



St John the Baptist Church of England Primary School

Bereavement policy

Date policy approved:	June 2023
Date due for review:	June 2026

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Death can be a difficult subject to talk about. School communities are affected by death. This might be the death of a pupil, staff member, pupil's family member, or of someone connected with the school.

Through providing a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses loss, death, bereavement and grief we can improve the skills of children and young people to deal with and emerge positively from them. Our school is well-placed to help children and young people to explore and develop an awareness and understanding of death, as well as to support those personally affected by it. An important part of this is the ability to support pupils, families and staff at times of loss and bereavement, as well as helping children and young people to support their peers, decreasing the sense of isolation that can be part of it.

Every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances.

At St John the Baptist C of E Primary School, we are committed to the emotional health and well-being of all staff and pupils. The most important thing that we can do for children is to acknowledge the death and their loss and offer them the chance to talk about it. This is also the same for staff and parents. We recognise that the support the school can offer or direct families to is for the long term, and that bereavement and grief take time for anyone to work through.

This policy is for all staff, children, parents/carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school.

The policy has an appendix with timelines, templates and guidance written using Child Bereavement UK schools information pack. These documents should be referred to for specific detailed advice eg re different cultural and religious practice, traumatic death including suicide, support for staff.

2.0 AIMS

- to provide a framework for the support the school can offer to all those affected by loss and death, both immediately and over the longer term;
- to provide a pathway to deal with the death of a member of the school community to enable leaders and governors to manage this difficult situation in a timely and appropriate way.

This policy outlines practical measures to be taken when people are in shock, or upset, especially with sudden or multiple deaths or traumatic circumstances.

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The management of a bereavement can be a whole school issue and a structured response is necessary to help everybody contribute appropriately at a difficult time for the school community. The main areas of responsibility are outlined below.

3.1 Governors are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and to provide support in terms of media enquiries.

3.2 The Head Teacher, with the support of the governors, will have overall responsibility for support and liaison in event of a death or traumatic loss. In the event that the Head Teacher is absent or deceased then the Assistant Head Teachers will take responsibility.

These responsibilities are:

- to follow agreed procedures outlined below and deal with external agencies including co-ordinating media enquiries;
- to be, or to nominate a member of staff to be first point of contact for the deceased person's family to communicate with the school;
- to identify appropriate support within and beyond the school community for the individual(s) concerned;
- to co-ordinate the support as appropriate to pupils and staff in the wider school community, including a longer term response to support those bereaved within school.

4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 When a person dies who is closely connected or widely known in the school community e.g. a child or member of staff the following steps will be taken:

- contact will be made with the family to:

identify the facts; agree with them what they wish for the staff and children to be informed; offer support from within and beyond the school community; agree point of contact, methods of communication and frequency of contact in the short term

- staff will be informed sensitively and accurately of the death and decisions taken concerning the best way to inform children and for the internal mechanisms for support to be organised and employed;
- children will be informed sensitively and accurately and generally the best way to do this will be in their class setting; following the guidance in the appendix
- parents will be informed at the same time (see appendix for sample letter). Information will be shared consistently - that does not mean everyone has the same level of detail, but that what is shared is accurate to avoid speculation or misunderstanding.
- the Local Authority via the LLP, parish clergy and diocese and other agencies will be informed and involved as appropriate, which may include the wider local community;
- if appropriate, a press statement will be prepared and a strategy for dealing with the media agreed with the family. This should be discussed with the Chair of Governors and the LLP or School Improvement Manager at HCC before any statement is made;
- discussions will take place concerning attendance at the funeral and any memorial service or provision (including school assembly/service/book of remembrance) agreed with the family;
- practical provision will be made for the day to day impact that the loss of the deceased will have on the school;
- after the event, a review process will be agreed with staff most closely involved in supporting the family and children of the school, sensitively led by a governor, to inform the approach taken in any subsequent bereavement.

