



St. Mary's Grammar School, Belfast

BEREAVEMENT

POLICY

September 2017



The majority of young people will be bereaved of someone close to them by the time they are sixteen. It may be a parent, grandparent, sibling, friend or other relative who has died.

Childhood Bereavement Network

Sadly, in our own school community, we have also experienced the loss of former members of staff, former students, current members of staff and enrolled students.

In the event of a death these procedures will be considered to support staff and students who have experienced a recent bereavement.

Effective and Sensitive Communication –

Contact Tree

- ◆ In the event of the death of a pupil or a member of staff outside of school hours the contact process will be initiated whereby the Principal and Vice-Principals will make contact with members of SLT. In turn, each SLT member will contact their respective Year Head and departmental link teachers. Each Head of Department will then feed the pertinent information to their departmental colleagues. This process may also be enacted, at the discretion of the Principal, in the event of the death of an immediate family member of a pupil or staff member.
- ◆ If the death is a matter of media or public scrutiny, all such public contact will be made via the Principal or the Principal's designate only.

Informing a Pupil or Staff Member about a Death during the School Day

- ◆ If a death occurs during school contact time the Principal will decide on how best to inform the individual and/or members of whole school community if appropriate.
- ◆ If it is necessary to break the news of a relative's death to a pupil or member of staff this should be done in a timely and appropriate way to avoid further distress.
- ◆ It may be that a member of the person's family has arrived to school and wishes to convey the sad news. A quiet location or venue which affords dignity and respect to the individual should be made available.
- ◆ The pupil or staff member will be offered the necessary practical and emotional support including the immediate removal from class, transport etc.

Information relayed to students via PA or Form Teacher as deemed appropriate by Principal

- ◆ If the death is to be acknowledged and made public to the school community then an appropriate acknowledgement and prayer may be read over the tannoy system.

Visit of Staff/Pupils to House (Wake)

- ◆ The wishes of the family of the deceased are paramount in any action that the school may take. Some families may prefer a private period of mourning free from staff or pupil contact. Others will welcome the public sign of support that a home visit or attendance at the funeral can give.

- ◆ The school will always ensure that these wishes are conveyed to staff and pupils. The Pastoral Vice-Principal will give clarity on this and provide appropriate information which should be conveyed to pupils where appropriate.

Bereavement – Book of Condolence

- ◆ If the death of a pupil has occurred the Year Head will liaise with the Form Teacher and School Chaplain to ensure that staff and pupils are given the opportunity to pay their respects in the form of a book of condolence.
- ◆ This will be placed in a supervised public area to allow for respectful and appropriate expressions of mourning and reflection. The Year Head, Form Teacher and School Chaplain will ensure the appropriateness of the comments by offering guidance in advance and by monitoring what has been written.
- ◆ In the event of the death of a member of staff, an appropriate designate will be appointed by the Principal to ensure the same opportunity for mournful reflection. This may be the Head of Department or a friend of the deceased colleague. The School Chaplain will again liaise with this person to ensure appropriateness.

Staff and Pupil attendance at Funeral where appropriate

- ◆ Staff and students may wish to show their respects by attending the funeral of the deceased.
- ◆ It may not always be practically possible to accommodate such requests during the course of a busy school day.
- ◆ All requests for attendance during a school day such be made to the Principal.

Staff & Student Board of Remembrance

- ◆ Each former member of staff or deceased student will have their name inscribed upon the memorial board on the Q2 corridor.
- ◆ Each November these deceased students, colleagues and friends are remembered and prayed for as part of our liturgical memorial for the deceased.

Body of work – memorial object

- ◆ If the staff member or student was particularly talented in a given field it might be fitting for the display of their work in an appropriate place.

Reflection in Simmarian & Web Site Acknowledgement

- ◆ It is appropriate that a close colleague, Form Teacher or other member of staff prepares a short reflection on the deceased for inclusion on the school website and Simmarian.
- ◆ This should be made available for examination and agreement by the Principal in advance of its publication.

Mass of Remembrance for Friends & Family

- ◆ As a Catholic community of faith we testify to the resurrection of Christ and our belief in God's mercy.
- ◆ It is appropriate that we wish to affirm this and celebrate the life and contribution of our deceased colleague/student.
- ◆ Such a remembrance Mass should be time appropriate and agreed with the deceased's family after a suitable period of mourning has passed.
- ◆ The family will be informed of our intention to commemorate the person and invited to attend. The details of this process will be agreed upon by SLT and relayed to the family and staff at the appropriate time.

Media/Press Release – Principal or designate only

- ◆ If the death is a matter of media or public scrutiny, all such public contact will be made via the Principal or the Principal's designate only.

In School Support

- ◆ As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support for a bereaved child.
- ◆ Bereaved children may wish to absent themselves from school on an ongoing basis but liaison with the pupil and family should promote the school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home.
- ◆ The pattern of daily lessons and dialogue with peers and friends is an essential part of the healing process. The pupil may feel guilty about returning to school and believe that by doing so they dishonour the loved one for whom they grieve. They must be assured that this is not the case.

Christian Faith

- ◆ Our Christian ethos and belief system reminds us that the death of a loved one is not the end. We are proud to hold this view but must relay this in a sensitive, non-judgemental manner.

