



Bereavement Policy

Committee approved on	May 2020
Next Review Date:	
Updated/Reviewed on	

In conjunction with this policy, please read:

- Supporting Attendance policy

Aims and Ethos of this Bereavement Policy

- To identify key staff within the Trust and LA, resources and further support services to help the whole community work together.
- To provide a framework for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To have clear expectations about the way the Trust will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement.
- To meet the needs of all its children and staff and to be a place that both child(ren) and family can rely on, and gain much needed support.
- For children to have the opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings, share their memories and develop coping strategies through support by sensitive staff.
- To support pupils, their families and staff with bereavement at a social distance.

Guidelines for Staff and Governors

A death can affect the community in different ways and often depends on:

- The role the deceased person had within the Trust
- How well known they were in the local community
- Circumstances surrounding the death, particularly suicide or violent deaths

Adults and children benefit from being kept informed. Being open and transparent, whilst compassionate is the best approach. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity, and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

We will follow these guidelines when informing staff and governors:

- Where possible, and if necessary, discussion will take place with the bereaved family and their wishes taken into account before any decisions are made in relation to how and what to tell the staff and wider community.
- We will consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- If necessary, ALL staff (including support staff such as lunchtime supervisors, PE coaches...) will be informed as soon as possible.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and if applicable the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death.
- Ensure Senior Leadership team are prepared for reactions to this news including visible upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed.
- Ensure a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Pastoral Deputy) is available to members of staff, parents or children if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Seek the advice of external support services as appropriate (see Appendix 4).
- Be prepared to arrange supply cover if necessary.

- Establish one person as a point of contact for the family (SAO) to ensure free flow of accurate information to and from the academy.
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary requesting external bereavement support if needed – See Appendix with support agencies.
- Arrange staff/pupil condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- If appropriate, agree a set time for teachers to inform their class what has happened, how this is to be done and EXACTLY what is going to be said to ensure a consistent message is shared. Identify any absent pupils.
- If appropriate, be prepared to follow this up with a special assembly, memorial service or memorial tree/garden...
- Arrange for the SAO/PDBW team and/or Senior Leadership Team to be on hand at the end of the working day for staff to de-brief and reflect upon the day's events and to agree upon any further action or support that may need to be put in place.
- Trained and experience practitioners are available on the Simon Says helpline (02380 647550) to support with ideas during the time ahead.
- Where possible staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released.

Guidelines for Informing Students

We will follow these guidelines when informing children of the death:

- We will identify children who are most likely to be impacted by the news, to be told together and in the smallest group possible. This will be done by adults they know.
- It is always a shock when a death occurs in a school even if it may have been anticipated. All pupils will be informed.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children; be honest, it is ok to say if you don't have the answers but remember to revisit the question at a later date when you do have the answer (See Appendix 1).
- Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
- Try to identify any key answers that we may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness, or dates, which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing class or schools.
- Conclude discussion on a positive note. Consider a prayer to remember the deceased and their family. Perhaps co-ordinate an assembly to end discussion if appropriate.
- Support pupils if they wish to do an activity to express their thoughts and feelings. If appropriate, they may wish for student representatives to attend the funeral (upper key stage 2). Staff may be deployed to support students in this instance.

Grief will last a life time and can surface throughout with new questions and many reflections

Special consideration needs to be taken when considering that staff/pupils and their families may experience a loss whilst social distancing measures are still in place. At times such as this, the Trust will endeavour to communicate as effectively as possible. Staff/Governors may be informed via video conferencing (Microsoft Teams) and where it is deemed appropriate, we may write to children/families/staff/governors (Appendix 3) to inform them of a death in our community. It is important to consider the way that members of our community may find out about a death. If we are

not open and transparent, this could, in turn, be damaging. The information sheet in Appendix 5 could be used to support parents with this (Child Bereavement UK, Delivering Sad News)

In the days after the death

- We will consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- We will ensure that nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.
- If necessary, we may temporarily provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- We will 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.
- We will be aware when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died others who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- During times of social distancing, we will ensure that the nominated member of staff has regular telephone contact with the bereaved person/family and is able to signpost them to support (for example; Child Bereavement UK 'Managing Grief' information guide – Appendix 6)

Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the academy's involvement in the funeral, if any.

