

St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Bereavement Policy

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

Matthew 5:4

Last updated: April 2020

Please note that this policy has been updated with the upcoming changes to the 'Good Work Plan', including the passing of The Parental Bereavement Leave Regulations 2020. These changes will be in effect from 6 April 2020.

Contents:

1. [Legal framework](#)
2. [Roles and responsibilities](#)
3. [The initial response](#)
4. [Informing staff and governors](#)
5. [Informing pupils](#)
6. [Informing parents](#)
7. [Funerals](#)
8. [The media and social media](#)
9. [Support for the family](#)
10. [Support for staff](#)
11. [Support for pupils](#)
12. [Behaviour and SEMH issues](#)
13. [Specific circumstances](#)
14. [Remembrance activities](#)
15. [Managing transitions](#)
16. [Teaching about bereavement and grief](#)
17. [Staff training](#)
18. [Monitoring and review](#)

Appendix 1 - Guidelines for providing on-going support for a bereaved student

Appendix 2 - Guidelines for supporting a student with special educational needs

Appendix 3 - Guidelines on how to inform children

Appendix 4 - Information sharing pathway following the death of head teacher

Appendix 5 - Information sharing pathway following death of a staff member

Appendix 6 - Information sharing pathway following death of pupil

Appendix 7 - External support agencies

Statement of intent

At St. George's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we understand that bereavement is faced by members of our school community at different times, whether this is the death of a family member, a friend or a member of the school community. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors and the wider school community during and after bereavement.

As members of a Catholic School community, we are called to witness our faith in times of joy and sorrow, and to support one another; especially in a time of crisis. When a member of the community dies, it is important that the community respond in an appropriate way. A different response may be necessary depending on whether it be a death of a student, a staff member or any other member of the school community.

A celebration of the life of the deceased is important and there are many possible ways that a school community can gather together to do this. It is important to have some key scripture passages and appropriate hymns to be used in any prayer or liturgical celebration. As already mentioned, much depends on who the person is that has died; a student, a staff member, a parent etc. as does the nature of the death; sudden or prolonged. Prayers are offered not only for the deceased individual but for the members of their family and friends who are suffering from the loss.

During the Bereavement process, it is important to provide opportunities for ritual and liturgy as a means of dealing with the death as well as healthy theological perspectives on life, death and the afterlife. Moreover, it is important for the Catholic school to provide emotional support for the bereaved members of the school in order to assist with the healing process.

This policy provides a framework whereby this support is provided and outlines how the school will respond to these sensitive situations.

NB. In this policy, all mentions of 'the family' refer to the family of the deceased individual. The wishes of the family will always be considered when carrying out any of the actions outlined in this policy. If the family objects to any of the procedures, the school will work to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.

Signed by:

_____ Head Teacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of Governors Date: _____

1. Legal framework

1.1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2019) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 'Good Work Plan'
- The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations 2020
- Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018

1.2. This policy has been created with due regard to the following guidance:

- Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Guide to Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Education'
- Winston's Wish (2019) 'A Strategy for Schools: Positive Responses to Death'
- Samaritans (2017) 'Help When We Needed it Most'
- Child Bereavement UK (2018) 'Schools' Information Pack'

1.2.1. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Behavioural Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. The Governing body will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the implementation of this policy.
- Reviewing this policy with the Head Teacher on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness.

2.2. The Head Teacher will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Liaising with external agencies, as appropriate.

- Informing governors and staff when a death occurs and arranging for pupils to be informed, as appropriate and with approval from the family.
- Being the first point of contact for staff, pupils and parents directly involved in a death, or designating this role to another appropriate member of staff.
- Responding to any enquiries from the media or the wider school community, or appointing a member of staff to undertake these duties.
- Ensuring staff have the necessary training to support bereaved pupils and to deliver sensitive news.

2.3. The Student and Family Support (SaFS) Team will be responsible for:

- Undertaking bereavement support training and conducting in-school training to share their knowledge with other staff.
- Supporting the Head Teacher in carrying out the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Supporting staff, pupils and parents following a death, as directed by the Head Teacher.
- Supporting other staff members with communicating the news of a death.
- Making referrals pupils, staff and other members of the school community to receive support.

2.4. The Head Teacher will be a media spokesperson. They will be responsible for:

- Liaising with the media as required.
- Monitoring media and social media activity regarding the death.
- Respecting the family's wishes in relation to what information can be provided to the media.

2.5. All staff members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training arranged by the Head Teacher or the SaFS team.
- Seeking support from the SaFS team as appropriate.
- Supporting their colleagues and pupils following a death, as appropriate.

2.6. The Parish Priest will be responsible for:

- Arranging and providing spiritual support for the family following a death, as appropriate.
- Arranging and providing spiritual support for all colleagues and pupils, as appropriate.

BEREAVEMENT flowchart

This flowchart is a summary of the detailed information below:

School are informed of a bereavement.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer identify the relevant communication pathway, the tasks required and who is best to complete them.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer to contact family via an initial phone call. They will then look to send a card/letter of condolence, if appropriate. At this point, the parish priest will also be informed.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will discuss with the family and child or young person, if appropriate, who they want their story shared with and support available to them.



