

## Bereavement policy for Brighton Girls

<b>Date policy agreed:</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
<b>Date of next review:</b>	<b>September 2022</b>

### Contents page

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
1	Introduction and purpose of the policy	2
1.1	Background and rationale	2
1.2	Policy links	2
1.3	Purpose of the policy	3
2	Our charter for bereaved children and young people	3-4
3	Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording	5
4	Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement	5
4.1	Role of the governing body	5
4.2	Role of the head teacher	5
4.3	Role of staff	6
4.4	Role of the council – the education psychology service	7
5	Procedures	7
5.1	Pre-bereavement	
5.2	Following a bereavement	
5.3	Following a sudden and unexpected death - suicide	
5.4	Following a sudden and unexpected death - homicide	
6	Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs	
7	Young asylum seekers and refugees	
8	Supporting staff	
8.1	Support for bereaved staff	
8.2	Staff training	
9	Curriculum	
10	Additional information and links	
10.1	Who is supporting us	
10.2	National support services and support resources	
10.3	Local support services	

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background and rationale

Brighton Girls is an inclusive school that strives to ensure that all children feel safe when with us. Our values focus on openness, honesty and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual child to ensure that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That's nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person<sup>1</sup>.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish.

## **1.2 Policy links**

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Self-harm Policy
- Health and Safety policy

## **1.3 Purpose of the policy**

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to pupils and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

---

<sup>1</sup> Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>



Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school, the council's families, children and learning department and the wider community.

## 2 Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#)

<b>B</b>	<b>Bereavement support</b> Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
<b>E</b>	<b>Express feelings and thoughts</b> We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
<b>R</b>	<b>Remember the person who has died</b> We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
<b>E</b>	<b>Education and information</b> All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
<b>A</b>	<b>Appropriate response from schools and colleges</b> Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.

<b>V</b>	<b>Voice in important decisions</b> We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
<b>E</b>	<b>Enjoyment</b> We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
<b>M</b>	<b>Meet others</b> We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
<b>E</b>	<b>Established routines</b> We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
<b>N</b>	<b>Not to blame</b> We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
<b>T</b>	<b>Tell the story</b> We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

### 3 Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.



We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school systems (CPOMS) to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

## **4 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement**

### **4.1 The role of the governing body is to:**

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

### **4.2 The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:**

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the Brighton and Hove Inclusion Support Service in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. link Educational Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker, alongside relevant colleagues and managers
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- keep the governing body appropriately informed



- deal with media enquiries

#### **4.3 The role of all staff in our school is to:**

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral team
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum or in the role of tutor (teachers only)
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

#### **4.4 The role of the local authority**

The role of the Brighton & Hove Inclusion Support Service (BHISS) is to:

- offer specific support when there has been an incident affecting a section of the school community, and / or a critical incident, suicide or sudden death of an adult or child, initially meeting with the head teacher and key lead staff in the school to discuss the immediate plan of action, with timeline outlined where possible for follow up actions
- inform appropriate colleagues within the local authority on a need to know basis



- advise and support staff who are supporting bereaved children and young people including offering and providing training on request
- advise on referral pathways and offer triage to support pathways of support, through identification of those requiring more specialist support and those whose needs can be met through the Whole School Approach on request
- ensure that any staff significantly affected by a death are made aware of the support that's available to them.

BHISS can be contacted on :

Mohammed Bham

Principal Educational Psychologist & Head of Learning Support Services

Email: [BHISS@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:BHISS@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Tel: 01273 293481

## **5 Procedures**

### **5.1 Pre-bereavement**

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact (Prep- Laura Comerford- Head; Senior- Wendy Fox- Deputy Head Pastoral) in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion

- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

## **5.2 Following a bereavement**

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

### **As an immediate response we will:**

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- will prepare a press statement, with support from the GDST communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (head teacher)
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all



staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.

- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family. We would normally do this through assemblies and / or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

### **For the funeral we will:**

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

### **After the funeral we will:**

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed

- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.