In line with the families' wishes, consider practical issues such as:

- Sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc...
- Who will attend the funeral?
- Cover for any staff who may be going to the funeral.
- Informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved.
- Possible closure of the academy.

Bereavement Flowchart

This flowchart will support our Academies in responding to a bereavement.



Guidelines for supporting a bereaved student to return to Academy

When the child or young person returns to the academy they may want to get straight back into friends, work and routine. They will have been surrounded by grieving family members and often a chaotic household of visitors. School may be their break from that.

If appropriate, we will have action plans in place to help the child and young people return by:

- Identifying a member of the team who will be the main contact point for them and their family. (Assistant SENCo/SAO)
- Ensure **regular** contact, (daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family). This will help us to understand how they are coping, what support they need, to discuss concerns and worries and plan strategies to cope.
- If they stay at home, we will remember them. We will have cards and messages sent to them from appropriate people (peer group and close staff).
- Before they return, we will ensure all staff are aware of the bereavement and the possible effects on them, their behaviour and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be given throughout the setting. (Be mindful of the following symptoms; headaches, tummy aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, feeling tired, disorganised anger and frustration)
- As much as possible, we will maintain normal rules and expectations of behaviour. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure. At all times, we will remember the impact of bereavement on the whole family when giving sanctions and the impact the sanctions may have on the whole family
- We will be guided by each child's needs on a care by care basis when considering strategies of support.
- Staff will be mindful that there is no set pattern or time limit to grief – It is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one.
- It is not unusual for bereaved pupils to take time off school during the early stages of their bereavement. The time away from school will vary from pupil to pupil but when they do return, they may have a number of concerns – we will only know what these are and how they might be resolved if we ask. Some of the more common concerns might be:
 - **How will staff and peers react**– who has been told, what do they know, what will be said, how much will I have to say to people?
 - **Fear of sudden emotional outbursts** – anger, distress, panic...
 - **Fear when they realise they may not remember what the deceased person looks like**
 - **Fear of being behind with work and unable to catch up**
 - **Inability to concentrate and feel motivated or sit still**
 - **Family grief impacting on normal family functioning**
 - **Unable to meet homework/project deadlines because of altered responsibilities within the family and home**

Guidelines for providing on-going support for a bereaved student

- If the child/young person thinks it would be helpful and friends agree, we will establish a peer support network – ensuring that those helping are given appropriate support themselves or seek help outside, for example, by making a referral to Simon Says.
- Make a note of significant dates, which might affect the pupil, e.g. date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries. Make sure other members of staff are aware of these and the possible impact these may have. Don't be afraid to acknowledge these potentially difficult times with them e.g. *"I know Christmas is coming up and it might feel a very different and difficult time for you all this year without your xxx– so don't forget, if it helps to talk you can always come and see me"*.
- Consider possible reactions to class/assembly topics. Discuss how these difficulties might best be managed with them e.g. if making Mother's day cards do ask them if they wish to be included in the activity too, very often the answer is 'yes' as they still have a parent, they just can no longer see them, but still want to remember them.
- Look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground – bereaved children/young people are often seen as vulnerable and may become a target.
- Consider using books/activities to help explore feelings and ideas about death as part of the normal school curriculum (*call Simon Says for further advice*)
- Be alert to changes in behaviour – these may be an indication that they are more affected by their bereavement than they are able or willing to say. Reactions may present themselves months or years after the event, and it may be difficult for staff and others to relate behaviour(s) to the bereavement.
- Follow up absences – absence could indicate bereavement – associated problems at home or school.
- At transition time make sure the new class teacher and/or academy are aware of the bereavement and support in situ.
- At the end of the day, be yourself, listen and care.

Guidelines for supporting a student with special educational needs

All children benefit from being given simple, honest “bite size” pieces of information about difficult issues - often repeated many times over. For further support visit www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx.

