

# Whitstable & Seasalter Endowed Church of England (Aided) Junior School



## Bereavement Policy

LET YOUR LIGHT *Shine*  
Matthew 5:14-16

Love ★ Joy ★ Goodness ★ Resilience ★ Trust

Reviewer	SENCO
Reviewed	December 2024
Date of Next Review	December 2026
Headteacher Signature	<i>EM Taylor</i>

## ***Bereavement Policy***

### **Introduction**

*'Every 22 minutes a parent of a child dies that's around 23,600 bereaved children each year. Almost one in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend, teacher or other significant person in their life'. (Child Bereavement UK, 2017 statistics)*

It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time any school will have to deal with a death that impacts the whole school community. Death is often something that we do not like to think about, so when we are faced with it, we often find ourselves underprepared.

Bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. Within the Whitstable Endowed school setting we provide learning opportunities for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. Our School's Christian Values help children to nurture 'Resilience; to keep our lights shining even when it is difficult to do so and Trust in God to help us do this'.

Bereavement impacts everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, The Endowed family have a duty to help support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs.

### **Aims of a Bereavement Policy:**

- To identify key staff within the school and LA, resources and further support services to help the whole school 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 school will respond to the death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To support children 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 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.

### ***Informing Staff and Governors of a Bereavement***

- Where possible, 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 school community.
- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- The Headteacher will inform ALL staff and the Chair of the Governing Body as soon as possible by holding a whole school staff meeting or team meeting; if possible this will include part time staff. (Measures will be taken to inform absent staff; they will be informed over the telephone, or by email.)
- A factual explanation of how the death occurred will be given and if applicable the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death.

- The Senior Leadership Team will be 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. The staffroom will be used as a quiet area to present the news as it is not within the main school building.
- The Senior Leadership Team along with our school FLO will be 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).
- The school FLO will be established as a point of contact for the family to ensure free flow of accurate information to and from the school.
- Bereavement support or counselling should be available to all as necessary, through our School Counsellor.
- Staff/children condolences will be arranged with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- The Wellbeing Team and Senior Leadership Team will 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.
- Where possible staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released.
- In the case of a child's parental bereavement a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the class teacher would be encouraged to attend the funeral as school representatives.
- If a death occurs on a school trip the 'Emergency Procedures Framework During the Visit' will be followed (Educational Visits Policy).

### ***Informing Pupils of a Bereavement***

- Children will be identified who are most likely to be upset by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased and they will be told the news together as a separate group. This will take place in the Well Being room, (FLO's Office), if possible and their teacher will be present. Where possible the children will be informed by the Headteacher.
- A set time for teachers to inform their class what has happened will be arranged by the Headteacher. Alternatively a whole school assembly could be arranged and the children would be informed by the local clergy. This will give a time for meaningful reflection and prayer during this difficult time.
- Staff have been provided with guidelines on how to inform children (See Appendix 1).

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

### ***In the Days After the Death***

- We will consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- The school Well Being Team will be available to support any pupils during the school day. They will check in with children each day to support them through their grief.
- If necessary temporary staff cover will be provided.
- The Well Being room will be allocated as a quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary.

- Flexibility to the school timetable will be offered by the Headteacher, to any pupils needing this.
- Support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died.
- The Headteacher or Well Being Team will liaise where necessary with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.

In line with the family's wishes, we will 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 school will also be considered if it is necessary for all staff to attend the funeral

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## - **BEREAVEMENT flowchart**

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- This flowchart shows how we plan to respond to a bereavement:

- You are informed of a bereavement



- Identify the relevant communication pathway (see Appendix 2) and as a team the tasks required and who is best to complete them.



- Headteacher or Well Being Team to contact family – phone call/send card/letter of condolence.



- Well Being Team to discuss with the family and child or young person who they want their story shared with and support available to them.



- Inform others – staff, families, children and young people of the setting as agreed with the bereaved family, child and young person.



- School FLO to be point of contact for family – discuss funeral arrangements/return to school.



- If deemed necessary; Well Being Team arranges to see child or young person at home or in the school to assess their needs and level of support required at this time.



- Well Being Team liaise with child or young person and support their return to the setting.