The Head Teacher will inform others – staff, families, children and young people of the setting as agreed with the bereaved family, child and young person, as appropriate.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will be the point of contact for family to discuss funeral arrangements/return to school options.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, alongside the class teacher, will liaise and support a return to the setting, with appropriate adaptations in place, if necessary.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will ensure significant dates and events are recorded on CPOMs for children, or in HR files for staff, and shared with all staff for future reference (birthdays, anniversaries), if appropriate.



If a pupil, the Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, alongside the class teacher, will continue to assess the needs of the child or young person. Observation, discussion with significant people, including the child or young person regarding their concerns or worries, and outside agencies if required.

If a member of staff, all other members of staff will continue to support and refer any concerns to the Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer.

For pupils, the SaFS Team will ensure friendships are secure as peer support can be very important. This will include the child becoming a part of the bereavement nurture group.



The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will continue regular contact with the family and sign post to outside agencies if deemed appropriate.

3. The initial response

- 3.1. If the family or member of staff contacts the school to inform them of a death, the member of staff that answers the phone will transfer the call to the Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer (Child Protection, Attendance and Safeguarding Officer) or the Head Teacher as appropriate.
- 3.2. If the school is made aware of the death through a source other than the family, Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer (Child Protection, Attendance and Safeguarding Officer) and/or the Head Teacher (as appropriate) will contact the family either by phone or through a home visit.
- 3.3. They will gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information will be communicated to the school community and how. This will include offering the support from the parish priest.
- 3.4. If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or member of staff, the Head Teacher will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed as soon as possible. The deputy head and Chair of Governors will support with this. See also appendix 5.
- 3.5. If the death affects an individual member of staff, e.g. the death of a relative, the Head Teacher will ask the member of staff if they would like this to be communicated to any of their colleagues. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, the Head Teacher will discuss with the staff member what information will be communicated and how they would like it to be delivered.
- 3.6. If a death affects an individual pupil, e.g. the death of a parent, Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer or the Head Teacher will ask the family if they would like this to be communicated to the school community. If it is decided that the death will be communicated, they will discuss with the family, and the pupil if possible, what information will be communicated and how the family would like it to be delivered.
- 3.7. If the death of a pupil's family member occurs while the pupil is at school, a member of the pupil's family will be asked to come to the school to inform the pupil of what has happened and to take them home. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for a member of staff to take the pupil home.
- 3.8. The designated safeguarding lead(s) will make contact with any other agencies as required, e.g. the police and the event will be logged via our cloud based reporting system, CPOMs.
- 3.9. Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer or the Head Teacher will inform the parish priest and request further spiritual support.

- 3.10. The Head Teacher will decide if any temporary variation needs to be made to the school timetable, e.g. rearranging or cancelling certain lessons.
- 3.11. In the event of the death of the Head Teacher, the deputy Head Teacher, supported by the Chair of Governors and Senior Leadership Team, will be responsible for the duties outlined above. See also appendix 4.

4. Informing staff, governors and the parish priest

- 4.1. Staff, governors and the parish priest will be informed of the death before pupils.
- 4.2. All staff, governors and the parish priest will be invited to a meeting by the Head Teacher as soon as practicable.
- 4.3. Absent staff and governors, including part-time and peripatetic staff, will be identified so they can be informed as soon as possible. If it is not possible for absent staff to be told in person, a phone call will be arranged. This will also be the case for the parish priest.
- 4.4. Any information provided to staff, governors and the parish priest during the meeting will have prior approval from the family.
- 4.5. During the meeting, the Head Teacher, with the support of the SaFS team, will (as appropriate):
 - Light a candle and begin in prayer.
 - Explain what happened leading up to the death.
 - Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
 - Allow time for all in the meeting to discuss what has happened, how they feel and offer their own personal prayers.
 - Explain that the Head Teacher, supported by the Chair of Governors will become the media spokesperson who will be responsible for liaising with the media, if required.
 - Identify what internal and external support, including spiritually from the parish, is available to all staff and governors.
 - Discuss the arrangements for informing pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for informing them.
 - Take further time for prayer, including the Eternal Rest.
- 4.6. When appropriate, the certain staff members that will be responsible for informing pupils about the death will be provided with a script which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer some difficult questions.
- 4.7. The Head Teacher and SaFS team will create the script, with input from the family. This will include an opportunity for prayer.

- 4.8. If appropriate, the RE team and Head Teacher will create a whole school Liturgy to allow for further spiritual support. The parish priest will support them with this.