### **Longer term we will:**

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

### **5.3 Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide**

Suicide is not just a really difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 4.3 we will seek advice from BHISS. As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days

It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide. <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/> and follow our Suicide Safety Policy.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal

- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as ‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended his / her life’ rather than ‘committed suicide’ or ‘successful suicide’, and saying ‘attempted to end his / her life’ rather than ‘unsuccessful suicide’ or ‘failed attempt at suicide’.

#### **5.4 Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide**

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston’s Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Winston’s Wish recommend taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston’s Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website:

<https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

## **6 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs**



We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

## **7 Young asylum seekers and refugees**

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate.

## **8 Supporting staff**

### **8.1 Support for bereaved staff**

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice.

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the trust's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

### **8.2 Staff training**



We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers [training courses](#) and also a [free online training course for school staff](#).

## 9 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

## 10 Additional support and links

### 10.1 National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

**Winston's Wish:** [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org) Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

**Cruse Bereavement Care:** [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

**Childhood Bereavement Network:** <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.



**Hope Again:** <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

**Papyrus:** <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

**Samaritans:** <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.

### **10.3 Local support services**

Bereavement support services

#### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#) is a charity which offers free information and advice to anyone who has been affected by a death. They also provide emotional support and counselling on a one-to-one basis and in groups.

If you live in Brighton & Hove (or surrounding areas) you can phone 01273 234 007, or send an email to [Brighton@cruse.org.uk](mailto:Brighton@cruse.org.uk).

If you live in Eastbourne (or surrounding areas) you can phone 01323 642 942, or send an email to [EastbourneBranch@cruse.org.uk](mailto:EastbourneBranch@cruse.org.uk).

#### **Winston's Wish**

[Winston's Wish](#) supports children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling.

You can phone the national helpline number on 08088 020 021.

#### **Sands (neonatal and stillbirth death charity)**

[Sands](#) provides support to parents and families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

To get in touch with Sands, you can phone the helpline on 08081 643 332, or send an email to [helpline@sands.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sands.org.uk).



## **Community Roots**

[Community Roots](#) provides support for those bereaved by suicide (provided by Rethink Mental Illness).

For more information and to discuss accessing support that's right for you, please phone 08081 961 768 for free.

## **Martlets Hospice**

[Martlets bereavement service](#) offers support to the family and friends of patients who have received care from Martlets - whether that's in the hospice itself or out in the community.

To get in touch with the Bereavement Team, please phone 01273 273 400 and ask to speak to the Patient and Family Support Administrator. Or you can send an email to [bereavement@martlets.org.uk](mailto:bereavement@martlets.org.uk).

## **Hearing You**

The Diocese of Chichester with Together in Sussex have launched Hearing You, a new pastoral phone line to enable the people of Sussex to feel connected and supported. The phonenumber will be open to anyone living in Sussex whether they currently attend a church or not.

It will provide pastoral support and a listening ear to the recently bereaved and people directly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. It will be staffed by volunteers, clergy and licensed lay ministers.

The service will initially run from 20 April to the end of May, Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm.

To access the Hearing You service, please phone 01273 425 047.

## **At a Loss.org**

[At a Loss.org](#) has developed information and advice to support people who are bereaved during the coronavirus pandemic, including:



- ideas to help people feel less alone
- how you can help someone who has been bereaved
- advice on funerals and memorials
- supporting children
- useful contacts

## **The Compassionate Friends**

[The Compassionate Friends](#) provides volunteer peer support to bereaved parents and their families.

To get in touch, please phone 03451 232 304.

## **My Life Brighton & Hove**

[My Life Brighton & Hove](#) is an online directory, listing services and organisations in Brighton & Hove offering bereavement support.

## **NHS information and support**

Find [NHS information and support on bereavement](#).

## **Counselling Directory**

The [Counselling Directory](#) is a support network which can help find a bereavement counsellor to help you cope with grief and adjust to life without your loved one.

## **Samaritans**

Need support? The [Samaritans](#) are there to listen 24 hours, 365 days a year. Phone 116 123 for free.

## **Sue Ryder Online Bereavement Support**

[Sue Ryder's Online Bereavement Support](#) makes it easy to connect with the right support from your own home.