4.2 A child may suffer a bereavement of someone close to them but not well known among the wider community. If so, the following members of the school community will be made aware of this bereavement with accurate facts as agreed with the child's family;

- Class teachers, leadership team members and support staff who work with the child
- Members of the pastoral team, eg ELSA
- Friends / peers eg classmates or the whole year group so that they know that their friend/peer is dealing with this

- Parents of friends/peers eg classmates or the whole year group so that they can support their own child who may have questions about what their friend is going through
- Children who have been bereaved will have the following support to enable them to come back into school after the loss;
- A designated member of staff who is there to support them emotionally;
- A phased return may be helpful
- Trained teachers /support staff who know what they may be going through and how to help
- A designated member of staff for family members to communicate with

Please see the Child Bereavement UK School information pack for more detailed guidelines when supporting a bereaved child.

5.0 TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF

All staff access online training on Dealing with Bereavement and Loss and this is also available to governors. It is expected that members of the senior leadership team and pastoral team complete this training once every three years and other staff if appropriate.

Dealing with a sudden death or leading and supporting the school community through a bereavement which impacts on many people is a testing time for all staff including the school leaders. The governors will support the school leadership team to allow them to not only carry out the essential role of leading the school through a time of bereavement but also to allow them personally the time and space to deal with the impact this will have on their wellbeing. Advice will also be sought from the School's LLP at Hampshire County Council if governors or senior leaders feel that expert support from other agencies is needed.

6.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

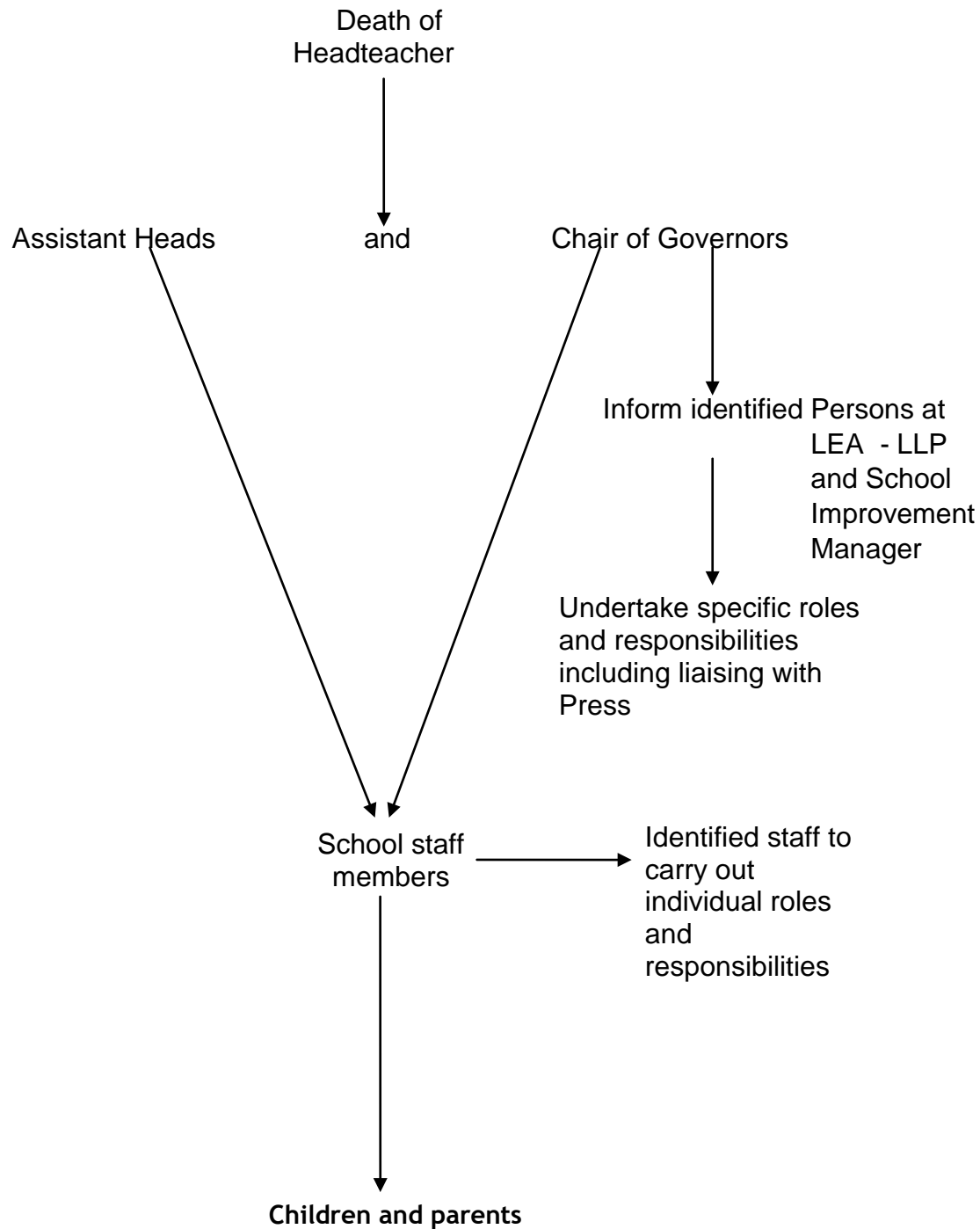
The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Governors and it will be reviewed every three years.

