



# BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON CATHOLIC SCHOOL STAFF AND STUDENT BEREAVEMENT POLICY

All that happens in Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School occurs within the context of the school's Mission Statement (in accordance with the Trust Deed for the maintenance and advancement of the Catholic religion).

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**Adopted: June 2020**

**Updated: June 2020**

**Persons Responsible: Head Teacher and Governing Body**

**Committee: Curriculum and Personnel**

**Review Due: Every 3 years**

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School is 'Committed to Gospel Values'. The Gospel of Jesus Christ invites all who follow its teaching to the fullness of life. Discipleship in the Gospel is a life-long journey of faith coming to complete fulfilment only in the presence of God in heaven. The entire life of a disciple is marked by learning and growth. We believe that Jesus is present in the day to day life of our school, that each member of our community has a divine origin and an eternal destiny. We believe that through his Incarnation, Jesus affirmed us as whole people and redeemed us through his resurrection. We believe therefore that the intrinsic dignity of each member of our school community is to be honoured in spirit, in word, in deed and in law. These beliefs underpin our approach and thereby commit us to encouraging all members of our community, staff and pupils alike, to grow towards human wholeness.

## Introduction

Our school is fully committed to the emotional health and well-being of our children and young people and that of our staff. We are dedicated to the continual development of a healthy and thriving school community and strive to work towards this in all aspects of school life. We are passionate about providing an ethos, environment and curriculum that can provide support during difficult times, including a time of death or dying.

### 1. Rationale

Within our school community there will almost always be some children and staff who are struggling with bereavement – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a student. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be *proactive*, rather than *reactive*, when responding to these challenging situations. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk).

### 2. Objectives

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support students and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and the Local Authority and clarify the pathway of support.
  
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm ([http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b\\_section2](http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2) ). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain staff and students' emotional well-being.

### 3. The role of the Governing Body

- To approve this policy and ensure its implementation as an active document. To be reviewed every three years.

*This includes:*

- Reflecting on its effectiveness in practice.
- Utilising the expertise within the school and sharing responsibilities.

### 4. The role of the Headteacher

*The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the governing body, parents/carers, the Local Authority and other relevant outside agencies.*

The Headteacher will:

- Monitor progress and ensure effective liaison with external agencies.
- Respond to media enquiries.
- Keep the governing body fully informed.
- Ensure an appropriate first point of contact for the family and/or concerned.
- Advise and support staff, consult on referral pathways and with internal and external specialists to ensure mechanisms to support more complex grief are in place.

### 5. Procedures:

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by an appropriate member of staff in dialogue with the Headmaster and the family's wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

We will be mindful of the use of social media sites and their impact throughout this time as rumour and gossip spread quickly.

2. Staff should be informed before students and be prepared (through prior advice and support) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. Students should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them. A decision will be made as to whether this information should be given as part of a whole school approach or if only certain groups of students need to be informed.
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.

5. The school should consider whether a flexible approach to the school timetable is needed to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of staff and children affected by the situation. However, it is recognised that minimal disruption to the timetable can offer a sense of security and familiarity.
6. Staff and children affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
8. Where necessary a press statement will be prepared by the Headmaster.
9. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. The school should be aware of any ongoing bereavement issues for new students. To this end it is important to have effective communication with 'feeder' schools and other interested parties (e.g. social services).

**Notes:**

- Many of the guidelines in this policy are only appropriate when the school community as a whole has experienced a death, for example a teacher, a student or another staff member.
- Perhaps a more common experience for teachers and learning support staff is that of a student experiencing the death of a parent, sibling, other family member or friend. Whole school or class activities will not normally be appropriate in this situation, but the needs of that individual student should still be given careful consideration.
- If a child has been bereaved, it is important to involve them in decisions about how the school manages issues relating to their loss. Talk to the child about their preferred way of informing their peers about what has happened and about the support they need.