Whether you're looking for one-to-one professional support, to talk to others in similar situations, or to read expert information resources, you can access support for free on your computer, tablet or smartphone.

## **Appendices**

GDST Guidance:

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.

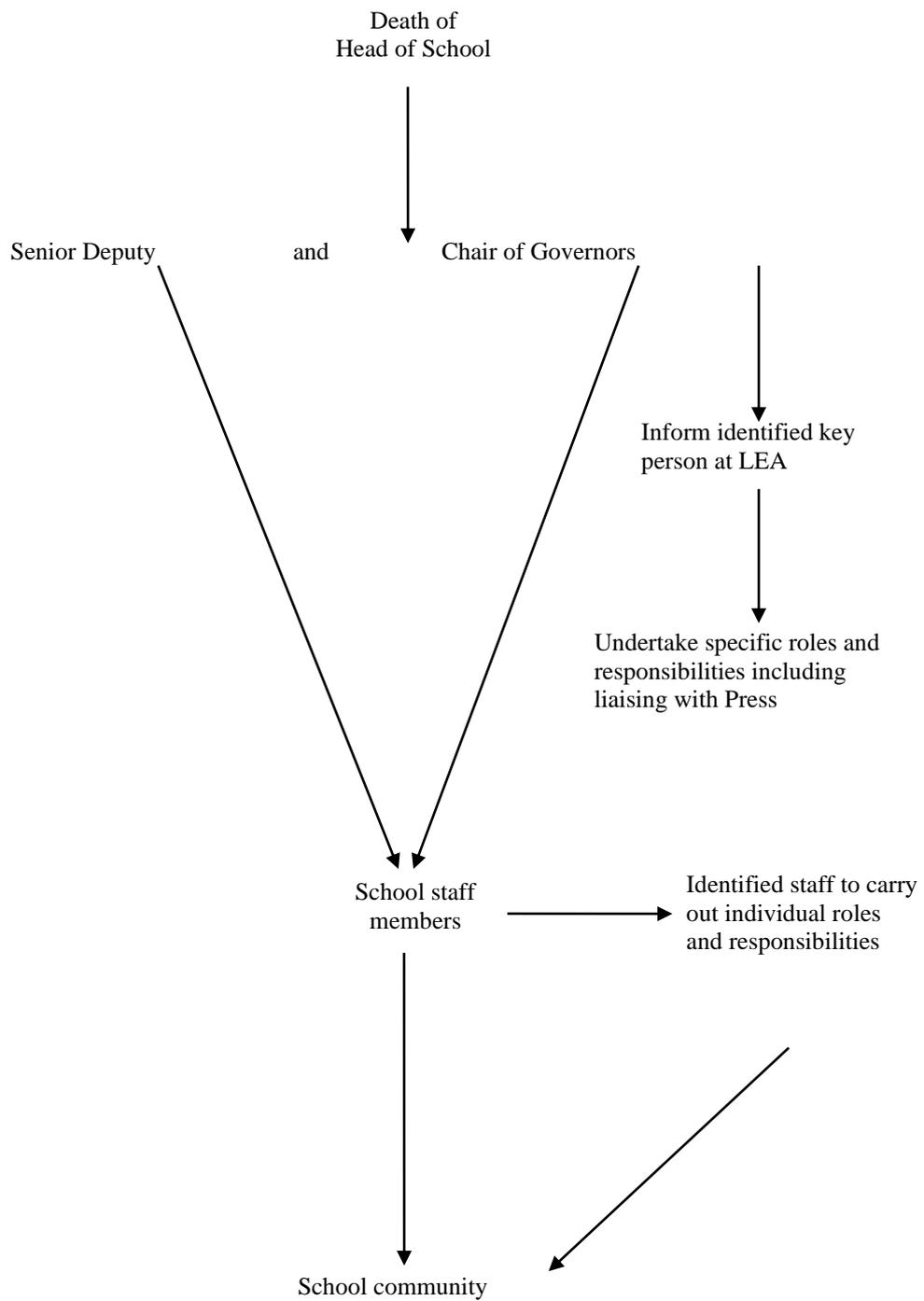
It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time all schools will have to deal with a death that affects the school community.