- School FLO ensure significant dates and events for the child or young person are recorded and shared with all staff for future reference (birthdays, anniversaries).



- The Headteacher or Well Being Team continues 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.



- Ensure friendships are secure as peer support can be very important



- Continue regular contact with the family – show you still care about them and their child or young person.
  - Sign post to outside agencies if deemed appropriate.

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# ***How We Will Support a Bereaved Pupil on Return to School***

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

This is the action we will put in place to help the child return by:

- The Well Being team will be the main contact point for them and their family.
- Depending on needs and wishes of the family. The Well Being Team will check in with the child each morning and afternoon To understand how they are coping, what support they may need now and in the future, to discuss concerns and worries and plan strategies to cope.
- If they are staying at home, the Well Being Team will check in with them at home. Cards and messages may be sent to them from appropriate people (peer group and staff they have good relationships with) Activities such as these will give the other children the opportunity to discuss their own concerns or experiences with the family and help them to feel they are doing something positive to support them, we may collate them into a book.
- Before they return, all staff will be 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 their time at school.
- 'Time out' strategies will be considered that suit the child or young person and the setting. Time out cards, signals or signs can help them to exit the room quickly if they are feeling vulnerable or emotional. Their point of contact will be the Well Being Team.
- We understand, there is no set pattern or time limit to grief – It is a unique experience and the process is a lifelong one. At different ages and during new or transitional times children will have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a re-visit of what happened; to develop a better understanding and acceptance.
- We will inform the necessary authorities to consider the bereavement and its potential impact on any up and coming statutory assessments.
- The local clergy may visit the school to speak with the child and to aid a restful return to school. The clergy may offer prayer space and time with the child on their return.

### ***Providing On-Going Support for a Bereaved Pupil***

- If the child thinks it would be helpful and friends agree, then a peer support network will be set up. With agreement from the parents or carers a referral to our school counsellor will be made.
- The Well Being Team will make a note of significant dates which might affect the child, e.g. date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries. This will also be forwarded to class teachers and other members of staff so they are aware of the possible impact these may have.
- Class teachers will be aware of possible reactions to curriculum content and how this could be managed if it is sensitive to the bereaved child. Teachers will discuss how these difficulties might best be managed with them e.g. ask them if they wish to be included in the activity too?
- All school staff will look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground and be alert to changes in behaviour – these may be an indication that the child is more affected by their bereavement than they are able or willing to say. Reactions may present themselves months or years after the event.
- The School FLO and Office Assistant will follow up absences and associated problems at home or school.
- All staff at the Endowed will listen, support and care.
- The parents or carers will be signposted to further support groups available.(See Appendix 4)

### ***The Death of a Member of Staff***

- All principles above apply to the death of a staff member.
- In addition:
- For procedures see flow chart Appendix 2
  - The Headteacher will notify the LEA of the death and seek advice.
  - The Headteacher will contact the staff member's family to offer any support.
  - The Headteacher will seek permission from the Chair of Governors to close the school if it were necessary as a mark of respect or for the staff to attend the funeral at a later date.
  - Personal or compassionate leave may be granted to an employee or employees at the discretion of the Headteacher on behalf of the Governing Body as stated in the Special Leave of Absence Policy.