5. Informing pupils

- 5.1. The Head Teacher and/or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will have a discussion with the family about whether all pupils need to be informed about the death.
- 5.2. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will strongly recommend to the family that all pupils should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform certain groups of pupils.
- 5.3. The Head Teacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed. The parish priest will provide additional support with regards to this.
- 5.4. Where possible, pupils will be informed about the death in small groups by a member of staff that is familiar to them at the same time.
- 5.5. Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs include the following:
 - Pupils that had a long-term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died
 - Pupils with a history of loss
 - Pupils with SEND
 - Pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour
- 5.6. Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the script provided to them.
- 5.7. To ensure all pupils are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which script to use for which year group.
- 5.8. Where possible, a member of the SaFS team will be present when pupils are told about a death so they can help with answering any questions.
- 5.9. The parish priest will be available to support any pupils spiritually.
- 5.10. Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling.
- 5.11. Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually.
- 5.12. Pupils will be told where they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

Informing pupils in a large group

- 5.13. If it is not possible to inform pupils about a death in small groups, the Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, in communication with the family, will decide if it would be appropriate to inform pupils in a large group, e.g. during an assembly.
- 5.14. Where an individual pupil has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to attend the assembly and, if they do not want to be involved, appropriate support will be arranged for the pupil during and after the assembly.
- 5.15. The Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will tell the family and, where relevant, the bereaved pupil exactly what they will say and to whom.
- 5.16. The Head Teacher, with support from the SaFS team, will deliver the information to pupils beginning and ending the time together in prayer, including the Eternal Rest.
- 5.17. After pupils have been informed, they will go to their classrooms and be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told. Teachers will have been given the appropriate information and support to be able to deal with these thoughts and feelings.
- 5.18. The parish priest will be available throughout this time to offer further spiritual support and prayers.

6. Informing parents

- 6.1. The Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents need to be informed about the death.
- 6.2. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Head Teacher will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.
- 6.3. If appropriate, the Head Teacher will compose a letter to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to. It will also include information about how to contact the parish priest for further support and spiritual guidance.

7. Funerals

- 7.1. If appropriate, the Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral.

- 7.2. With the family's approval, the Head Teacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.
- 7.3. The Head Teacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed.
- 7.4. Transportation to and from the funeral will be arranged for staff and pupils, if and as appropriate.
- 7.5. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

8. The media and social media (If appropriate)

- 8.1. Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family.
- 8.2. Only the appointed media spokesperson, which in this case is the Head Teacher, will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death. In the event of the death of the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will take this role.
- 8.3. Staff, governors and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. The media spokesperson, which in this case is the Head Teacher, supported by the Chair of Governors, will investigate any post made regarding the death and will refer any concerns to the senior leadership team and/or chair of governors.
- 8.4. When applicable, if information about the death is circulated on social media prior to the school making an official statement, the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors, as media spokesperson, will release a statement on the school's social media channels, with the agreement of the family, to prevent rumours from spreading.
- 8.5. Comments and other activity on school-posted social media statements will be monitored and moderated by the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors.
- 8.6. If staff, governors or pupils find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors.
- 8.7. If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 8.8. If a pupil is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Behaviour and Safer-Internet Policies.

9. Support for the family

- 9.1. The Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will be the main points of contact between the school and the family, and may appoint another member of staff to this role where necessary.
- 9.2. The Head Teacher will invite the family into the school to discuss how the school can best support them. The parish priest will be available for this should the family wish.
- 9.3. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.
- 9.4. Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support could include the following:
 - Sending a letter of condolence
 - Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died
 - Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school, including Masses and Liturgies.

10. Support for staff, including from the parish priest

- 10.1. Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend of the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place. This will include spiritual support from the parish priest where appropriate.
- 10.2. The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, and may include the following:
 - Ensuring the staff member is not left on their own
 - Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered
 - Organising bereavement leave
 - Spiritual guidance from the parish priest
- 10.3. The death of a partner, child or parent of a member of staff needs to be dealt with sensitively. It is essential that the member of staff is supported throughout the immediate period of mourning and on his/her return to school.
- 10.4. On hearing of the death the Head Teacher will decide how other members of staff are to be informed. The parish priest will also be informed in order to provide additional support. The Chair of Governors will be informed also.
- 10.5. The Head Teacher will contact the staff member as soon as possible and convey condolences and offer whatever support is appropriate.

- 10.6. It is unlikely that many of the pupils will have to be informed but if so the Head Teacher, in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team, will decide on the appropriate method(s) to be used.
- 10.7. Attendance of Staff at the funeral will be discussed with the staff member.
- 10.8. On his/her return to work the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors must ensure that the member of staff is given appropriate support. The nature and degree of this support will vary depending on the circumstances but may include additional bereavement leave or a phased return at the discretion of the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors.
- 10.9. All staff members will be offered the opportunity to speak to a member of the SaFS team and/or parish team one-to-one.
- 10.10. Staff members will be given information about the in-school and external support they can access. They will also be made aware of the contact details and support of offer from the parish priest.
- 10.11. A designated prayer/quiet space will be made available to staff where they can go during break and lunchtimes to meet with other staff and share their thoughts and feelings.
- 10.12. Staff will be vigilant to the signs that indicate their colleagues have been affected by bereavement and will offer them support or make a referral to a member of the SaFS team or parish priest.

11. Support for pupils

Pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement, e.g. of a family member

- 11.1. A member of the SaFS team will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be made aware of who the staff member is.
- 11.2. The Head Teacher and/or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will contact the pupil's family to discuss whether the pupil will be attending school.
- 11.3. Any support put in place for a pupil will be pupil-led, based on their needs and wishes. There will always be an option for support from the parish priest.
- 11.4. When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:
 - The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
 - The relationship between the pupil and the person who has died.

