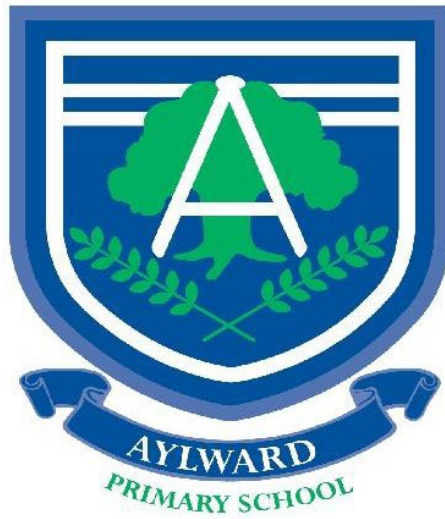




AYLWARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

BEREAVEMENT POLICY

GB Committee Responsible:	Q & S
Reviewed by:	Nicolle Khan
Review Date:	May 2025
Approved by Committee:	12.06.2025
Next Review Date:	May 2028

Introduction

Every year 20,000 children under the age of 16 years will be bereaved of a parent and many more will experience the death of someone else special in their life. In addition to these individual pupils, schools may also experience the death of a child at the school or a staff member. It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time all schools will have to deal with a death that affects the school community.

As children spend the vast majority of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children will see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and will look to trusted staff members for help.

Aims

Aylward Primary School aims to meet the needs of all of its children and staff. When home circumstances are changed because of a death in the family and all around is 'different', our school aims to be a place that both child and family can rely on, and gain some much needed support. If the death is of a child or member of staff, the whole school community will work together, with outside agencies as appropriate, to support each other.

Death is something that most people choose not to think about so when faced with it we often find ourselves ill prepared. The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

Where children have to deal with loss and death, the support that they receive is crucial to their ability to cope and recover from their personal trauma. Grief is unique for each individual – its manifestation is very varied, and it is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some children and young people are able to cope and come to terms with the loss, there are some children that don't and these would be the ones that need support.

Procedures

Within school, we work in partnership with parents. When children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents should make teachers aware of any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement, moving, new babies' etc). If there has been bereavement, information on what the child was told (in terms of religious beliefs etc.) should be sought, in order that the school staff do not say anything that could confuse or upset the child or family.

When school is informed of bereavement or loss the following action should be considered:

- The family should be contacted for appropriate support.
- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows, as well as how he/ she has been involved.
- It should be explained to the family how the school can be involved to support the child and family.
- The importance of 'included care' will be explained – both parties assessing changes in behaviour. A key member of staff will be responsible for doing this. (Eating and sleeping patterns may change or behaviour in school may deteriorate or the child may become withdrawn.)
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate e.g. the school nurse, Harrow Bereavement Care, CAMHS, The Educational Psychology Service

When the school is informed of the death of a child or member of staff, the following action should be considered;

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes taken into account before decisions are taken on how and what to tell the children in school.
- Counselling should be available if necessary e.g. in cases of sudden or violent death.
- People will be released, where possible, to attend funeral or memorial services should it be appropriate.

- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support. For example, some children may require mentoring support or bereavement counselling (outside agencies may be approached).

See appendices for information sharing pathways and guidelines in the event of a death or major incident within the school community.

The age of the bereaved child

When staff are considering their response to bereaved pupils, it is necessary to recognise that the age of the pupils can affect their response to death. Young children process information differently from adults. Typically, depending on emotional development, children react to death in the following ways:

3 – 7 years

Children of this age are very egocentric. They believe that they are to blame for the death. If this feeling is not explained, they may carry the guilt for the rest of their lives. Children of this age can react casually to the news of the death but may ask about it at a later stage. Some will believe that they might die as well.

8 – 12 years

At this age, children begin to realise that death is permanent. They also recognise that they will die one day. They may also feel resentful if there is less attention at the time of the death or immediately afterwards.