### ***The Death of a Child's Pet***

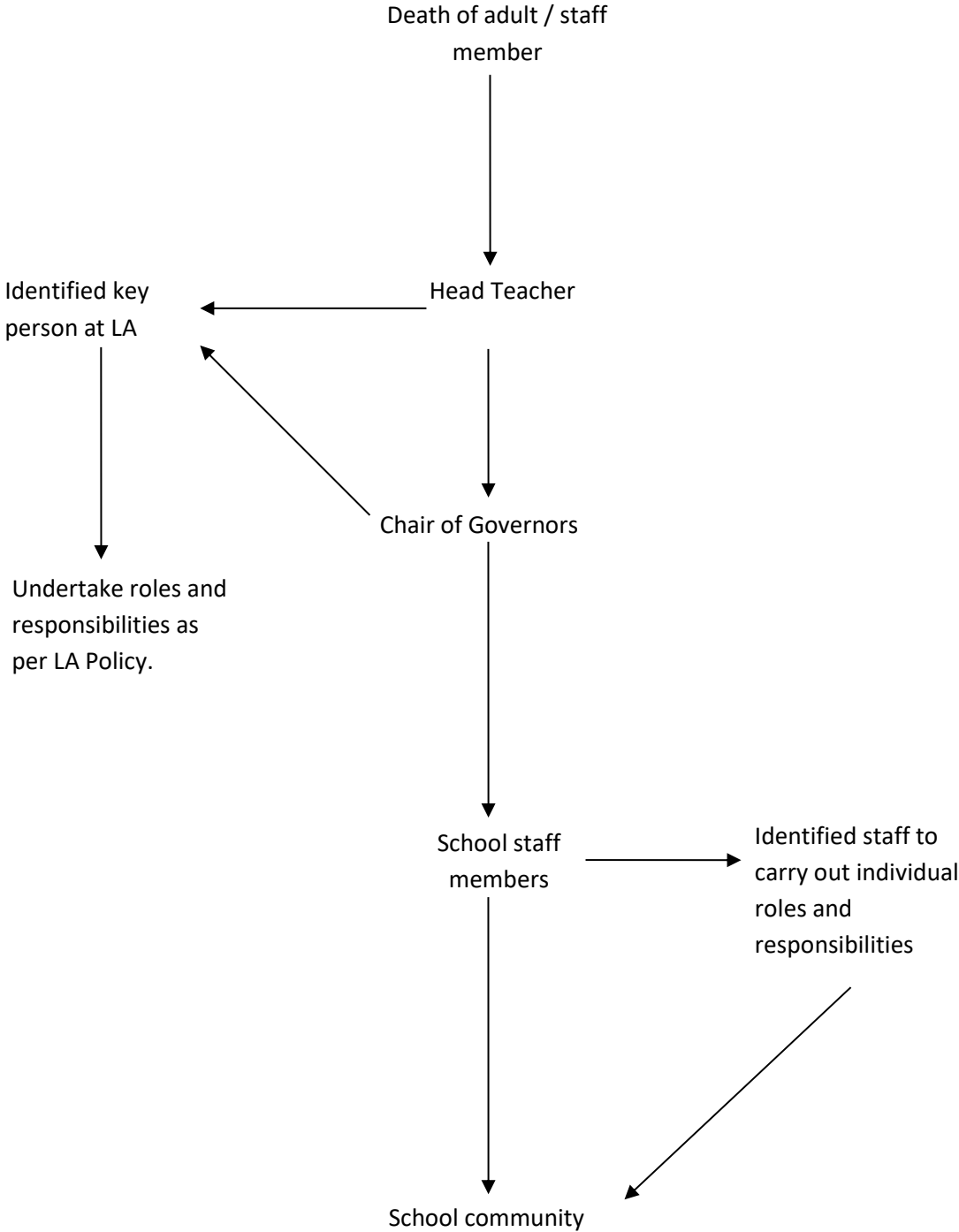
- This can also be a time of anxiety for many children.
- The Well Being Team will check in with the child and offer support.
- The class teacher can also be an important person whom will be open to talking with the child about their grief at this time.
- A peer group including the child's friends can also help to reduce the bereaved child's anxiety.
- Children may be offered a time to talk to their class or small friendship group about their pet and their time with it. They may even bring in photographs to share with their friends and class.