- The ability of the pupil's family to support them following the death, e.g. if a pupil's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the pupil?
 - Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
 - The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
 - Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.
 - The family's religious preference.
- 11.5. The pupil will be a part of discussions regarding who should be informed about the death and how, where appropriate.
- 11.6. If a pupil chooses to attend school immediately after a bereavement, they will be allowed a flexible timetable and staff members will be made aware that the pupil may not be able to work to their usual capacity. The designated staff member will keep in communication with the pupil's family to inform them about how the pupil is doing.

There will be an opportunity to attend a 'Bereavement Support Group' The Bereavement Support Group will be led by 'Emotional Wellbeing Lead'. Pupils will be given the opportunity to participate in Bereavement Support Group, meeting on a weekly basis. The children will;

Have the opportunity to speak to, and build relationships with, other children who have experienced loss

Have the opportunity to build up a relationship with Emotional Wellbeing Lead

Talk about their loss in age related appropriate language

Use activity based therapy to support the grieving process

Share memories of their loved ones

Support each other, sharing their own strategies to cope with loss

The Emotional Wellbeing Lead will continue to monitor pupil's wellbeing when group work is completed and will share any concerns with Vulnerable Children's Team where further support can be put in place if required.

- 11.7. If the pupil is absent from school following the bereavement, they will be made aware of who has been informed about what has happened and what they were told.
- 11.8. The designated staff member will make regular contact with the pupil during their absence.

- 11.9. The Head Teacher, designated staff member, pupil and the pupil's family will make arrangements for the pupil's return to school, e.g. a phased return.
- 11.10. If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam, the Head Teacher will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations apply.
- 11.11. If a pupil misses an exam due to the death of a close family member or friend, the Head Teacher will report this to the appropriate exam board who will then make a decision as to whether special considerations can be applied.
- 11.12. Any safeguarding concerns regarding a bereaved pupil will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Support for all pupils

- 11.13. All pupils, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g. the death of a staff member.
- 11.14. Pupils will be given the opportunity to speak to a member of pastoral staff.
- 11.15. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language.
- 11.16. Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in Acts of Worship and remembrance activities with support from the parish priest.
- 11.17. Staff will identify any pupils that may need more direct support and make a referral to the SaFS team, who will assess what support might be required.

12. Behaviour and SEMH issues

- 12.1. Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display immediately after the death of someone close to them:
 - Inability to concentrate
 - Lack of motivation
 - Tiredness and irritability
 - Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks
 - Inability to take others' feelings into account
 - Anger, frustration or aggression
 - A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
 - Anxiety
 - Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them

- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness
- 12.2. The pupil's designated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home.
 - 12.3. Any challenging behaviour displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behavioural Policy.
 - 12.4. A record will be made of anniversaries and days with regards to the death which may act as a trigger for challenging behaviour.
 - 12.5. Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the Anti-bullying Policy, taking into account the pupil's needs and circumstances.
 - 12.6. All staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to pastoral staff who will put appropriate support in place.
 - 12.7. The school's Mental Health Policy will be followed to ensure pupils that may be vulnerable to developing or experiencing SEMH issues following a bereavement can be identified and appropriately supported.

13. Specific circumstances

- 13.1. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the school community and individual pupils; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.

Pre-bereavement – when a family member is not expected to live

- 13.2. If a pupil has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place.
- 13.3. A member of pastoral staff will meet with the pupil weekly to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.
- 13.4. All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer any concerns to the SaFS team who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

Pupils with a life-threatening illness

- 13.5. Pupils with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.
- 13.6. The Head Teacher, Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, the pupil and their family, and other relevant staff members (e.g. a member of

pastoral staff) will decide how to share the news that a pupil is terminally ill with the school community. The parish priest will be available to provide support at all opportunities.

- 13.7. Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.
- 13.8. If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the pupil will be identified and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer and the Head Teacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

Suicide

- 13.9. The school will respond to a suspected suicide within 48 hours.
- 13.10. The Head Teacher, or the Child Protection, Attendance and Inclusion officer, will contact the police or the family as soon as possible to confirm the death and whether it is being treated as a suicide.
- 13.11. If the family does not wish the cause of death to be disclosed to the school community, the school will state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.
- 13.12. If the death is subject to an ongoing investigation, the Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will check with the police before speaking about the death with pupils who may need to be interviewed by the police.
- 13.13. Staff will be told about the death first, in line with [section 4](#) of this policy.
- 13.14. The script that staff will use to inform pupils of the death will be factual while avoiding excessive detail about the suicidal act itself.
- 13.15. Immediate emotional support will be arranged for any pupils and staff who require it. This will be provided by the parish priest alongside other appropriate agencies.
- 13.16. A designated prayer room/quiet space will be set up where pupils and staff can go to if they are struggling with the news. Opportunities for quiet prayer or talks with the parish priest will be available.
- 13.17. If appropriate, liaison with the media will be handled in line with [section 8](#) of this policy.
- 13.18. Any information distributed to the school community and media regarding the death will:
 - Be factually correct but not include detail of the cause of death or method used.
 - Not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death.