When talking about death and bereavement with a child with learning difficulties it might be helpful to consider: -

- **WHO** should be key worker working with the child and family - inform parents who this person will be and keep in contact, this should be someone they ALREADY have a good relationship with.
- **WHERE** is the student most receptive to new ideas? – quiet room, pool, outside. Use this space for talking with them.
- **WHAT** should be talked about? (as agreed with parents). Ensure that you use the same language and ideas as the family to avoid confusion.
- **HOW** is new information normally given? - signs, verbally, pictures. Use their normal communication methods to talk about illness and death.
- **HOW** is new information normally backed up? – you will probably need to repeat information a number of times over a long period. Do you need to make a social story? (www.speakingspace.co.uk will assist with this)
- **PROCEED** at a level, speed and language appropriate to them.
- **BUILD** on information given – small bites of the whole, given gradually will be easier to absorb.
- **REPEAT** information as often as needed.
- **WATCH** for reactions to show the child understands – modify and repeat as needed.
- **FOLLOW** the student’s lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.
- **WATCH** for changes in behaviour to indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed.
- **MAINTAIN** normal daily routine as much as possible.
- **LIAISE** with other agencies involved with the student to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

Appendix 1

Guidelines on How to Inform Children

Remember it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important we model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear.

- Be honest and factual.
- Use clear language – use the person’s name, do not use euphemisms like ‘passed away’ or ‘lost’ use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion.
- Allow the children/young people to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- 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 (even if that is the death of a pet).
- 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.
- Acknowledge some days will be harder than others
- Do not expect to go straight into maths, allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical outlet.
- 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 day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

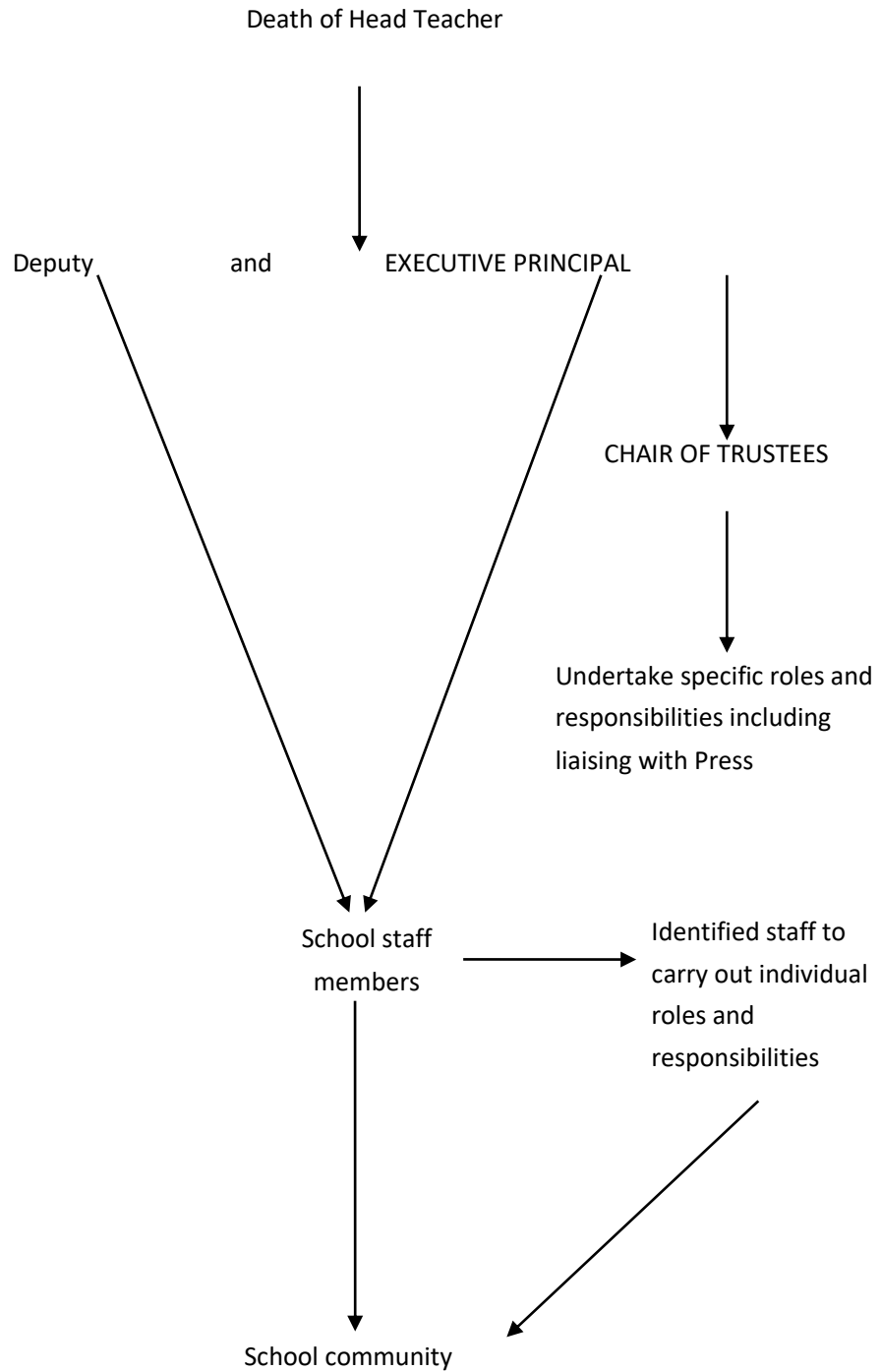
Suggested scripts to use when someone dies:

“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. _____, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday in hospital”.

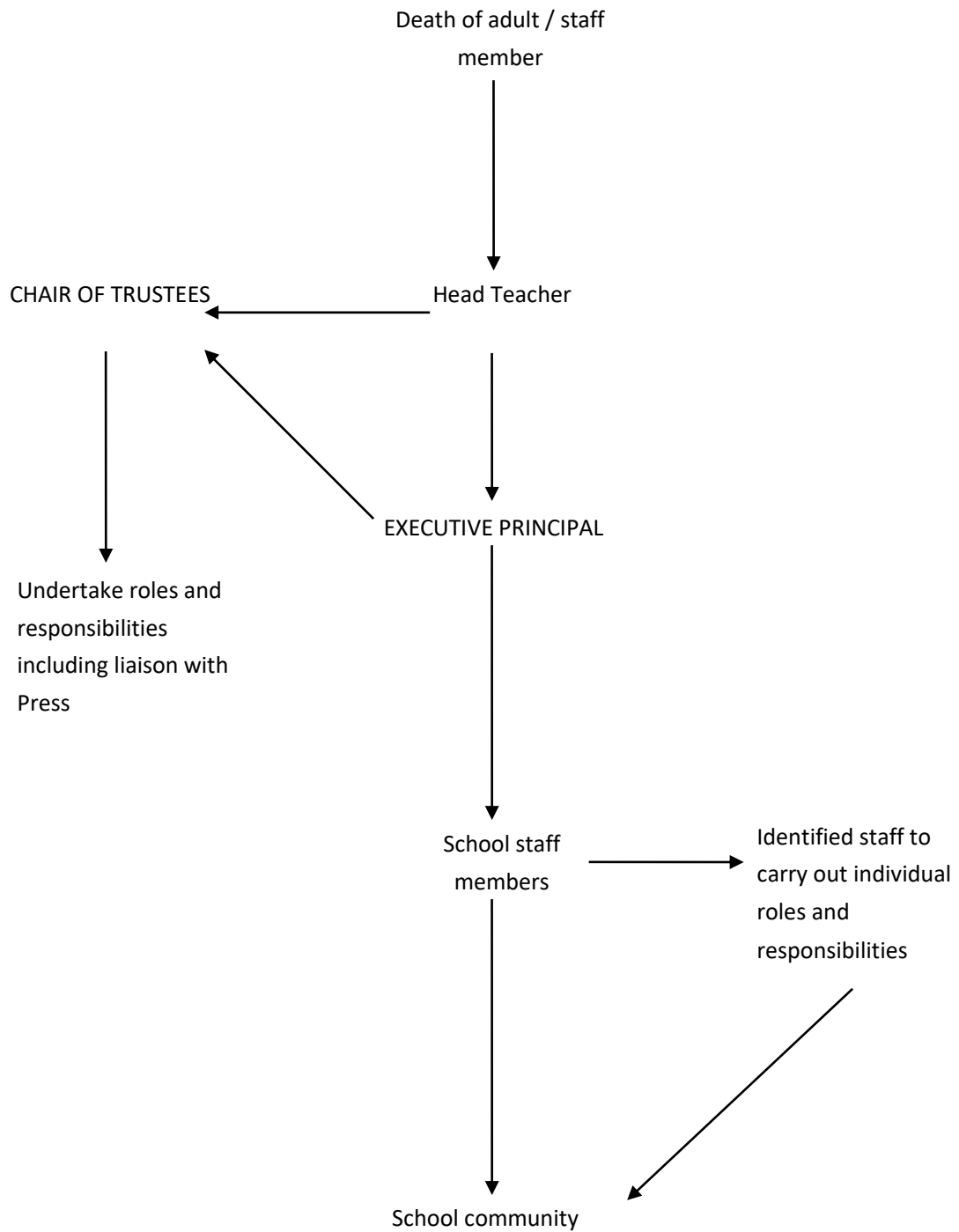
“Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.

