



Houghton Conquest Lower School and Pre-School

Bereavement and Loss Policy

Rationale

We believe that the learning environment should be challenging, expecting pupils to take as much control of their lives as they are able. In order to achieve this, pupils/students must be given relevant knowledge and experience to reflect on the world within and beyond the school.

We believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. Therefore, to achieve our aims of challenge and independence, we must comfort pupils with the reality of bereavement and loss so that they can develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to deal with these experiences.

We believe that the ethos of the school, based on openness and mutual support, provides a framework in which these experiences can be realised in an enriching manner.

Process

The school will act in a planned and agreed manner, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute their part in a way that is consistent with the values that have been adopted.

The Headteacher is prepared for the inevitability of loss. She has already thought through the way in which she intends to respond so that her thoughts and actions are ordered. The head, will co-ordinate the school's response and be fundamental in creating the most appropriate atmosphere.

All staff will be told together by the most relevant member of staff. The Headteacher and Emotional Well-Being Partner will create a list of people to be told so that the school can be sure that no one close to the situation will find out by chance.

There are many different responses depending on whether there are multiple deaths, death in school, death of a member of staff, death of a student and death of a parent of a child at the school. Depending on the type of death we will take advice from the CHUMS <http://chums.uk.com/bereavement-service/>. It could mean all the pupils and parents will be told at the same time and as promptly as circumstances will allow. Pupils/students in school will be told face-to-face, parents/carers by letter the same day. Absentees from school will also need to be informed. The Headteacher and Emotional Well-Being Partner will track who is informed, when and by whom, to ensure that no one is missed.

The school has a range of strategies that it could adopt in the days and weeks that follow any significant loss. Decisions about which to undertake will be determined following discussions with the family concerned and will take into account the cultural/religious beliefs of the family.

An individual or small group of school staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention.

Curriculum

In the event of bereavement or significant loss the school has established clear guidelines for action. We also prepare children for such an experience by ensuring that it is dealt with within planned programmes of study within the school's curriculum.

Some opportunities include:

- RE - The spiritual dimension relating to loss and bereavement is explored within themes dealing with Rites of Passage, Worship and Key beliefs and values within the major world religions.
- PSHE - The emotional element and the nature of ongoing relationships with those who suffer bereavement or loss can be explored within PSHE and Circle Time.
- Science - The reality of death is included in schemes of work dealing with Ourselves and Life processes
- Cross-Curricular Studies
There are a number of opportunities within cross-curricular themes and dimensions such as equal opportunities or citizenship where the issues can be raised.

In planning for such experiences there must be a continuity of practice which is consistent with the rationale explicitly stated in this policy.

Parents/carers

In acknowledging the role of the school in dealing with bereavement and loss, the school must not undermine the place of parents/carers in this process.

The parents/carers remain the most significant support to young people trying to come to terms with the death of a school friend. The school will support parents/carers in this by:

- Sharing with parents/carers the intentions of the school to act in a particular way in the event of a death.
- Offering guidance to parents/carers on how they might act using the materials on the CHUMS website: <http://chums.uk.com/bereavement-service/>.
- Keeping parents/carers fully informed about the actions of the school throughout the immediate period of grieving.
- Parents/carers will be invited to be involved in any school response that occurs after the death, e.g. a memorial service. The format of any memorial service will take into account the beliefs of the bereaved family.

Outcomes

By adopting a planned and considered approach we hope to promote desired, positive outcomes for both staff and pupils within the school and those in the wider school community.

These may include:

Staff will

- Feel equally valued.
- Have an opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenging role they face.
- Be given time and space to work through their own feelings.
- Become aware of the skills needed, and be offered training, to develop them.

Pupils will

- Be offered support by sensitive, trained staff working in unison.
- Grow as a result of this experience and be more able to come to terms with their feelings.
- Develop a sense of perspective about their own lives and the fears that this might engender.

The school will

- Have clear expectations about the way it will act, not simply react.
- Promote a sense of unity and identity in the whole community.

The family will

- Have real support to draw on.
- Be given an opportunity to reinforce feelings of worth rather than a sense of loss.

The parents/carers will

- Be drawn into a closer partnership with the school.
- Be given guidance on how to support their sons and daughters.
- Have time to prepare their own responses to loss and bereavement.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher, staff and Governors.