- Not include details of any suicide note.
 - Not include speculation over the motivation for suicide.
- 13.19. Research indicates that pupils that have been directly affected by suicide are at an increased risk of taking their own life. Staff will report any concerns about pupils to the Head Teacher, Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer or SaFS Team and the appropriate support will be put in place or a referral to specialist services will be made in line with the Mental Health Policy.
- 13.20. Any memorial activities, such as Acts of Worship or Liturgies, conducted by the school will be held within two weeks of the death; following this, any memorial material will be given to the family.
- 13.21. Permanent memorials will not be held at the school; however, the school may set up a memorial on the website that will be moderated by a designated member of staff and removed after an agreed time.
- 13.22. Pupils and staff will be warned about the risks of un-moderated online memorials (e.g. those on social media), such as their comments becoming public without their permission and online memorials attracting negative comments.

Cultural and religious behaviours

- 13.23. The school will keep in mind the cultural attitudes and behaviours relating to a death and will make sure these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected, including the length of bereavement leave for members of staff.

Forces' families

- 13.24. The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.
- 13.25. Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change. This will be supported by the parish priest.
- 13.26. Bereaved forces' pupils will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated prayer/quiet area in school that the pupil can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

A death involving murder or manslaughter

- 13.27. The Head Teacher or Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will contact the police or the family to establish the facts about what has happened.
- 13.28. A designated staff member from the SaFS team will be available to talk to the pupil to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.

13.29. Research indicates that pupils that have been bereaved due to murder or manslaughter can be at significant risk of developing PTSD. Any concerns relating to the pupil will be addressed in line with the Mental Health Policy.

13.30. Media personnel will not be permitted onto the school site at any time.

14. Remembrance activities/Acts of Worship

14.1. Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, Acts of Worship, Liturgies or Masses.

14.2. The family will always be consulted prior to any such events being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.

14.3. All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in the events.

14.4. All remembrance activities, Acts of Worship, Liturgies or Masses will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

15. Managing transitions

15.1. Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded.

15.2. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:

- If the pupil moves school
- When the pupil moves to secondary school
- If the pupil moves class
- When the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

16. Teaching about bereavement and grief

16.1. Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death. This will be through Circle Time activities and touched upon through our RSE curriculum 'Life to the Full', which is in line with Christian views.

16.2. Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching. If appropriate, they will seek advice from the Head Teacher, Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer, SaFS team or parish priest.

16.3. Bereaved pupils and their families will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required.

- 16.4. Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.
- 16.5. Any lessons covering topics of death or bereavement will take account of religious and cultural beliefs. As a Catholic school, prayer opportunities will be available at all times.

17. Staff training

- 17.1. All pastoral staff will receive training in bereavement support.
- 17.2. The SaFS team will organise whole-school training sessions to share their knowledge with all staff members, including support staff, annually.
- 17.3. Members of the SaFS team will attend training as it is available to support with bereavement and the counselling of young children.
- 17.4. If any members of staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to pupils or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will speak to the SaFS team who will arrange for the staff member to undergo the appropriate training.
- 17.5. The Head Teacher and Child Protection, Inclusion and Attendance officer will check if the staff that work for third party providers that deliver extra-curricular activities for pupils have received bereavement training and will recommend them to do so if this training has not been undertaken.

18. Monitoring and review

- 18.1. After a bereavement, the school will review what was done at each stage and will evaluate the actions taken to see what was effective and what might have been done better. This will enable the school to plan for the future.

Experience can also inform other programmes of the school or can also lead to additional supports being put in place.
- 18.2. Should no bereavement have occurred, this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the governing board and Head Teacher.
- 18.3. The next scheduled review date for this policy is April 2021.
- 18.4. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff members.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING ON-GOING SUPPORT FOR A BEREAVED STUDENT

- If the child/young person thinks it would be helpful and friends agree, establish a peer support network – ensuring that those helping are given appropriate support themselves or seek help outside, for example, from the parish priest.
- 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 Dad – 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.
- 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 school are aware of the bereavement and support in situ.
- At the end of the day, be yourself, listen and care.

APPENDIX 2

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, prayer space, 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 3

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.