Appendix 2

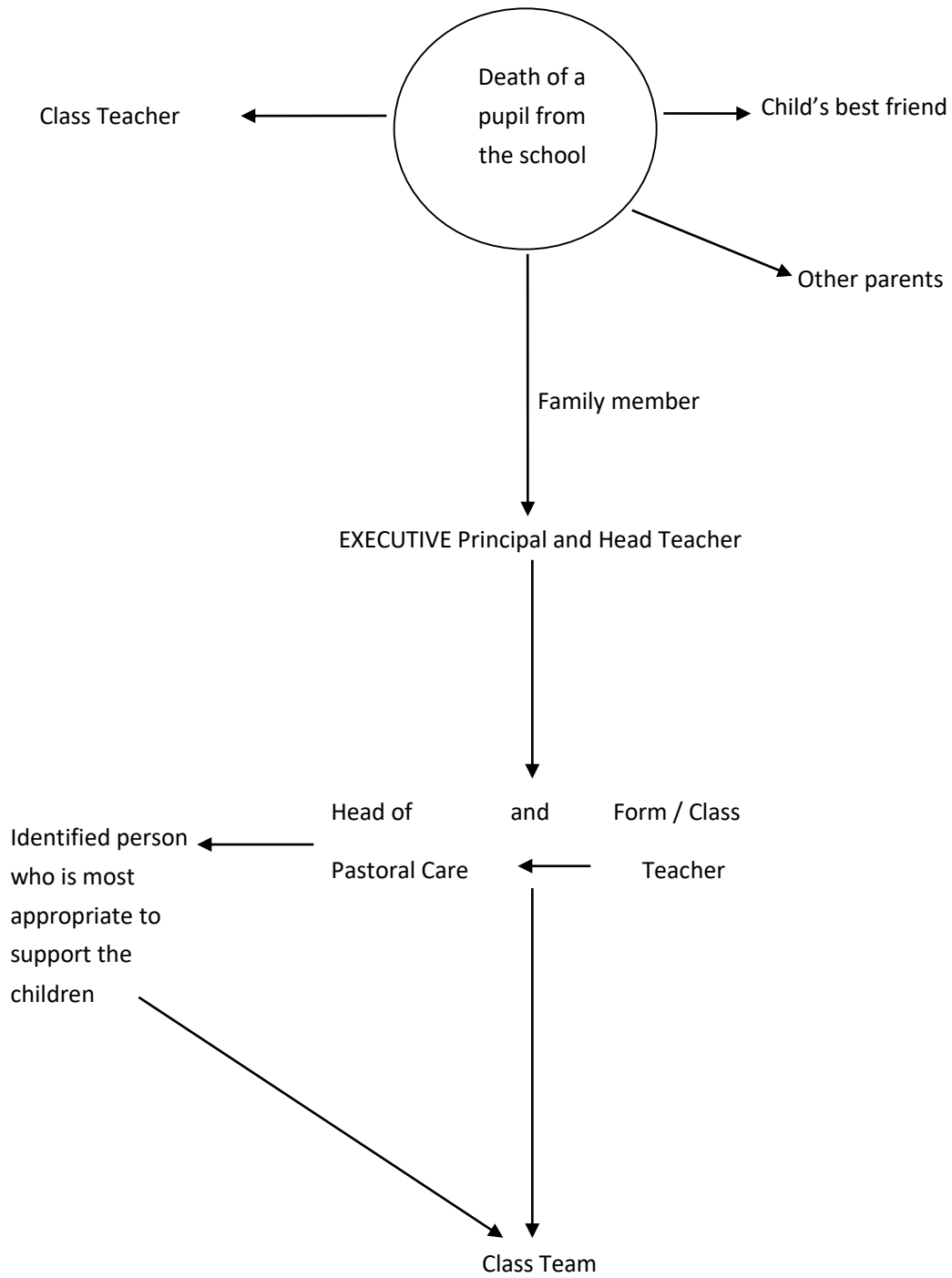
Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of Head Teacher