### ***Guidelines on How to Inform Children***

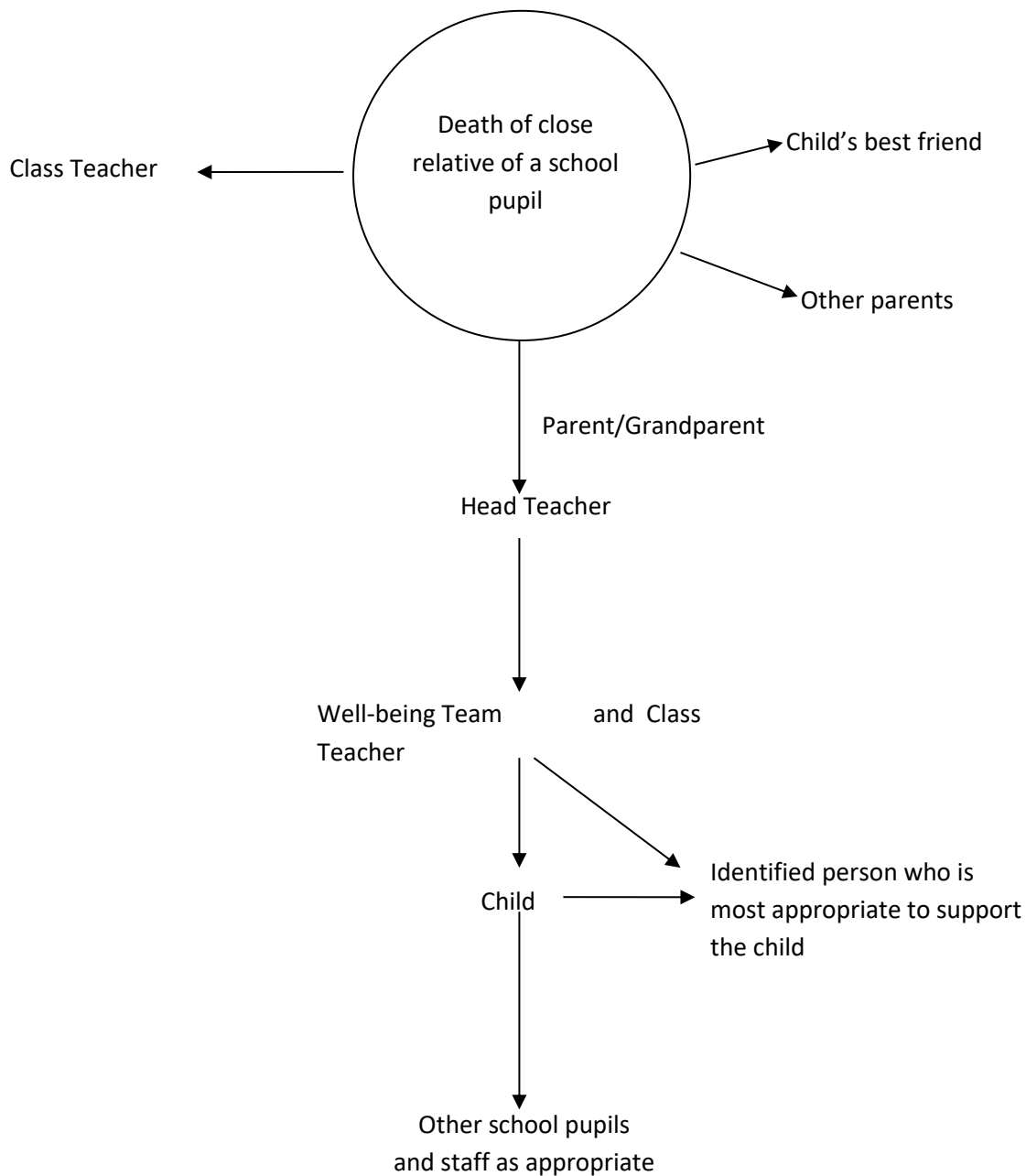
Remember it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important we model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear.

- 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 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 the Curriculum, allow for a time of restoration possibly with a physical outlet.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school routine as soon as possible thus ensuring minimal disruption within the school day which also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

