A Catholic school's response to a death in the community

Updated during COVID-19

Somehow before all of this, we need to make staff aware that if they receive any news that a member of the community is seriously ill or has died, they should inform the Headteacher immediately. They should not pass the information to other staff or post any information on social media.

Informing staff

- Headteacher to phone Deputy Heads and School Chaplain.
- All staff to be contacted by phone calls via line managers. Messages regarding the reason for the call not to be left on ansaphones, simply a request to call back as soon as possible. Text messages are not appropriate in these circumstances.
- Staff to be asked not to post anything on social media until 24 hours have passed.
- Staff to be asked not to notify any students until students hear via parents through ParentMail.
- Particular care should be taken if this news concerns a student with the calls made to the student's Form Tutor, HOY, SLT link and any linked staff e.g. SEND, MI.
- Particular care should be taken if this concerns a member of staff with the calls made to those known to be close friends/colleagues.
- Headteacher to email all staff 8 hours after phone calls have been made via line managers.

Contact responsibilities

- Chaplain to contact local clergy, and advise clergy on how students are being informed so it is not announced on parish websites until students are told.
- Transition Coordinator to contact the primary school Headteacher (if regarding one of their former students) and email other local primary Headteachers.
- Headteacher to contact Strategic Executive Leader.
- Headteacher's PA to contact governors and directors.

How we tell students

- We would want students to be told by their parents and carers, not by receiving an email directly themselves.

How we tell parents

- A letter from the Headteacher to parents to be sent out via ParentMail to all year groups.
- Students to be asked not to post on social media for 4 hours to allow others to hear the news appropriately.
- A photo of the person may need to be included in the announcement. With large yeargroups or staff, people may only recognise one another by sight and not necessarily by name.

- No announcements to be made by school via social media (Twitter, Facebook or Instagram).
- If press contact school, they may be given the text of Headteacher's letter. A tribute may or may not go out to press later, after the funeral.

Help and support for students/staff

- Students encouraged to support one another and especially to look out for those who may not be in touch with others/isolated socially.
- Students to be given details of Kooth and advised of websites which offer support during bereavement.
- Students to be reminded they can contact staff by email if they wish.
- Students and staff to be emailed resources regarding bereavement.
- Staff encouraged to support one another, especially through departments.
- Staff encouraged to request support via line manager if needed.

Prayers

- Chaplain to prepare prayer resources which will be sent out with the staff email and with ParentMail.

Mass

- Chaplain to liaise with family and, if appropriate, request a Mass to be live-streamed from a local parish with a link available for students and staff to access at home.

Funeral

- Whilst funerals are necessarily being held in private, no details would be made available to the community of the venue of the funeral although perhaps the date of the funeral might be made known.
- Plans would be made in close liaison with the family for a memorial Mass in the future if deemed appropriate.

Relevant phone numbers

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Jane Porter
Chaplain
Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Luton
23 March 2020