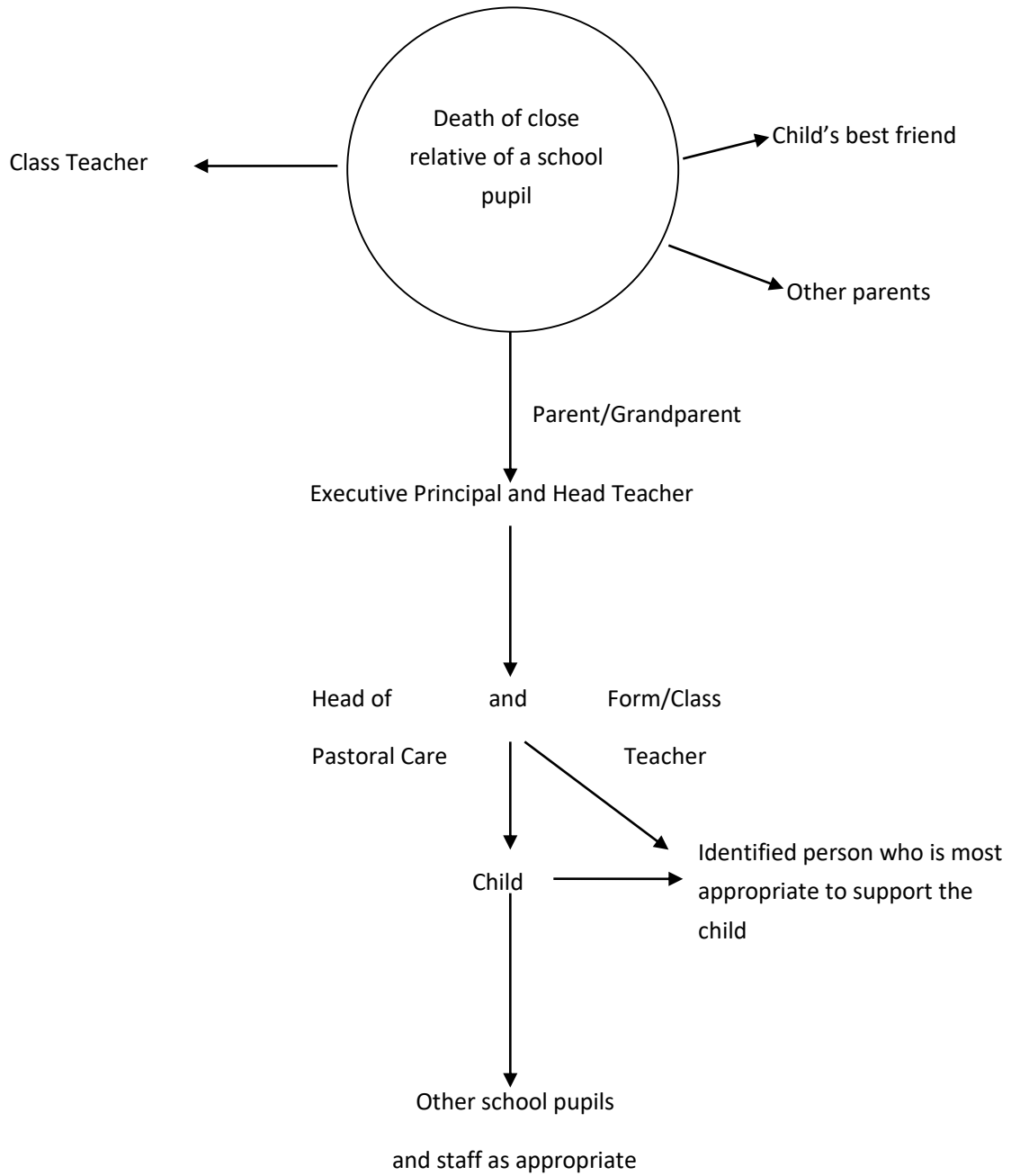
Information Sharing Pathway following Death of a Staff Member