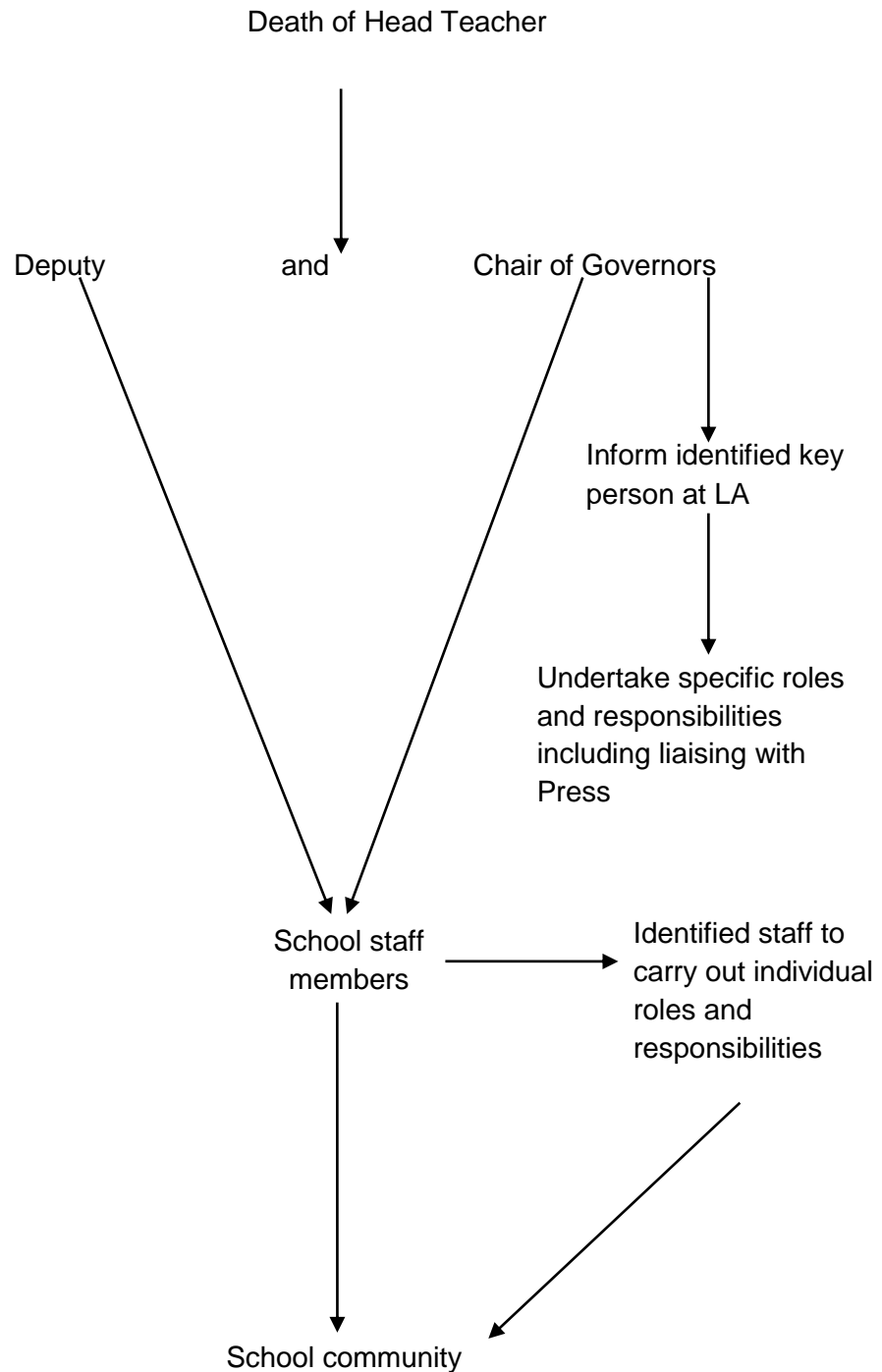
1 Suggested scripts to use when someone dies:

“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”.

