

## ***Moving up to Secondary School***

Moving from primary to secondary school is a challenging time; leaving behind the comfort and familiarity of your primary school that you may have attended since you were four or five years old. With that comes the loss of teachers, pupils, and maybe some friends too, although hopefully some of them will be going to the same secondary school as you.

During your time at primary school, many changes will have taken place in your life: meeting new friends and teachers, growing up and developing intellectually and physically, becoming more independent – perhaps going to school on your own. As well as being bereaved, there will also have been changes in your home life during these years. Maybe having a younger brother or sister, joining activities outside school, or moving house for instance.

Along with the loss that comes with leaving your primary school, comes the anticipation, excitement and curiosity of starting a new school. However, this transition can be a stressful experience and it is important to acknowledge this. You may feel anxious, uncertain and a sense of bewilderment or not knowing.

Being bereaved can add to these feelings of uncertainty. Facing up to a big change in your life and the sense of loss that accompanies it can cause you to think again about the person who died. Maybe that person, perhaps one of your parents, was the one who usually would have been able to support you during this time. Maybe it was a sibling or a friend, with whom you would have shared the experience of moving school, or perhaps a grandparent who would have been interested in your school and subject choices.

Meeting and making new friends may be rather daunting. As you begin to get to know new people they will naturally want to know all about you, as you will them. You may not want to share facts and feelings about your bereavement or how it has impacted on your life straight away.

Here are some practical tips that may help you through this transitional period:

- Be responsive - join in conversations, even if you feel nervous or apprehensive.
- If a question feels awkward, be confident in putting your point across, for example: "*My dad died last year, but I don't really want to talk about it just now.*" If this new friendship develops, you can share more as time passes.
- If a friend has moved to your new school with you, share your concerns with them. If you don't seek help, people will think you are managing ok. Share these concerns at home too – parents and carers can often offer useful advice.
- Hopefully some of the staff at your new school may be aware that you have been bereaved. You can check this out with your tutor or another member of staff who you feel at ease with.

The secondary schools in Kingston are aware of the *Saying Goodbye Project* and the help we can provide for you. Talk to a member of staff or your parent or carer if you think it would be helpful to meet with one of our counsellors. We work specifically with young people and children who have experienced the death of someone special to them.