Appendix 1

Bereavement Procedure **To be read with Child Bereavement UK Information Pack for Schools**

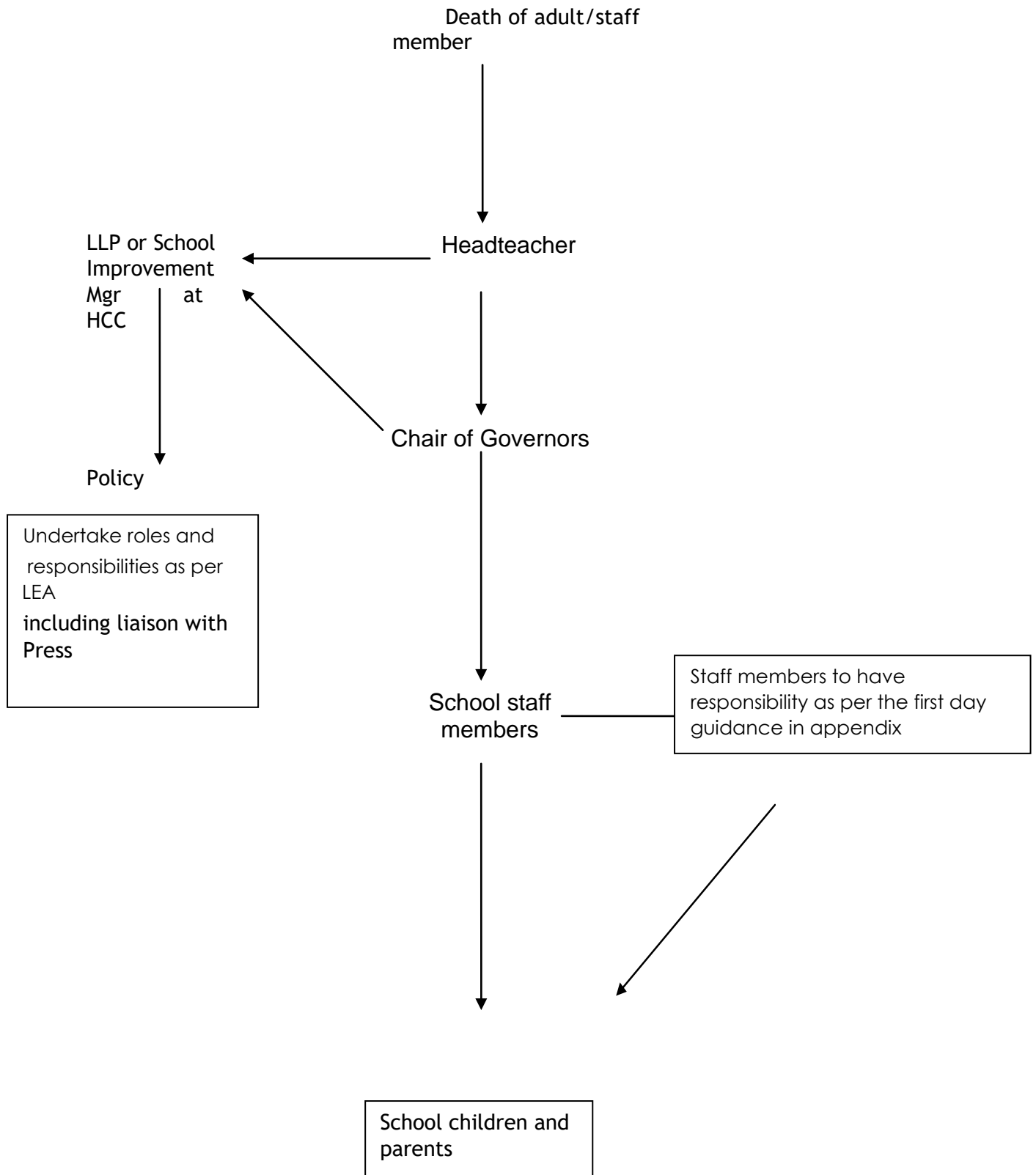
Information Sharing Pathway

following death of Headteacher