Sex differences

Boys generally show their emotions and talk things through much less than girls do and as a result may find it a lot harder to grieve. Culture and society have a part to play in this, as there can be pressure on boys to 'act like a man' and not show their feelings as 'big boys don't cry'. Very often, however, boys' unresolved grief can manifest itself in poor behaviour at a later date.

Girls, on the other hand, are considered to be the expressive sex, and are thus more able to talk about and show the way that they feel, which makes the grieving process slightly easier.

Whatever the reasons for these differences, it is important to be aware they exist.

At Aylward we place value on ~

B Bereavement support

Bereaved children are entitled to receive the support they need.

E Expressing feelings and thoughts

Bereaved children should feel comfortable expressing all feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety and to be helped to find appropriate ways to do this.

R Remembering the person who has died

Bereaved children have a right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives if they wish to do so. This may involve re-living memories (both the good and the difficult) so that the person becomes a comfortable part of the child's continuing life story.

E Education and information

Bereaved children are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will happen next.

A Appropriate and positive response from our school

Bereaved children can benefit from receiving help and understanding from their teachers and peers.

V Voicing important decisions

Bereaved children should be asked if they wish to be involved in important decisions that have an impact on their lives (such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries).

E Everyone being involved

Bereaved children should receive support which includes their parent(s) or carers and siblings and which respects each child's confidentiality.

M Meeting others

Bereaved children can benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.

E Established routines

Bereaved children should be able to choose to continue previously enjoyed activities and interests.

N No to blame

Bereaved children should be helped to understand they are not responsible and not to blame for the death.

I Telling their story

Bereaved children have a right to tell their story in a variety of ways and for those stories to be heard, read or seen by those important to them.

Resources

Useful websites, telephone numbers and addresses

- Winston's Wish: 08088 020 021, www.winstonswish.org.uk
- Childhood Bereavement Network: 020 7843 6309
- CRUSE Bereavement Care: (0870) 167 1677, www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