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.

Death is something that most people choose not to think about so when faced with it we often find ourselves ill prepared.

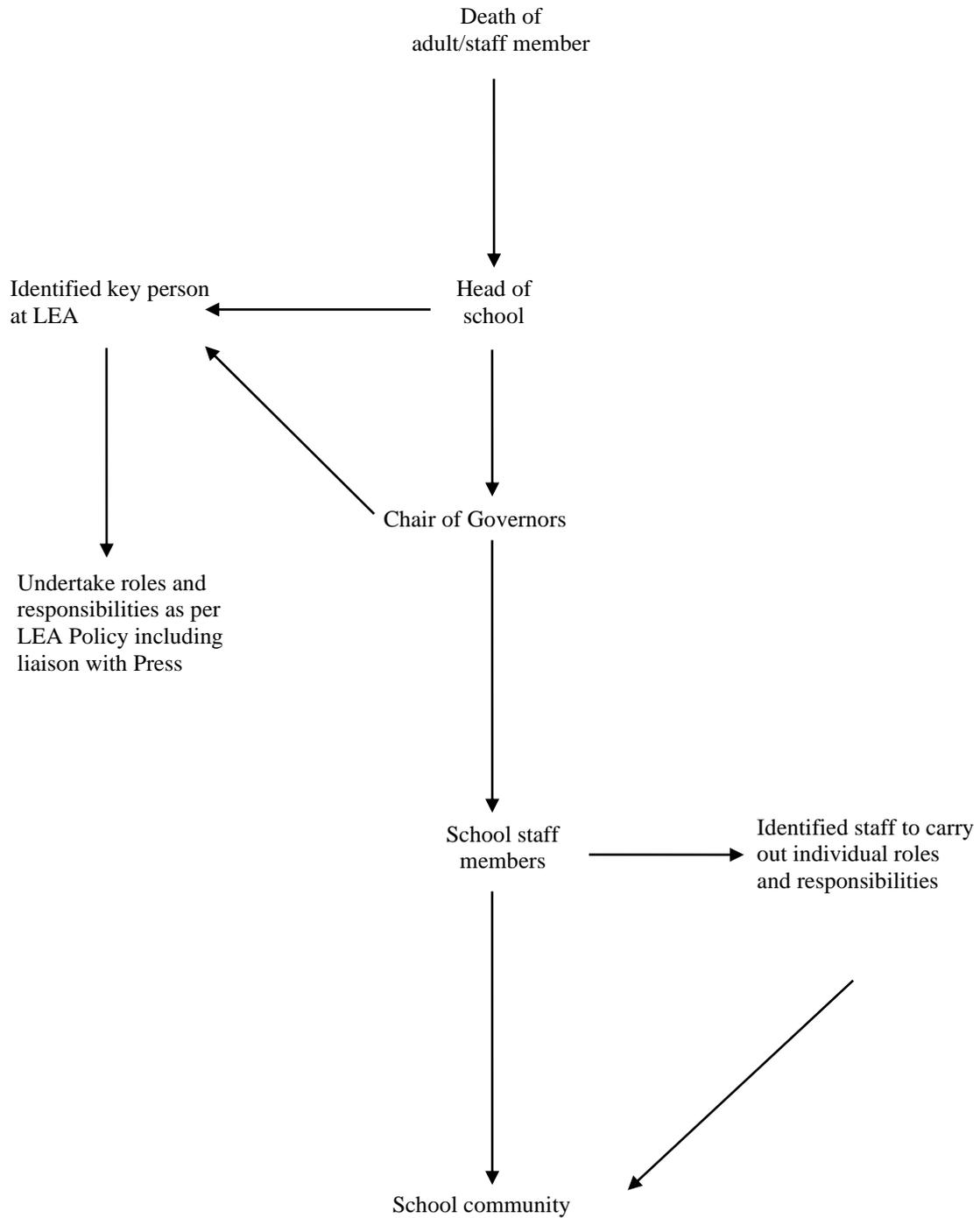
The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