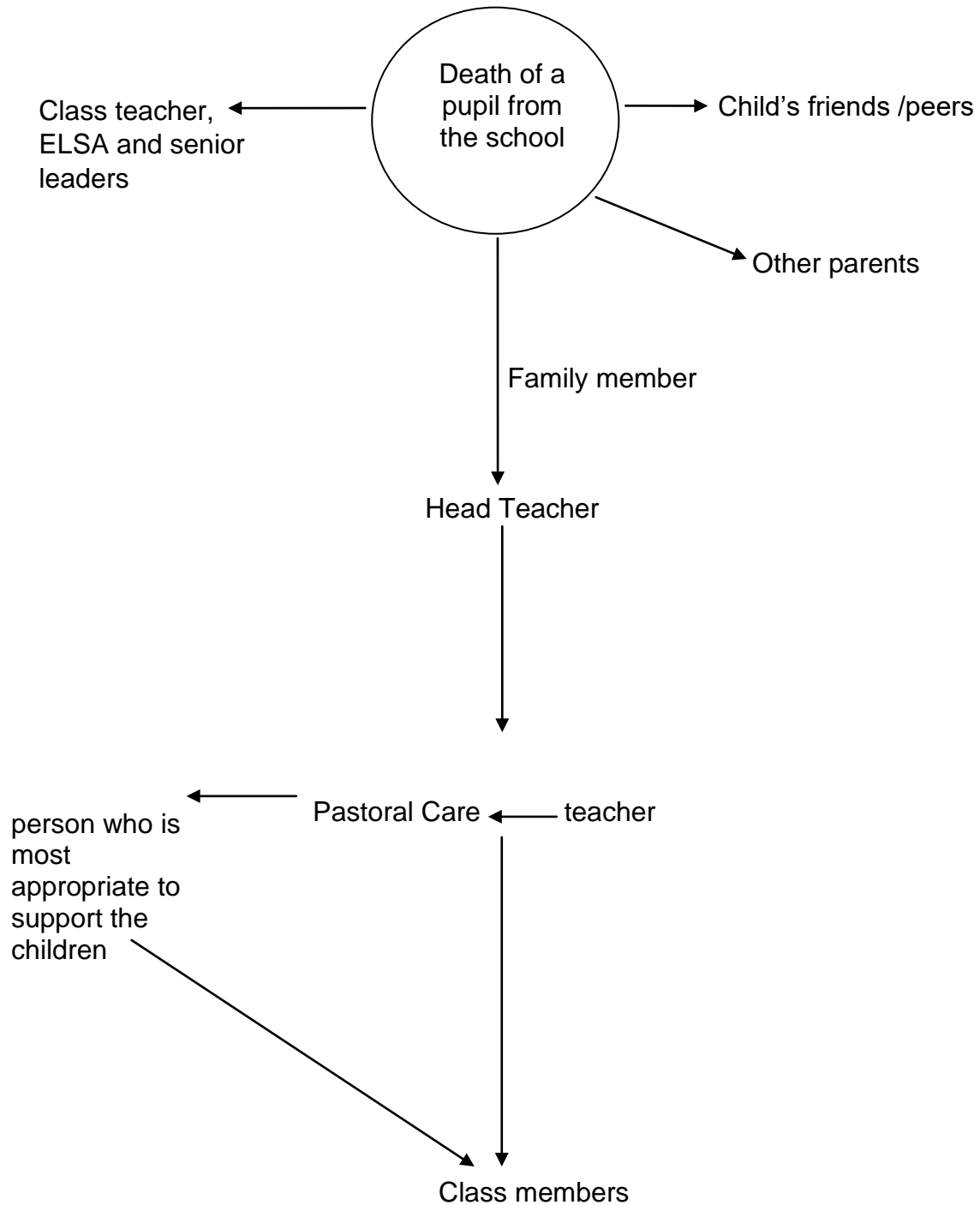
Information Sharing Pathway

following death of a staff member



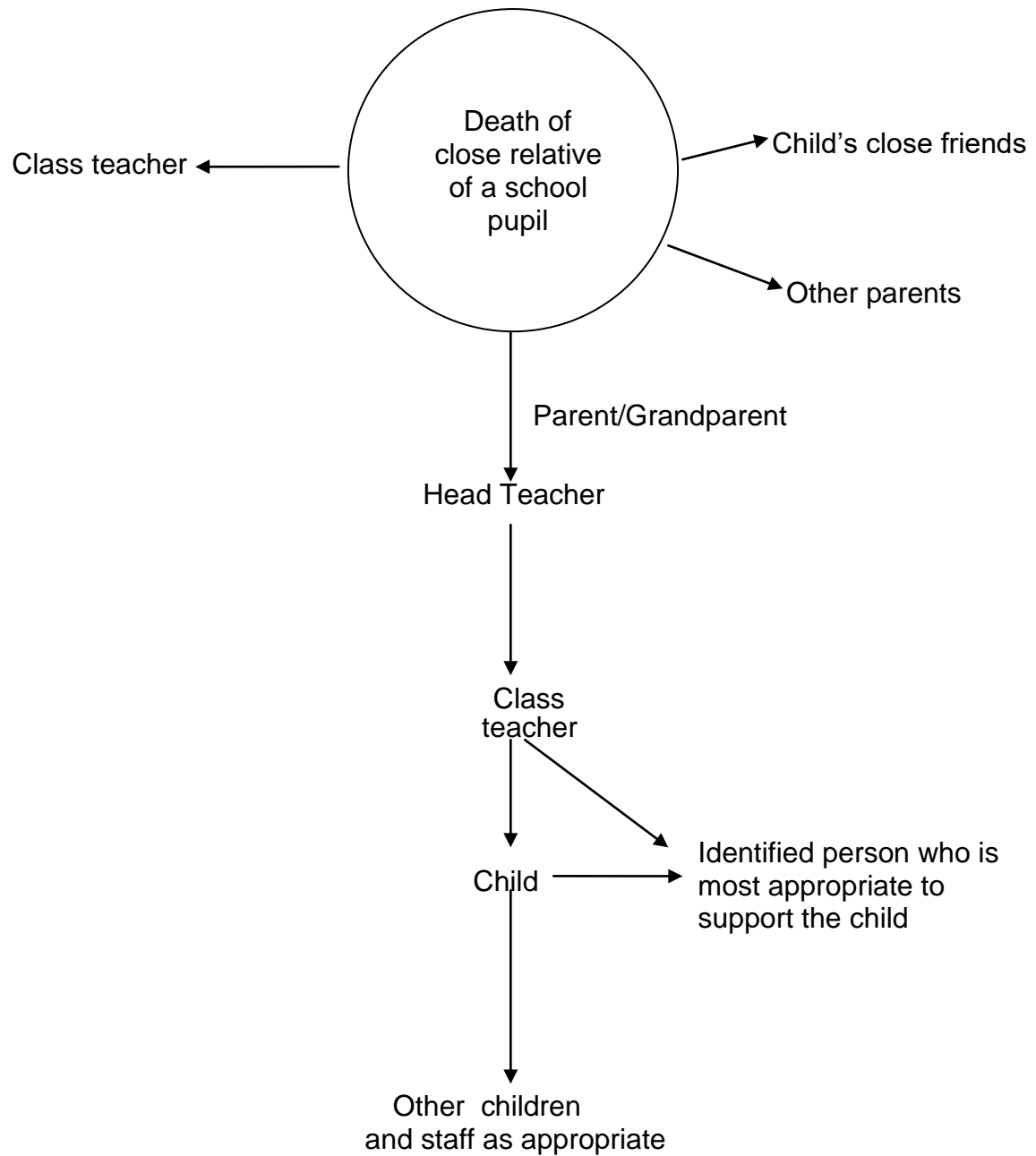
Information Sharing Pathway