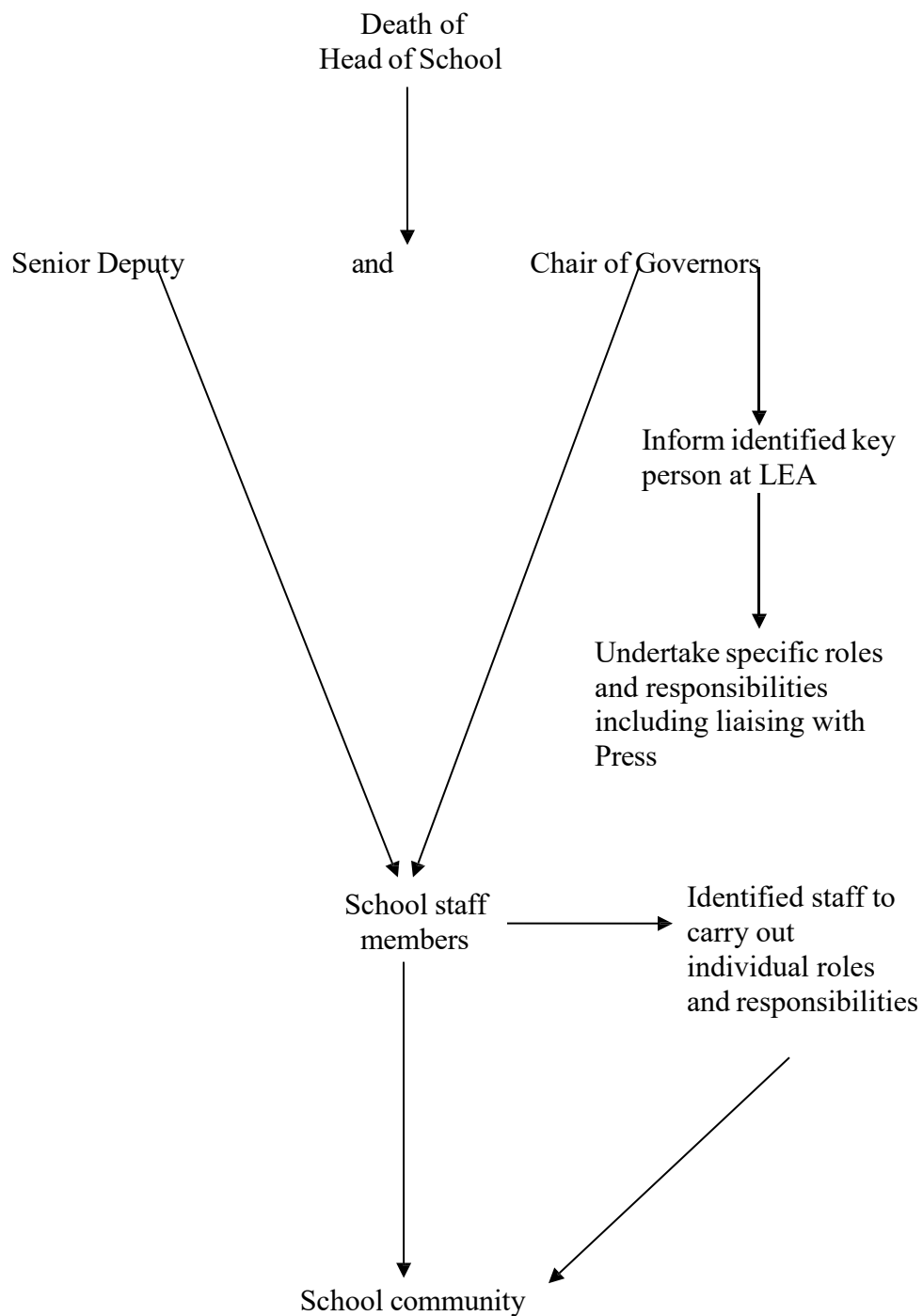
Books dealing with death and loss:

- Beyond the Rough Rock
- As Big As It Gets
- Supporting a Child who has been Bereaved through Suicide ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley
- Supporting a Child when Someone in their Family is Seriously Ill ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley
- The Secret C - Straight Talking about Cancer ~ Julie Stokes, Diana Crossley
- I Miss You ~ First Look at Death ~ Pat Thomson
- Chocolate Chip – Shelley Gilbert

