**Bereavement Policy**

**Introduction**

We in Scoil Mhuire, as Christian educators, are concerned with the whole development of all members of our school community. We strive at all times to achieve the fullest possible development of every dimension of the student’s personality. Bereavement is an integral part of life and yet it is an experience that many find difficult to acknowledge. It is hoped that this bereavement policy will confer on our school community the necessary coping skills and thereby become an intrinsic part of our ethos. .

**Aims of the Bereavement Policy**

* Create awareness within the school community that death is an integral part of life.
* Develop a strategy to help staffs and pupils to cope with the experience of bereavement.
* Help create a caring, understanding & comforting environment where the bereaved are enabled to accept, understand and process their grief.

**Procedures for dealing with a bereavement which impacts on the school community**

No single bereavement experience is the same and therefore it is these procedures are merely guidelines that may be adapted to suit the needs of different situations .

**Informing staff:** the principal will inform all staff members, either individually or in groups, depending on circumstances i.e. time of day, weekend, during school holidays etc.

**Informing pupils:** Should news of the death of a member of the school community reaching the school during school hours, pupils will be informed by their respective class teachers.

**Funeral / Memorial Service:** the principal will make a decision with regard to suitable arrangements, in consultation with the bereaved family, depending on individual situations. (These arrangements will be in line with any Covid-19 restrictions which may be in place)

**Dealing with the Media:** The Principal will act as spokesperson to deal with media enquiries. In the event of a member of staff being approached by the media, they should refer them to the school spokesperson.

In the situation of a tragic death, the principal will consult with the family concerned and an agreed statement will be issued, by the spokesperson to the media. All members of staff will also be informed of this statement.

**Contact with External Groups*:*** in the event of a traumatic death affecting the school community, it was felt that grief facilitators might be of help. Grief counsellors will be sourced and with parents' permission, they may counsel senior pupils (who have been deemed in need of such help).

**Record Keeping**

It is important that the principal/SET informs new staff if any pupil in his/her class has suffered bereavement or separation.

**Return of a bereaved pupil to school**

The teacher will talk to their class group about the bereavement to prepare them for the return of their bereaved classmate. The teacher should ask pupils if they have any questions and avoid euphemisms such as “He’s passed away,” or “He’s sleeping”.

Teachers must also be sensitive to the fears, rational or irrational, which the bereavement may have generated in pupils if one pupil’s parent dies. It’s important that the home/school link be emphasised at this sensitive time. On the return of the bereaved child to school, the class teacher will take the pupil aside and talk to her/him quietly – perhaps give her/him a little notebook with a supportive message to write down her/his thoughts and feelings. The student will be reassured that should they feel overwhelmed at any time, they may go to the office and ask for her/his teacher to be sent for.