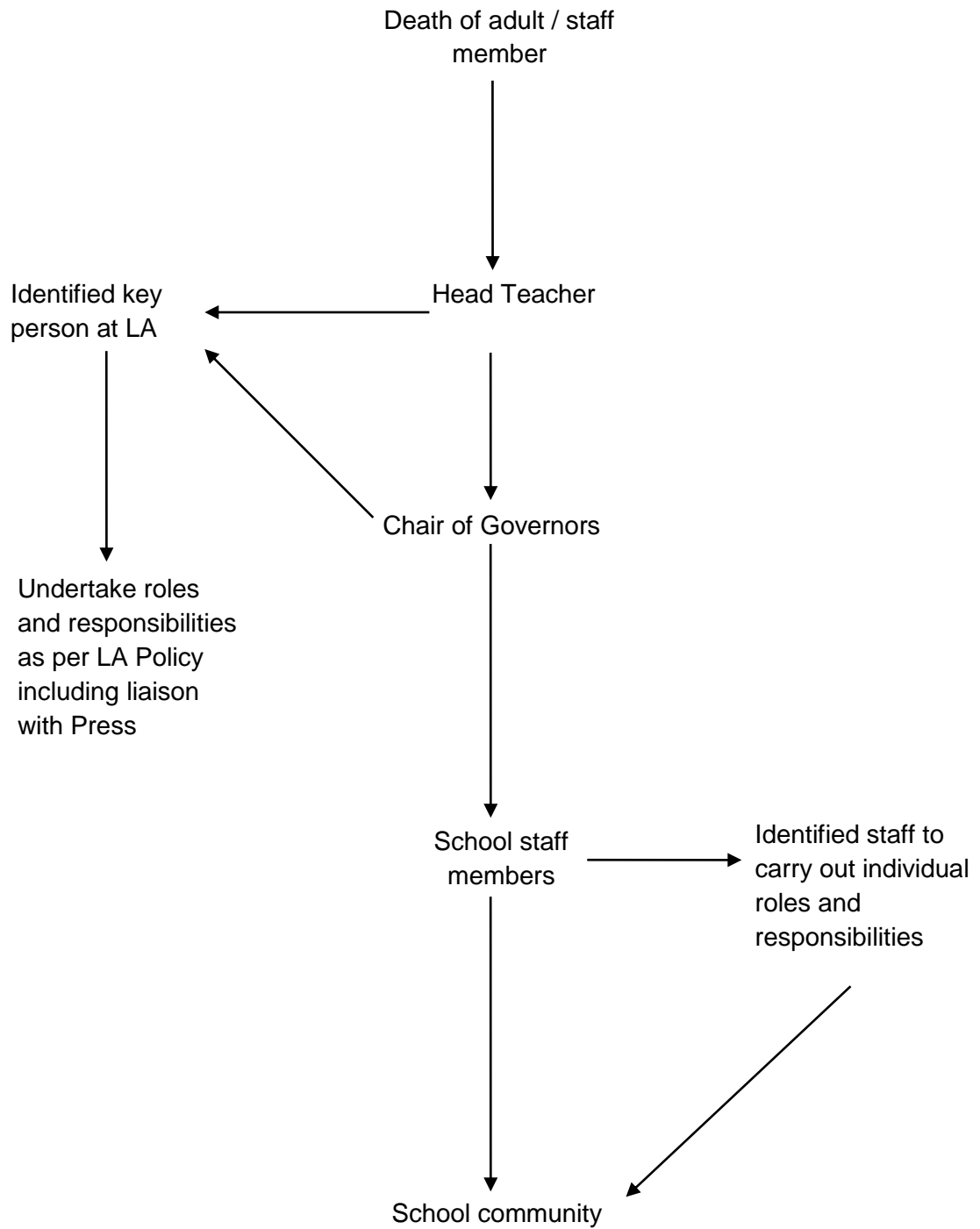
APPENDIX 4

INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF HEAD TEACHER

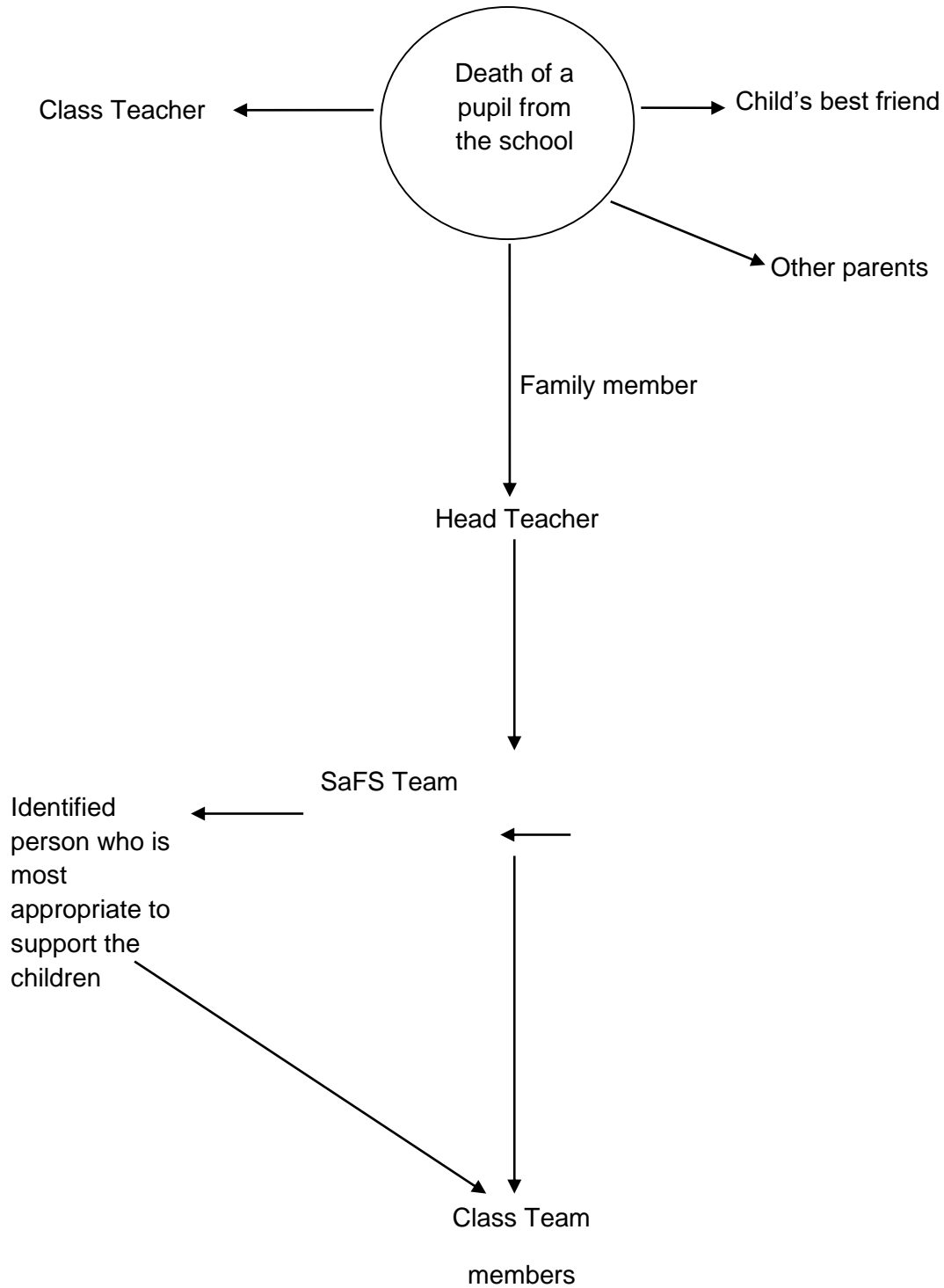


APPENDIX 5

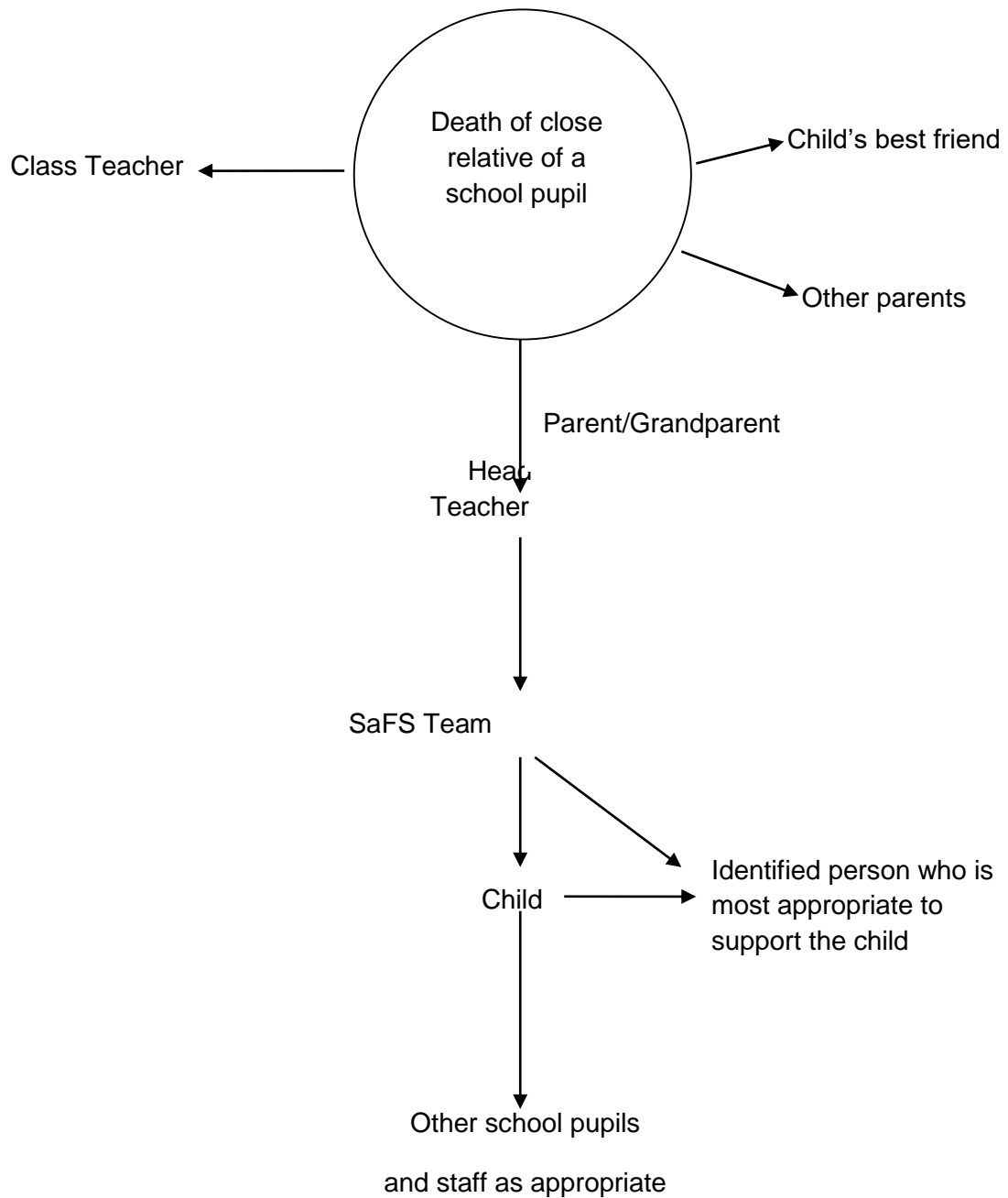
INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER



APPENDIX 6
INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING
DEATH OF PUPIL



APPENDIX 7
INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING
DEATH OF CLOSE FAMILY MEMBER OF SCHOOL
PUPIL



APPENDIX 7

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AGENCIES

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.