following death of pupil



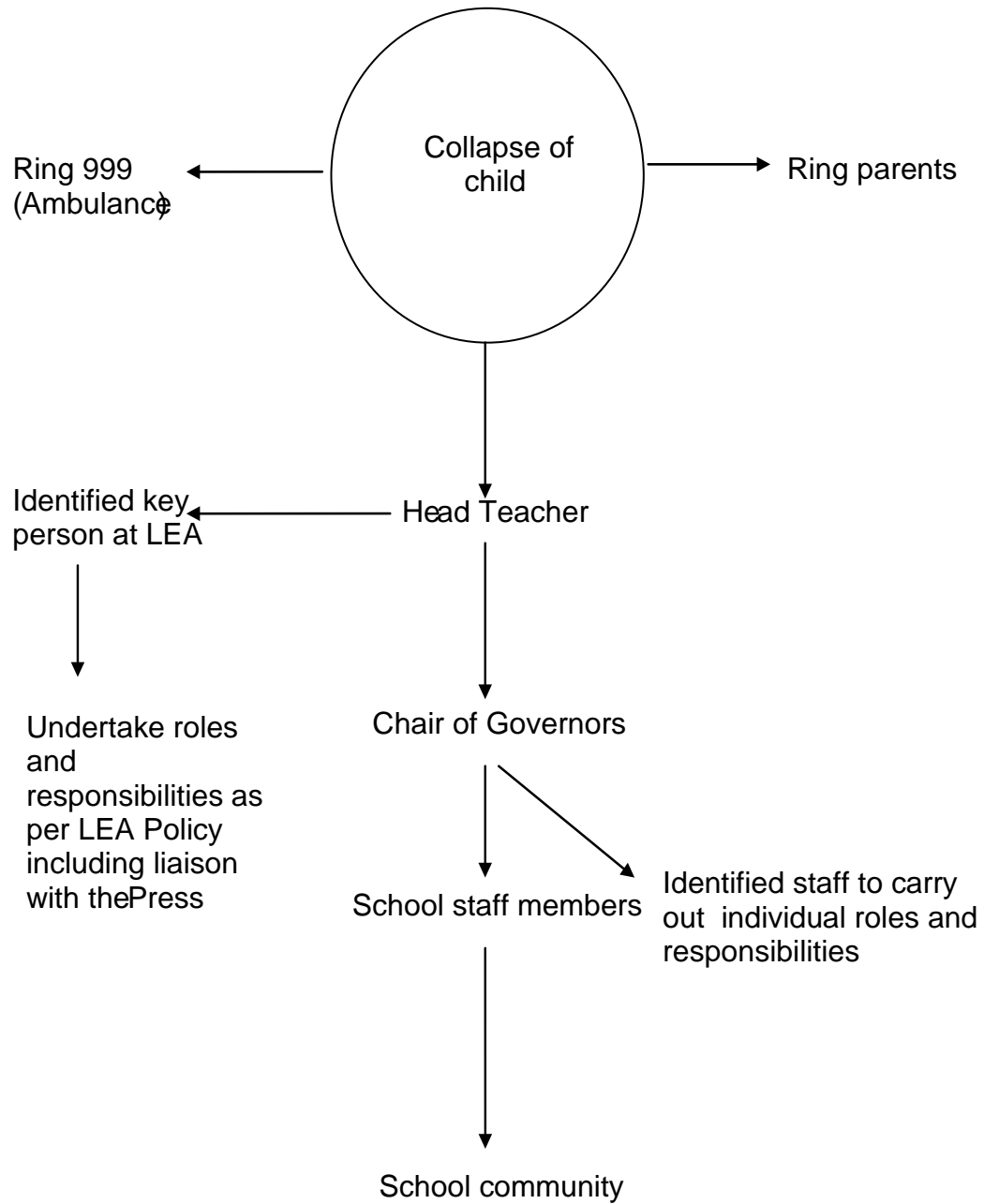
Information Sharing Pathway

following death of close family member of school pupil

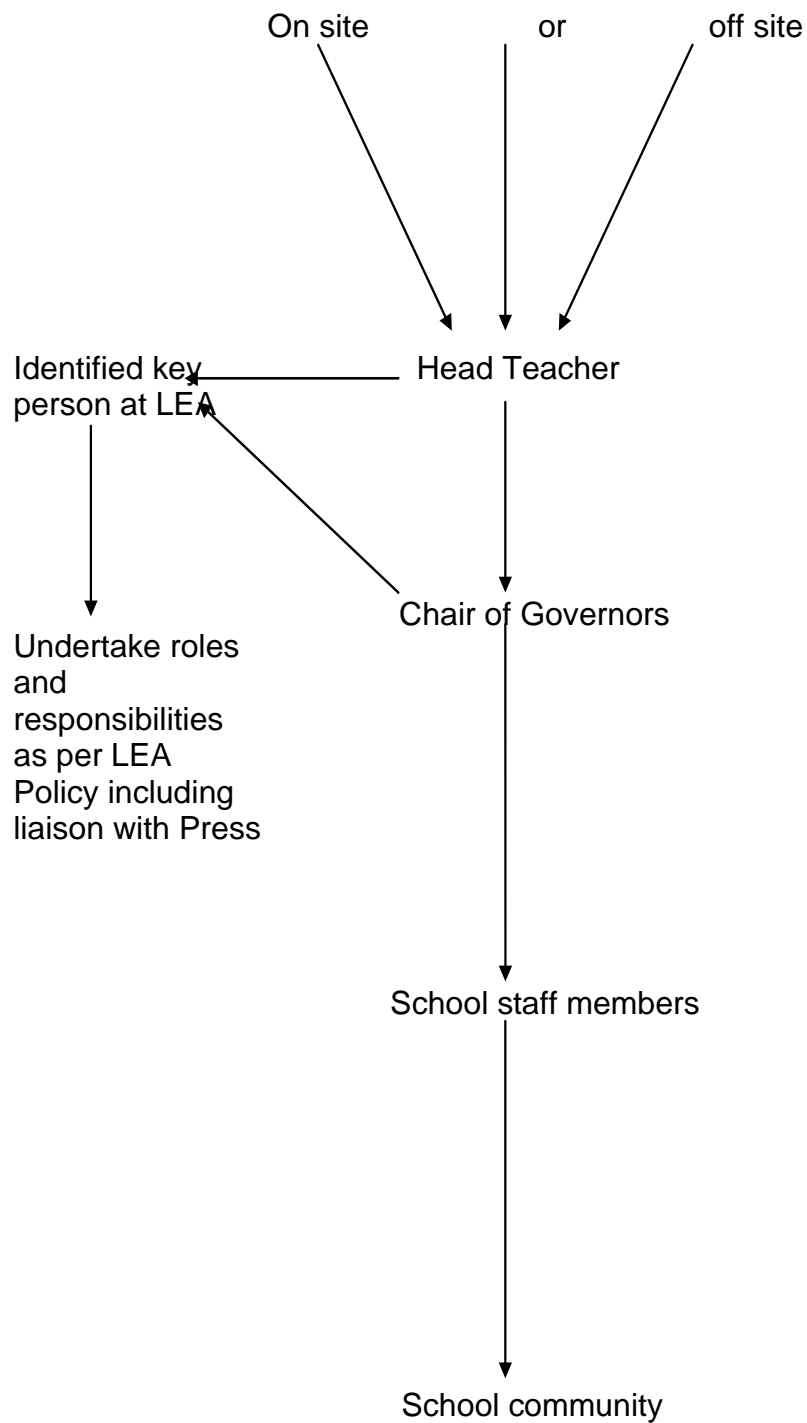


Information Sharing Pathway

following death of child in school



Information Sharing Pathway following major incidents



**Template of a letter informing
parents of the death of a
member of staff**

To all parent/carers

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a member of our staff, x has died. The children were told today and understandably many are quite distressed.