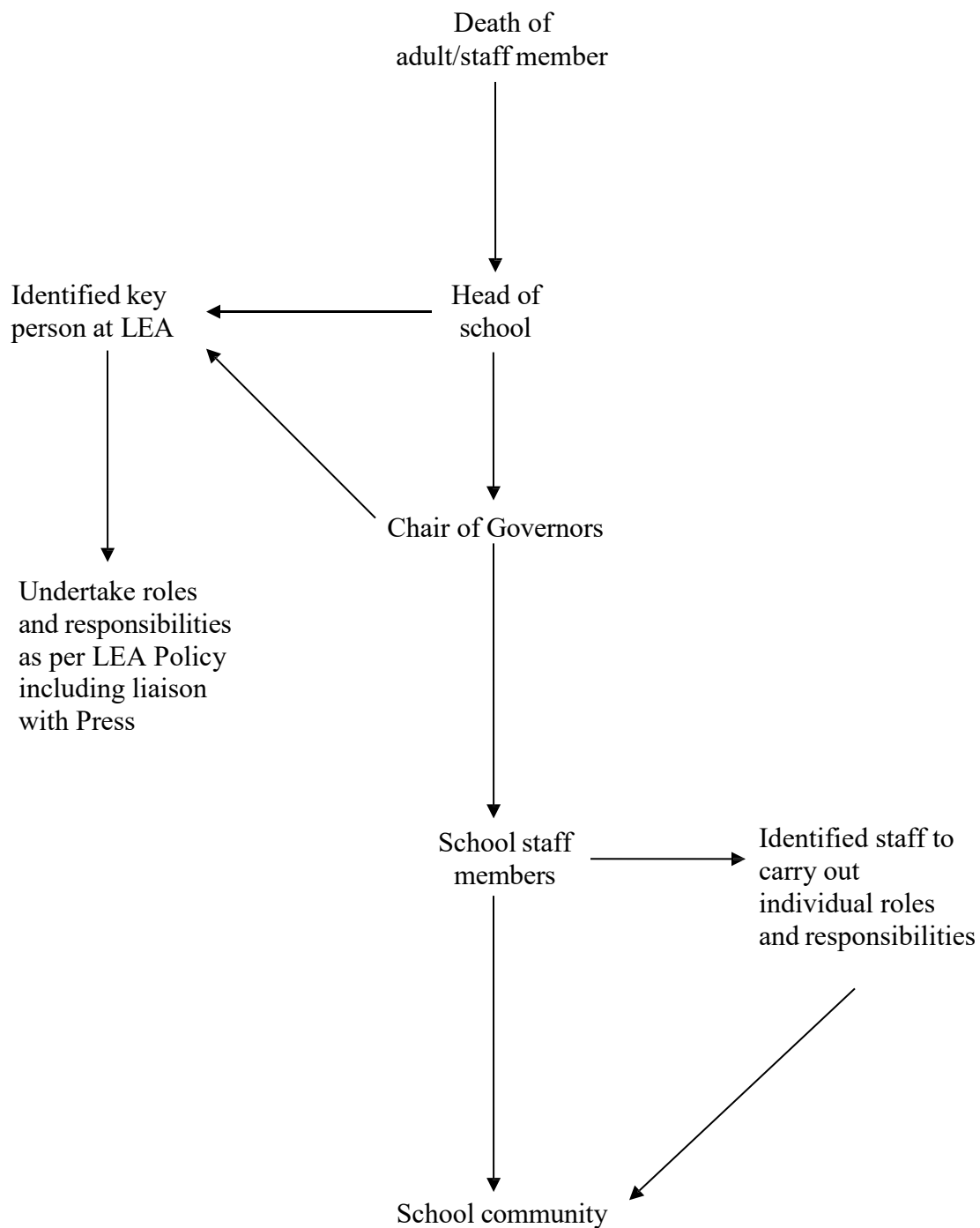
Appendices:

- Appendix A: Information Sharing Pathways
- Appendix B: Guidelines for sharing news
- Appendix C: Letter Templates
- Appendix D: Things to consider in the days following the news of a death