**Information Sharing Pathway  
following death of Head of School**

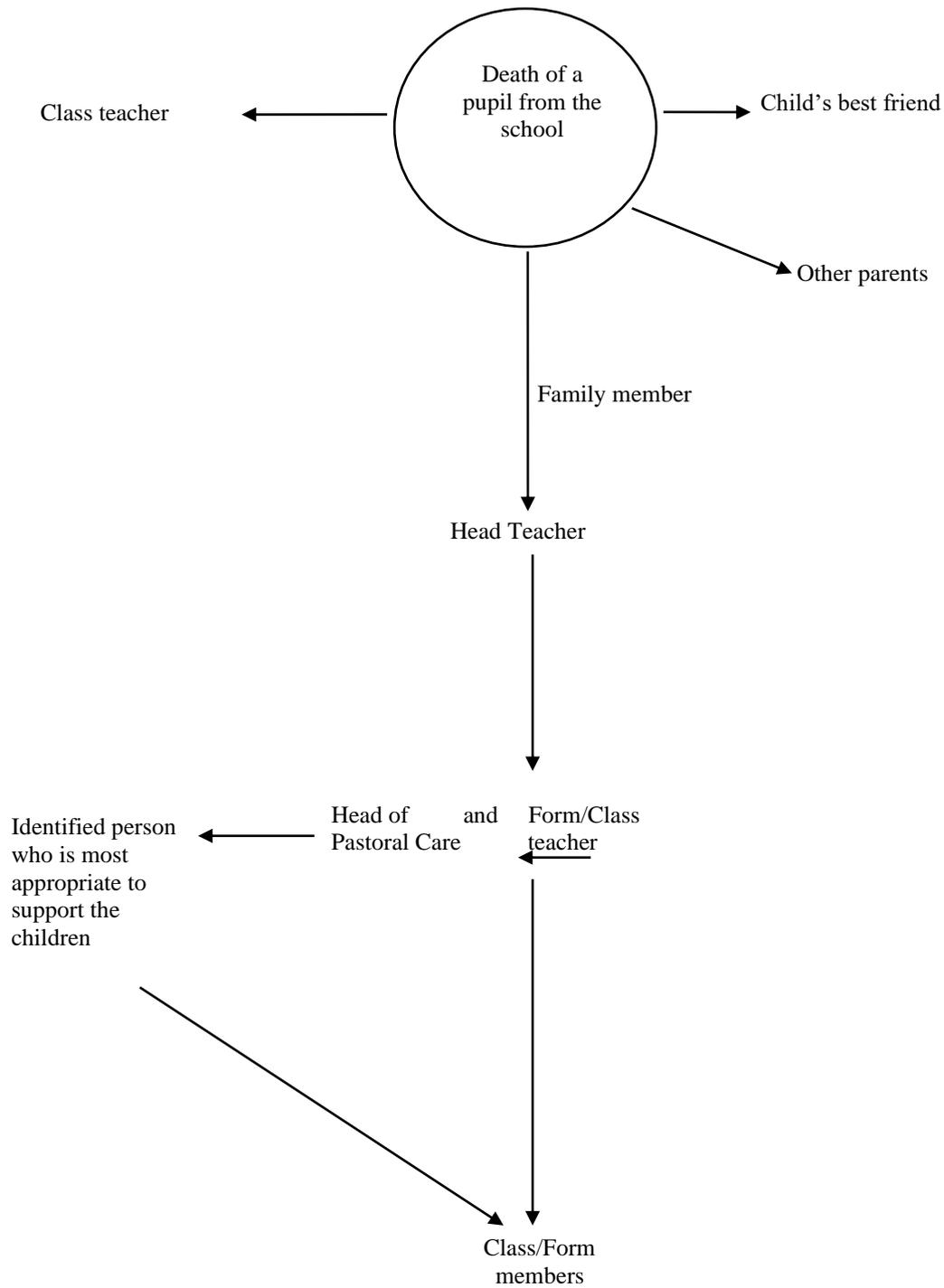