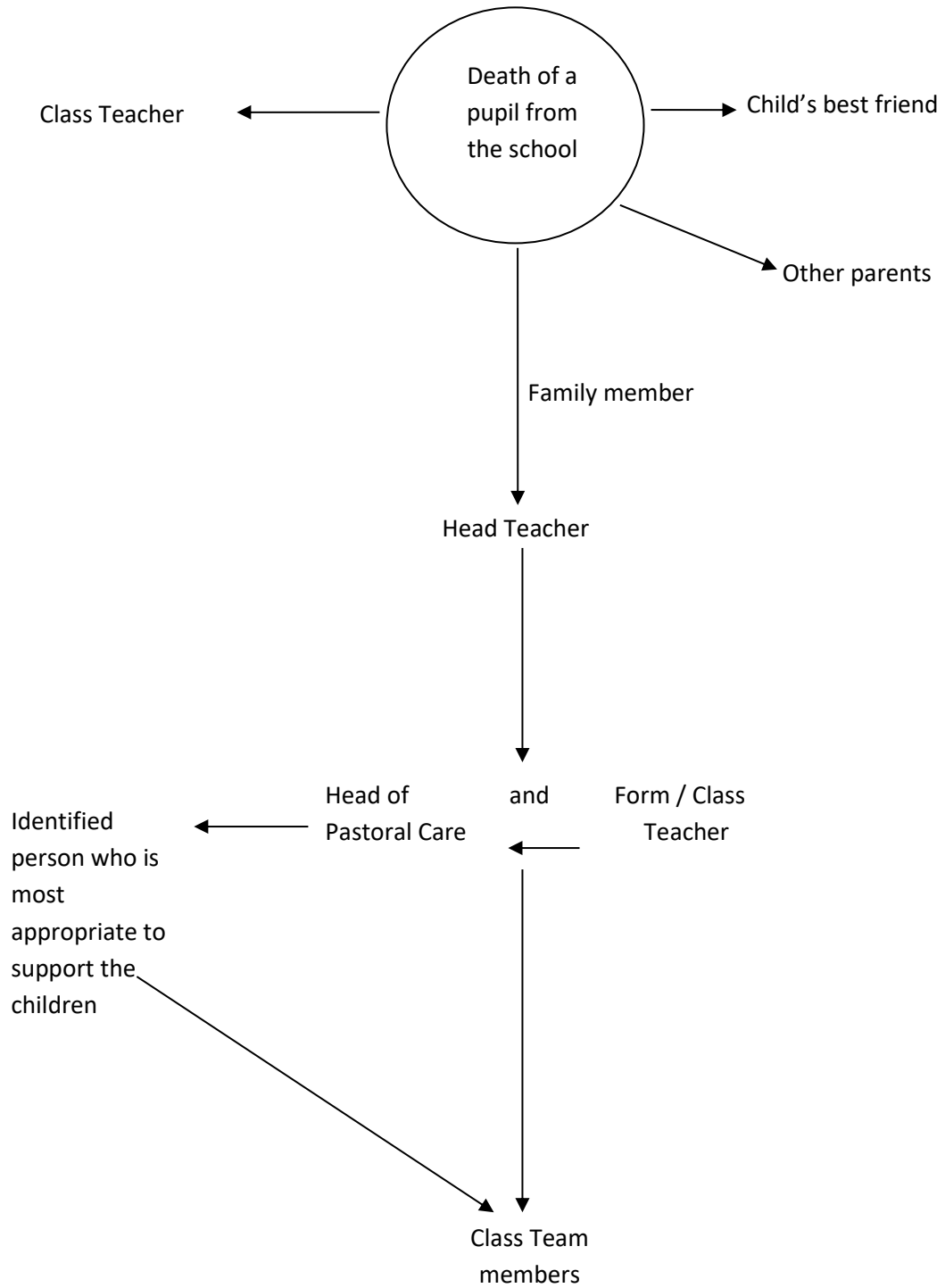
# Information Sharing Pathway following Death of a Staff Member



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



# ***Information Sharing Pathway Following Death of Pupil***



## Appendix 4

### ***External Support Agencies***

[www.ataloss.org](http://www.ataloss.org) -UK's bereavement signposting website

[www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx) – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death.

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement.

[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk) - Childhood bereavement.

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) - All aspects of bereavement.

[www.griefencounter.org.uk](http://www.griefencounter.org.uk) - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

[www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk) - Specifically for young people aged 12-18. [supportline.org.uk](http://supportline.org.uk) - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) - Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or mental health

[www.seesaw.org.uk](http://www.seesaw.org.uk) - Grief support service for children and young people.

[www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk) - Providing support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

[www.simonsays.org.uk](http://www.simonsays.org.uk) - Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.

[www.teenissues.co.uk](http://www.teenissues.co.uk) – Discussing the issues teenagers face.

[www.theredlipstickfoundation.org](http://www.theredlipstickfoundation.org) – Support for families bereaved by suicide.

[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.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.

[www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk) – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51<sup>st</sup> birthday

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) - Help for grieving children and their families.