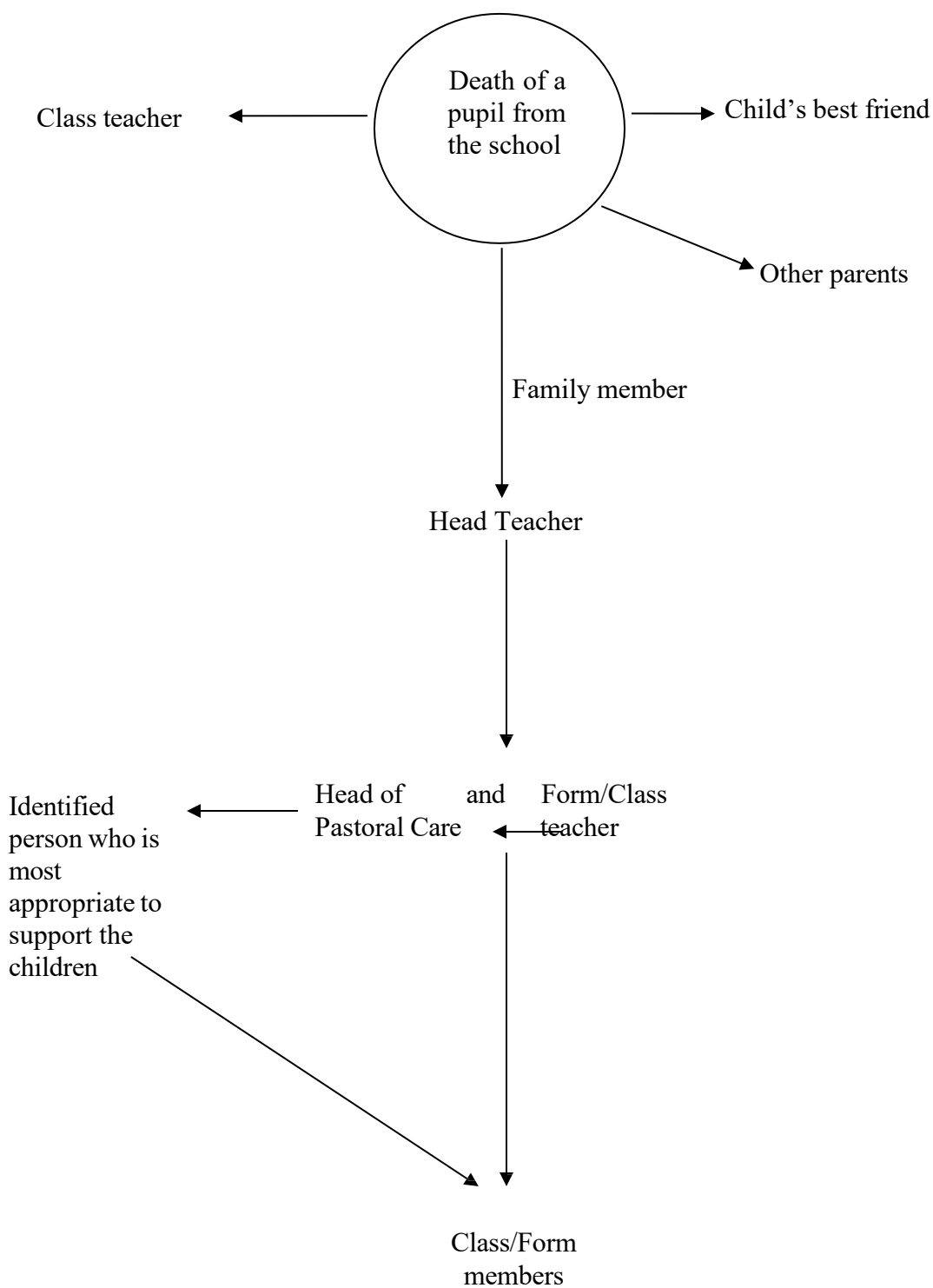
Information Sharing Pathway following death of Head of School