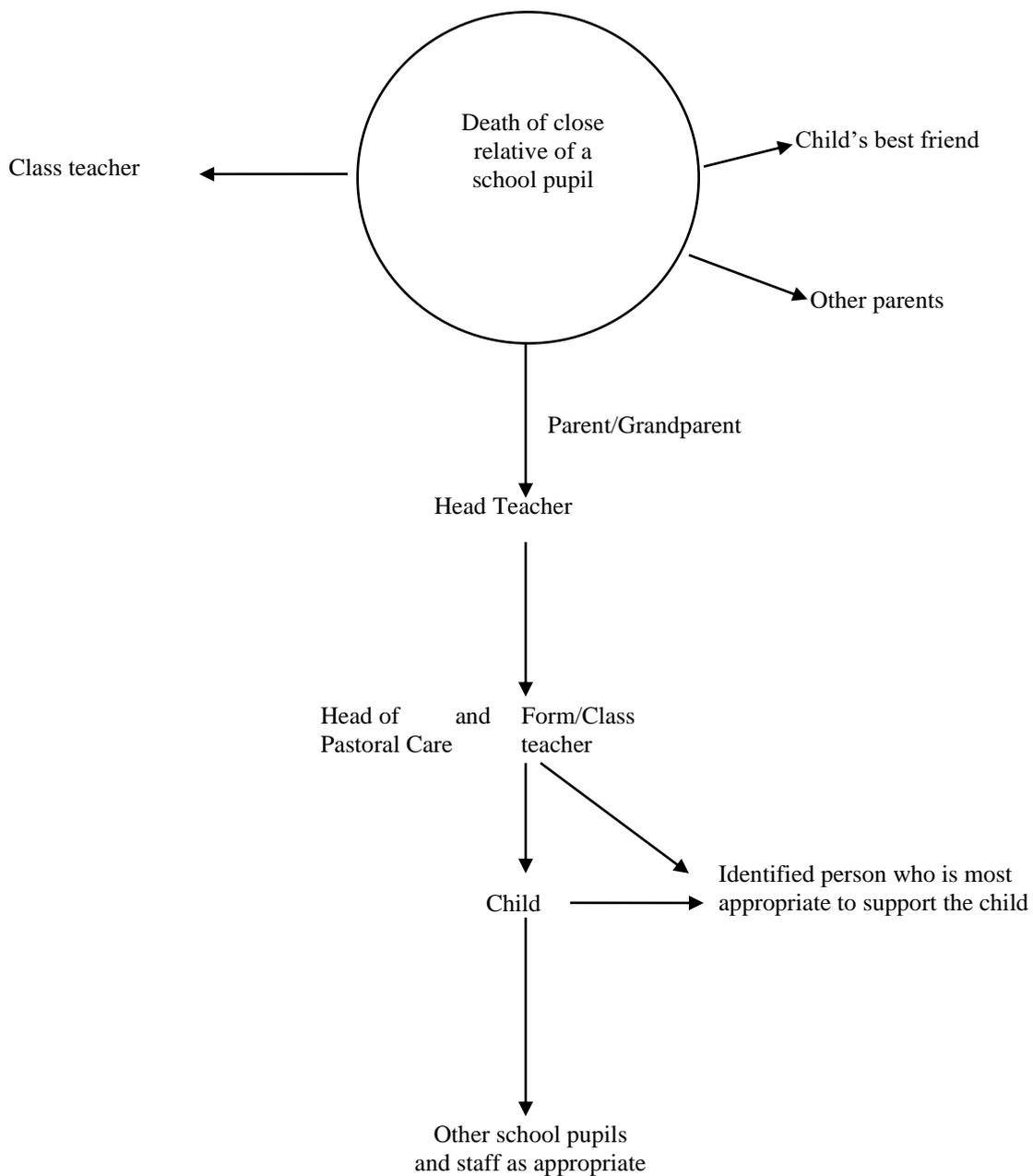
**Information Sharing Pathway**  
**following death of a staff member**



