to work the Executive Headteacher and Head of School and other close colleagues must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances.

#### **5 Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy**

5.1 After a bereavement, the school will review what was done at each stage and will evaluate the actions taken to see what was effective and what might have been done better. This will enable the school to plan for the future. Experience can also inform other programmes of the school or can also lead to additional supports being put in place.