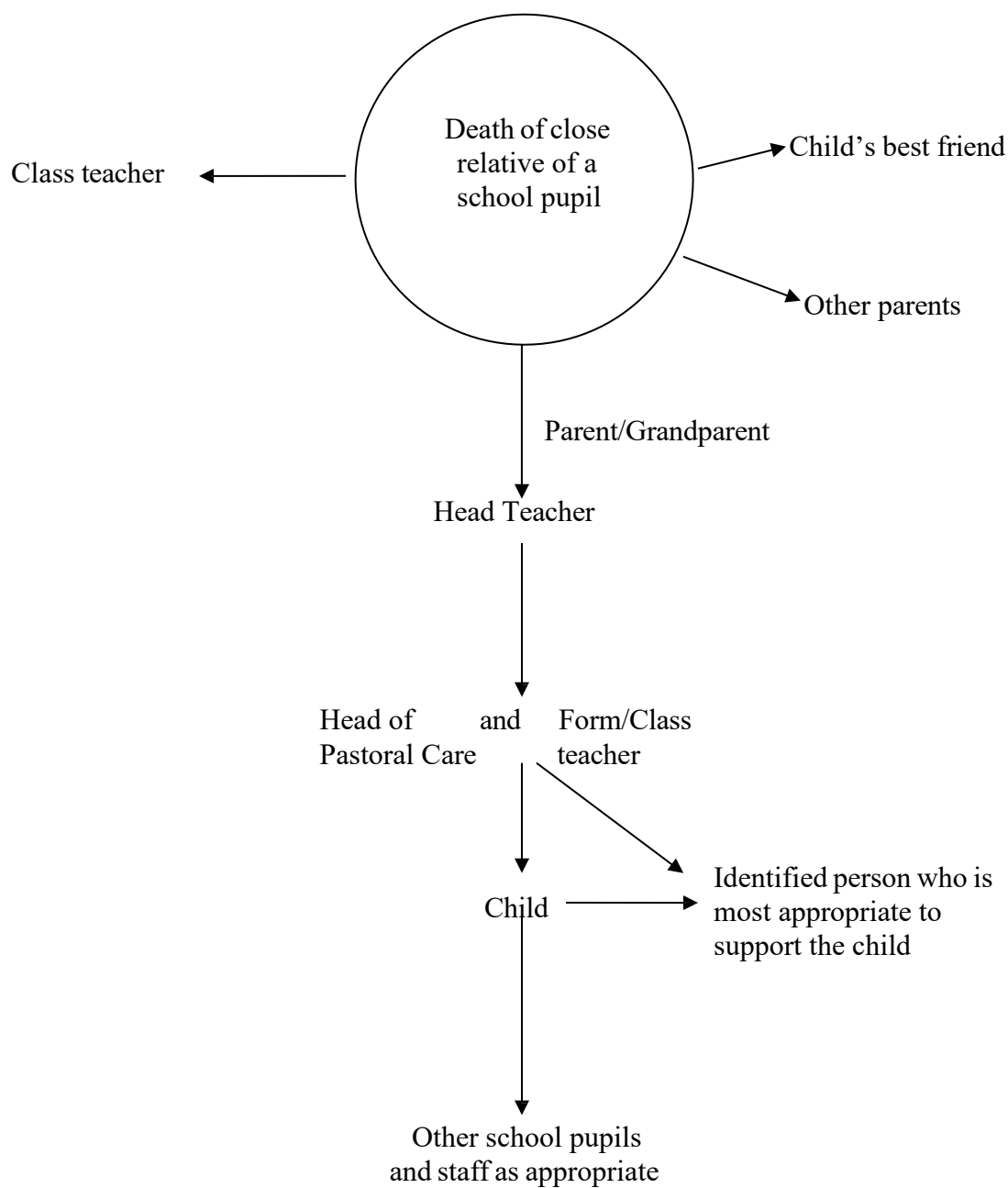
Information Sharing Pathway following death of a staff member