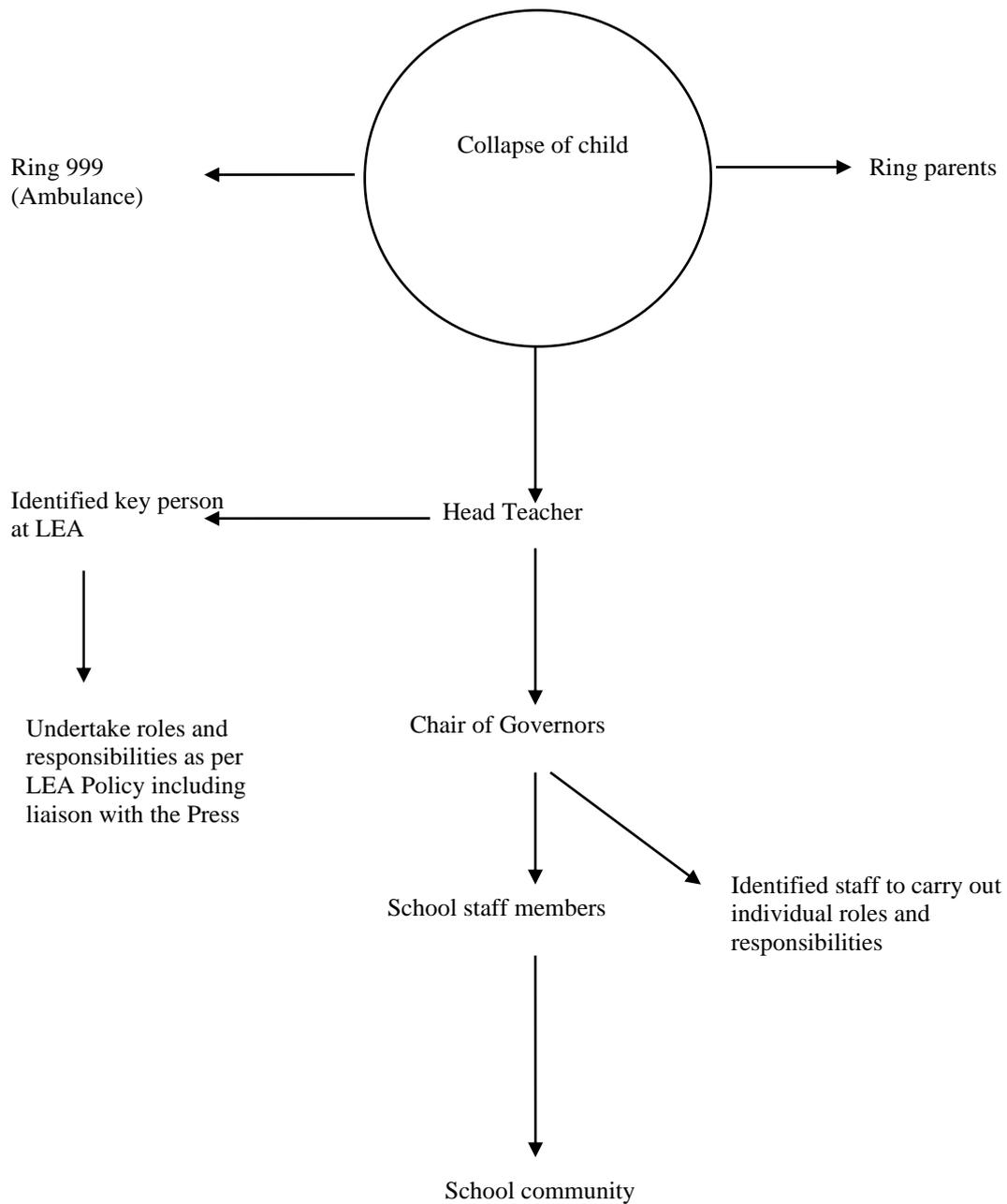
**Information Sharing Pathway**  
**following death of pupil**