Information Sharing Pathway Following Death of Pupil



Information Sharing Pathway Following Death of Close Family Member of School Pupil



Appendix 3

Templates

Death of a staff member

<Name of School>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task today of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name>, who has been a <teacher, LSA, Lunch time supervisor...> at this school for <number> years.

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

The children were told that <Name> died from an <asthma attack> on <Date>. A number of pupils have been identified as being asthmatic and <Name>, the School Nurse has today reassured them that it is unusual for a person to die from asthma.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, and confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from contacting Simon Says, a Hampshire based child bereavement support charity. Their contact details are 02380 647550, email info@simonsays.org.uk or visit their website www.simonsays.org.uk.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's ~~tutor~~ teacher.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Head Teacher

Death of a pupil

< Name of School >

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

They were told that <name> died from an illness called <cancer>. Sometimes people who have cancer can get better, but other times people die from it. <Name> had been ill with <cancer> for a long time and died at home yesterday.

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion - these are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this from contacting Simon Says, a Hampshire based child bereavement support charity. Their contact details are 02380 647550, email info@simonsays.org.uk or visit their website www.simonsays.org.uk.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral. If this is the case, you may collect your child from school and accompany them to the church. Please inform your child's ~~tutor~~ teacher if this is the case.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Head Teacher

Appendix 4

External support agencies

Local access to counselling and bereavement support:

The Dove Service – Bereavement and Counselling support
01782 683155 / www.thedoveservice.org.uk

Douglas Macmillan Hospice <https://www.dmhospice.org.uk/>

Psychology today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/counselling/bereavement/eng/stoke-on-trent> (access to bereavement counsellors)

Online advice and support

simonsays.org.uk - Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.

autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

childbereavement.org.uk – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk - Childhood bereavement.

childline.org.uk - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

crusebereavementcare.org.uk - All aspects of bereavement.

griefencounter.org.uk - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

hopeagain.org.uk - Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

papyrus-uk.org - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

seesaw.org.uk - Grief support service for children and young people.

sands.org.uk - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

teenissues.co.uk – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

theredlipstickfoundation.org – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

uk-sobs.org.uk - Those who are left behind after a suicide can be helped by talking to others who have experienced a similar loss.

Widowedandyoung.org.uk – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

winstonswish.org.uk - Help for grieving children and their families.