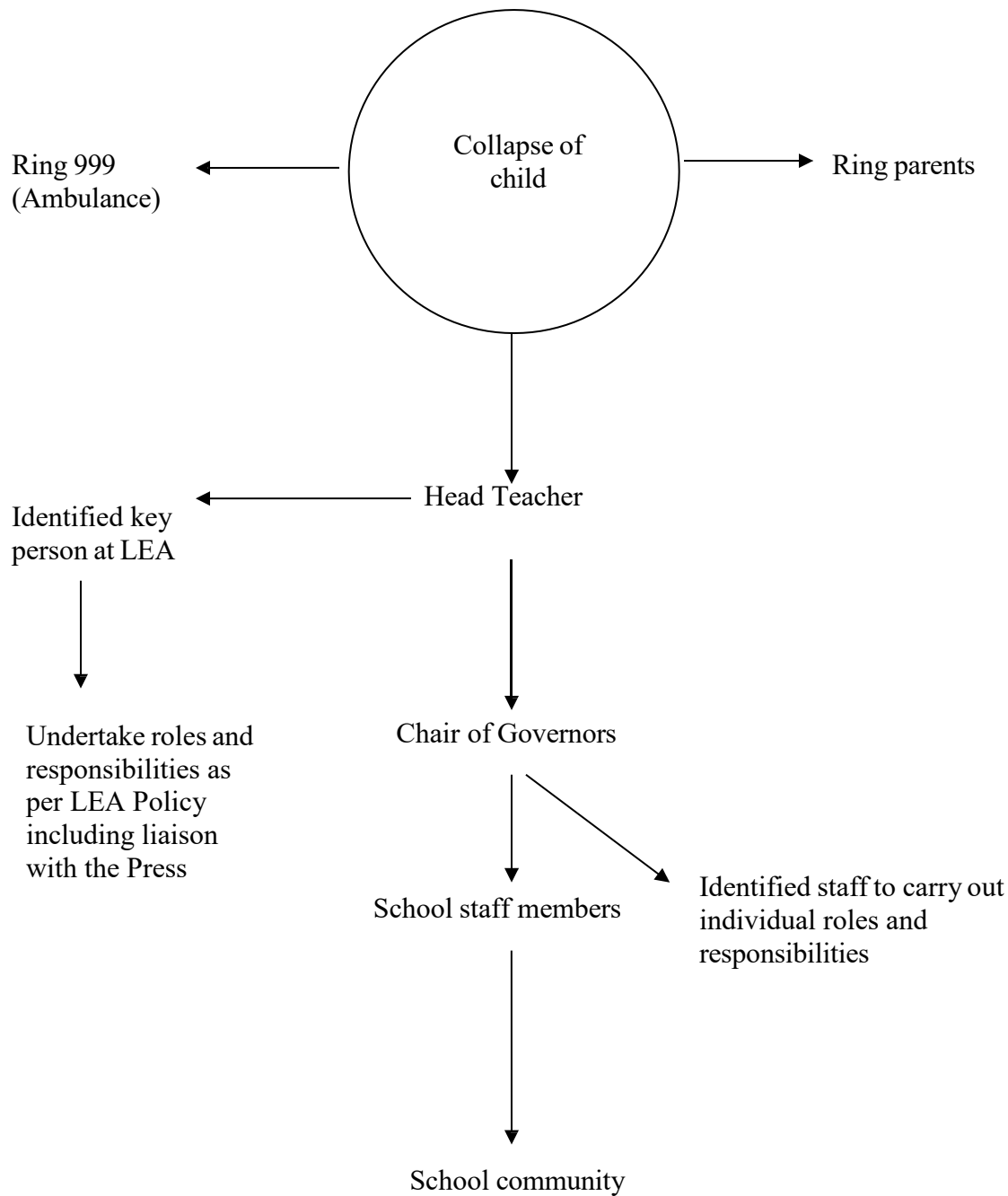
Information Sharing Pathway following death of pupil