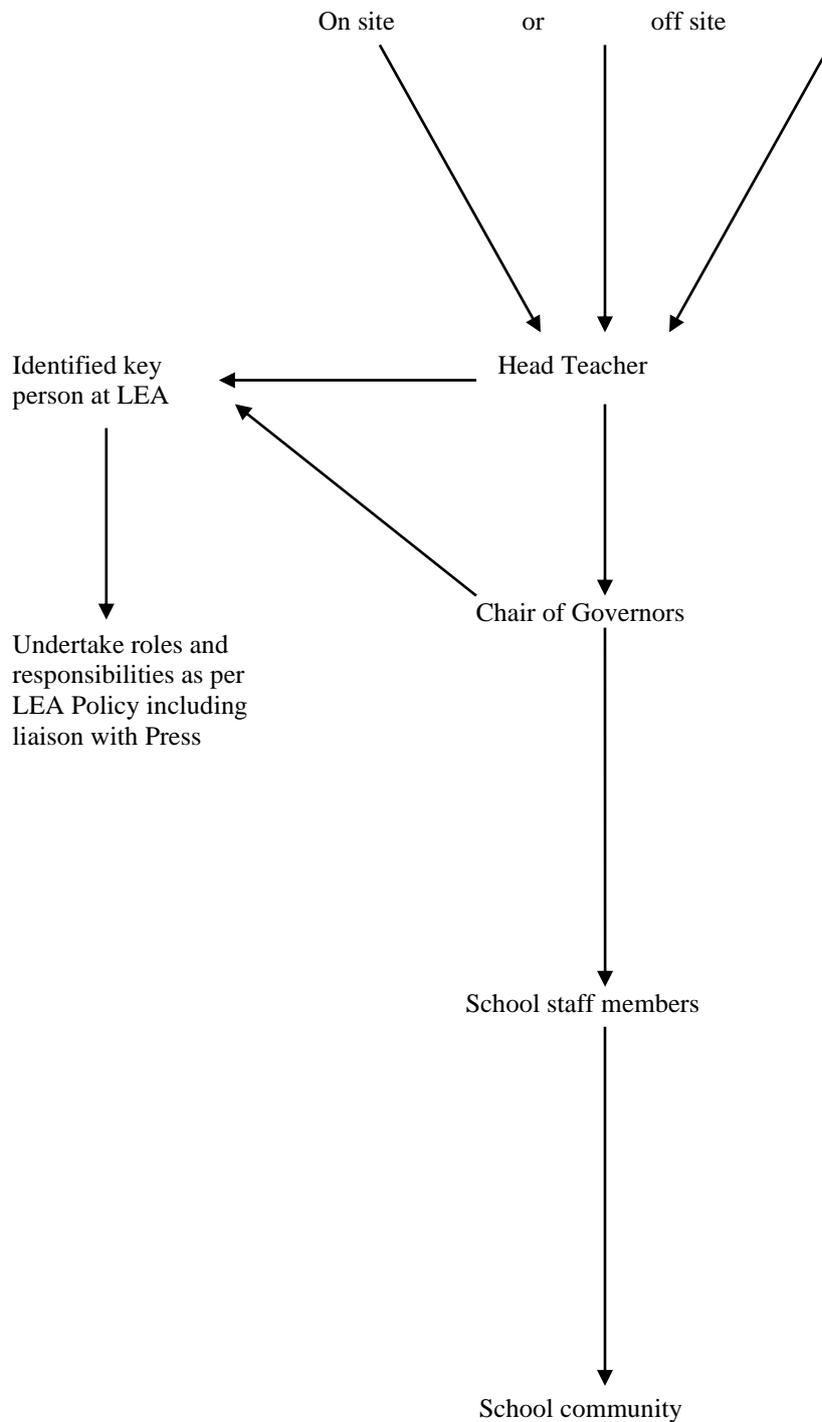
**Information Sharing Pathway**  
**following death of close family member**  
**of school pupil**



**Information Sharing Pathway  
following death of child in school**



**Information Sharing Pathway**  
**following major incidents**





**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 will be more than happy to help you.

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 would be more than happy to help you.

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

**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 cognisant 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.

**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 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.