Support

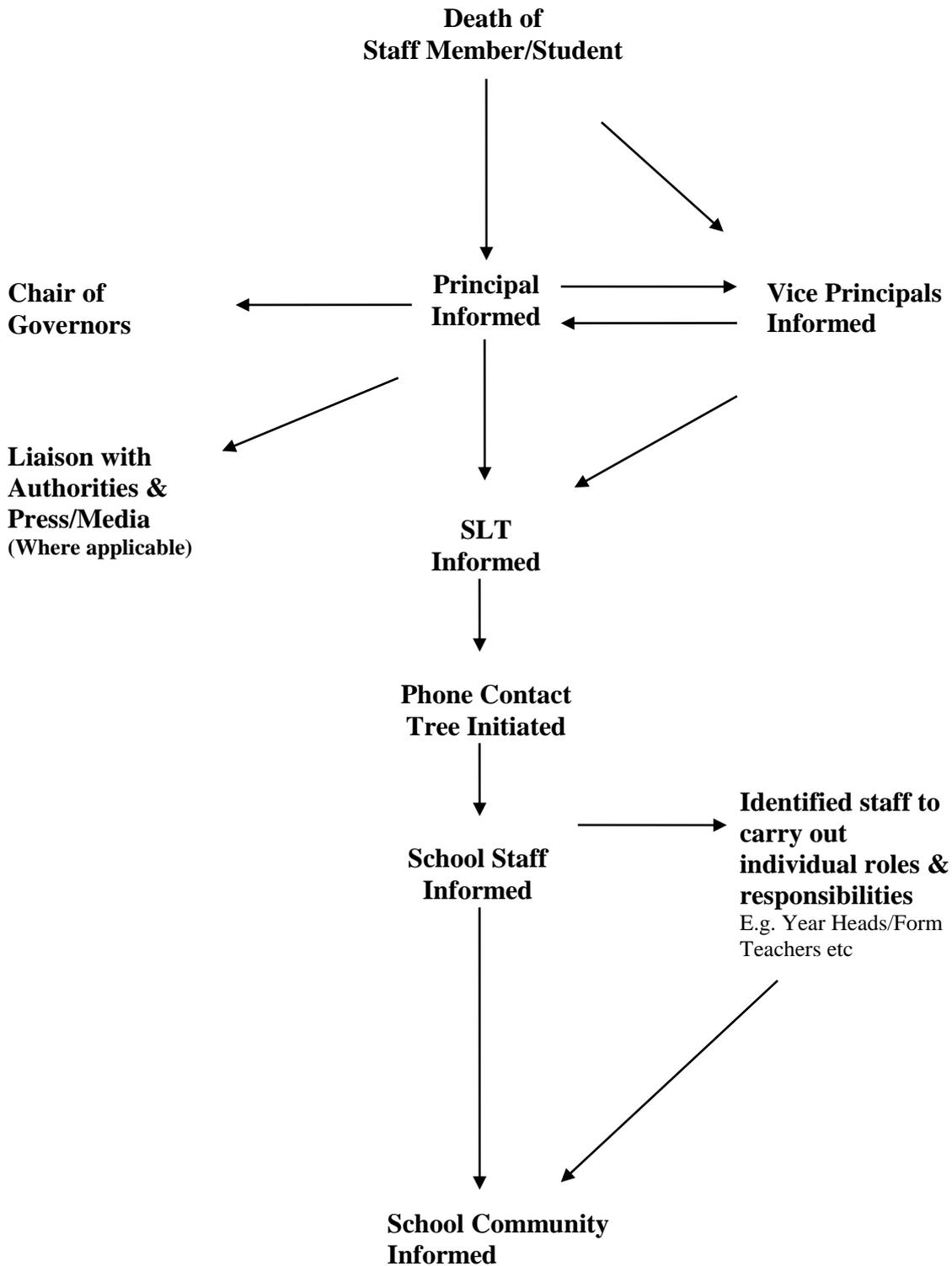
- ◆ School Listening & Support Staff and the Family Works Counselling team should be made available to those students who feel it may be beneficial.
- ◆ The school can also offer support to staff if required.
- ◆ During the period of immediate or longer term staff absence following a bereavement, colleagues may wish to express their concern through visits, text messages, phone calls etc. This should be considered carefully to avoid further stress or anxiety. It would not be appropriate for work related matters to be address without the express permission of the Principal.
- ◆ Home contact with a pupil or family should be maintained only with the guidance of the Pastoral Vice-Principal. It would be most appropriate if this contact was made via the Form Teacher or Year Head in consultation with SLT.

This policy attempts to outline best practice in dealing with the tragedy of bereavement. Any ambiguity or concerns should be addressed to a member of SLT.

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

John 11:25-26

Information Sharing Procedure
following death outside school hours



USEFUL LINKS

The Child Bereavement Trust

- Information for young people who've lost someone close to them.
- Tel: 0845 357 1000
- Website: www.childbereavement.org.uk

Childhood Bereavement Network

- National resource for bereaved children and young people, their parents and care givers.
- Tel: 020 7843 6309
- Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/

ChildLine

- Free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people who need to talk about any problems they may have.
- Tel: 0800 1111
- Website: www.childline.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

- National charity offering counselling, support, help and advice to the bereaved. Has more than 6,000 trained counsellors.
- Helpline: 0844 477 9400
- Young persons helpline: 0808 808 1677
- Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Depression Alliance

- A UK charity offering information to people with depression.
- Tel: 0845 123 2320
- Website: www.depressionalliance.org