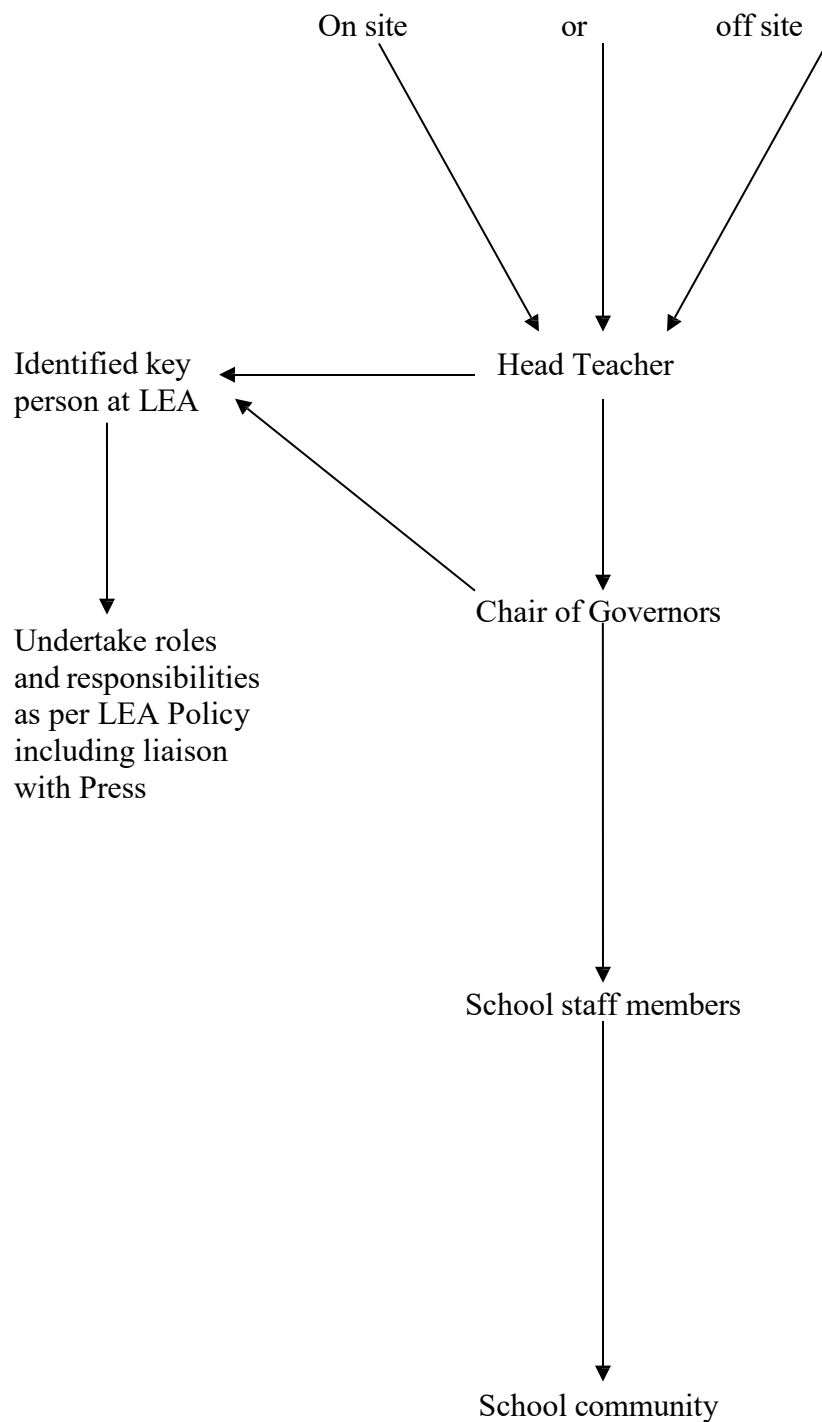
Information Sharing Pathway
following death of close family member
of school pupil



Information Sharing Pathway following death of child in school



Information Sharing Pathway following major incidents



**Guidelines for breaking news about a death
to staff and governors**

- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible.
- 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 aware 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.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
 - a) support members of staff
 - b) support groups of children (The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted.)
- 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. Telephone line providers may provide an additional line if the situation requires one.
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day.
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation. Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues. Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need.
- Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement.

**Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the
children/young people**

- Inform the children/young people as soon as possible about the death.
- Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class or tutor groups. Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately.
- If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.
- Allow the children/young people to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children/young people 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.
- Those children/young people 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/young people 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.
- 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/young person who needs additional help and support.

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

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/head of year had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

Our thoughts are with <Name>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed.

When someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we offer every possible assistance.

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.

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and 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 but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we will offer every possible assistance.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..>'s life.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

**Things to consider in the days
following the news of a 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 to temporarily 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 secretaries/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, caretaker etc in advance.