Delivering sad news

A guide to help education professionals, parents and carers tell a young person that someone has died

- **Prepare** - Take time to prepare what you will say to a young person; it is best to start by saying that you have some sad news. Find a safe space away from any distractions and consider how the young person might react to the news, being prepared to be led by them.
- **Explain** - Tell the young person who has died, giving details of where and when, if this is known.
- **Check understanding** - Make sure that the young person has understood what you have told them.
- **Acknowledge** - People react differently to hearing the news that someone has died; they may feel very shocked, upset or numb. Tell them that whatever they are feeling is OK.
- **Answer questions** - Offer an opportunity to ask questions or talk about what happened. If you do not have the answers, say so. Take time to discuss their questions with open and honest conversations.
- **Share feelings** - It's okay to show your feelings; becoming emotional in front of a child or young person shows you are human and helps to let them know that is normal to feel upset and sad. Reassure them that you are okay but are feeling very sad because the person has died. Encourage the young person to share their feelings, memories, and any worries they may have.
- **Consider next steps** - Talk with the young person about what they might do next. This might include giving them additional information as it becomes available, spending time with family, or doing something in memory of the person who has died.
- **Discuss support** - Talk to the young person about who can support them such as their extended family, school and friends. You could also talk to them about resources and support organisations which can help them to manage their grief, or provide further support if needed.

Child Bereavement UK's free national Helpline provides confidential support and information for professionals and families. We can respond to emails and Live Chat via our website. Our website also provides a range of resources for schools and families:

Helpline: 0800 02 888 40

Live Chat via childbereavementuk.org

Email support@childbereavementuk.org

9am-5pm, Monday-Friday (except Bank Holidays).

**For large print version
call: 0800 02 888 40**

To give feedback on our information, email
support@childbereavementuk.org

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and Scotland: SC04919

Managing grief

A guide for education professionals and parents supporting bereaved pupils

The news that someone has died may come as a huge shock to a young person and they may struggle to manage overwhelming feelings of grief. It will be particularly difficult during the current pandemic where it may not be possible for young people to attend a funeral. Feelings of isolation may intensify as visiting extended family members and spending time with close friends are also restricted.

Making contact with the family/carers

If a family in your school community is bereaved, contact with a member of staff from school may be welcome. As well as passing on supportive thoughts and messages, it can be an opportunity to clarify their wishes and offer support. This could be by helping a pupil and their family/carers tell other people in their school community their news, if they wish to do so.

Saying goodbye

Even with physical distancing, it is possible for a family to involve their children in some way, perhaps by contributing to a funeral with drawings, letters, music or poetry. Maybe they could help to plan a memorial event for the future, or send pictures, messages or film clips to share within their extended family or close friends. Taking part in an event at home such as lighting a candle or sharing memories of the person who died may help them feel connected to others who are grieving, as well as to the person who died.

Support

Remind a young person that they have people who care. As well as their immediate family/carers, school plays an important role in their lives. Supportive adults in school may be able to provide a little stability and normality, even while working remotely.

Having fun

Young people naturally oscillate between feeling very sad and getting on with things. It is therefore important to allow them time to have fun while also being there for them if and when they need to talk or express their feelings.

Memories

A scrapbook or memory box containing special items which remind them of the person who has died can help a young person remember. This could include photographs, drawings or stories about things they shared with the person, or images of special or favourite food, places, and sports etc.

**For large print version
call: 0800 02 888 40**

This could be done electronically, by creating a gallery of pictures and photographs with messages or as a film montage. For young people, making a playlist of music that is significant to them, or organising an online fundraiser, can also be positive ways to remember someone.

Feelings

Adults may want to try and distract a bereaved young person, but it is important to acknowledge their feelings and allow them time and space to grieve. When the young person feels ready to focus on something else, they may find it helpful to choose from a 'tool kit' or list of things which they enjoy doing such as listening to or playing music, watching TV or films, gaming, art, writing, reading, or sport.

Recognise that anger is a common emotion when grieving, so encourage safe ways to manage this. Ideas could include: punching a pillow, crushing cans or boxes, ripping paper, writing messages and tearing them up, intense exercise such as running, skipping or press-ups, or putting a tennis ball in a sock which can be 'bounced' or 'kicked' indoors while being held. Calming routines such as focused steady breathing, listening to music, using a stress ball or other tactile object, drawing, colouring or keeping a journal may also be helpful.

Resources and support

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