No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy. You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at www.childbereavement.org.uk

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. It is likely that school will be closed on the day of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague. I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new

Yours sincerely

(Name)
Head Teacher

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

To all parent/carers

Dear Parents/Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a child in <Year>.

<Name> died from x *as appropriate as agree with family*. As you may be aware, many children who have x get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died x eg. peacefully at home yesterday.

Name will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school. At home, you can help by acknowledging what has happened with your child and offering to answer their questions too.

We will be arranging events in the school in the coming days and weeks as a means of celebrating <Name>'s life. Any further information we know that is appropriate to share widely will of course be passed on to you and your children as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

(Name)
Head Teacher

Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and Governors

- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible.
- Arrange a face to face meeting or phone call with the chair of governors or another governor if they are not available and ask them to pass the news on to other governors, seek advice from governor services if appropriate.
- Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour.
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways.

Be mindful of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died.

- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting, i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent, e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or e-mail etc.

Procedures for delegating responsibilities for responding to the death of a member of staff or a child on the first day that the news is shared

Activity to take place	Person responsible	Feedback to senior leader by:
Arrange a staff meeting and prepare wording for breaking news to staff		
Contact chair of governors for news to be passed on to all governors on the same day		
Identify individual members of staff who feel able to: support members of staff		
Identify individual members of staff who feel able to support groups of children and agree on a suitable space in school for this work (trusted adults)		
Share agreed wording for staff to use with their classes to break the news to the children		
Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary).		
Identify an appropriate member of staff who will take phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a "protected" telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information.		
Identify a member of staff who will provide a letter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day before 3pm.		
Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation.		
Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement (see Child Bereavement UK bereavement information pack).		
Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues.		

Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the children

- Inform the children as soon as possible about the death.
- Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately in advance.
- Where possible, the children should be informed in classes by their teacher or another well known teacher.
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
- If the adults around them can express their emotions, a child will know it is OK to do the same. Encourage and help them to express feelings by giving opportunities through play and other activities.
- Allow the children to verbalise their feelings and to have opportunities to respond creatively to help them express themselves, eg drawing or writing.
- Allow the children to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
- Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person.
- Avoid using euphemisms. Use factual accurate language to describe in an age appropriate way. Do not be afraid to use the word 'dead'. Words such as 'lost' or 'gone away' create confusion and misunderstanding in children.
- The most helpful thing that you can do for grieving children, is to acknowledge what has happened. Keep it very simple, "I was very sorry to hear that *** has died, that is a very sad thing to have happened.
- Those children who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or on a one-to-one situation.
- Ensure the children understand that the death is nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in **no** way their fault.
- Reassure them that not all people who are ill or have had an accident will die and that many people get better.
- When they ask difficult questions which you are unable to answer, ask the child what they think or ask them what they have been told.

- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school.
- Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family.
- Be available for any child who needs additional help and support.
- Refer to the Child Bereavement UK Information Pack for schools for further guidance.

Things to consider in the days following the news of the death

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- Ensure nominated staff, with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.

It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.

- Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary.

It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.

- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.

Consider practical issues like:-

- putting an obituary in the paper, sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc;
- who will attend the funeral, making a collection etc;
- cover for any staff who may be going to the funeral;
- transport to and from the funeral;
- informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved;
- possible closure of the school. If this is the case remember to tell lunchtime supervisors, site manager etc in advance.

Things to consider in the medium to long term

What external sources of support are the family using and can the school guide to more suitable /available support using charities eg Cruse helpline, Winston's Wish helpline - see the Child Bereavement UK information pack

How will the bereavement impact be monitored and how will the child/family/staff member be supported to flourish in school