



Bereavement Policy

Name of School	Petersgate Infant School
Date of review	September 2025
Date of next review	September 2026
Reviewed by	Wendy Mitchell Headteacher

School Vision

"for all children to grow into responsible, caring individuals who actively and positively contribute to the community."

At Petersgate Infant School, our vision outlined above is strengthened by our values of safety, caring, achievement, resilience and friendship. These values symbolise warmth, community and cohesion to ensure we are "working together to achieve our best".

As a school, we can apply these values through the following aims:

Aims

- Ensuring everyone stays healthy and safe.
- Ensuring everyone feels valued and has a sense of belonging.
- Providing a high quality learning environment.
- Helping everyone enjoy learning and achieving their best.
- Nurturing and developing the whole child.
- Ensuring everyone makes a positive contribution to the school and wider community.

Safeguarding at Petersgate Infant School is carried out in line with the statutory guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' published by the Department for Education.

1. Introduction

An estimated 46,300 dependent children (aged 0-17) are bereaved of a parent each year. That's 127 children newly bereaved each day. 1 in 29 five to sixteen-year-olds has been bereaved of a parent or sibling - that's a child in every average class. (Child Bereavement UK, 2022-2023 statistics)

It is almost inevitable therefore, that at some time our school will have to deal with a death that impacts the whole school community.

Bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing. It is important that we provide learning opportunities for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. Bereavement impacts everyone in different ways and for different periods of time. Whatever the level of understanding about bereavement, we have a duty to help anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that meets their needs.

By adopting a planned, open and considered approach, with an ethos of openness and mutual support, we can support the emotional well-being of children, families and staff.

2. Aims

- To identify key staff within the school and Local Authority, resources and further support services to help our school community work together.
- To provide a framework for all staff, to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.
- To have clear expectations about the way we, as a school, 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 our 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.

3. Guidelines for Staff and Governors

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

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

It is important that adults and children are kept well informed. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can even lead to both children and adults developing the attitude that death is not a topic to be discussed. 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.

- 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.
- We will consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- ALL staff will be informed as soon as possible via a whole school meeting and any absent staff will be notified by telephone.
- We will give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and, if applicable, the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death.
- The Senior Management Team will be prepared for reaction to this news including visible upset of feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavement may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
- A member of Senior Management Team will be available to members of staff, parents or children if they are finding the situation particularly hard. We will seek the advice of external support services as appropriate (see Appendix 3).
- We will be prepared to arrange supply cover if necessary.
- One person 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 will be available to all as necessary.
- School will arrange staff/pupil condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- A set time will be agreed for teachers to inform their class what has happened, how it is to be done and EXACTLY what is going to be said. The office team will identify any absent pupils.
- We will be prepared to follow this up with a special assembly, memorial service etc.
- The Senior Management 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. Staff who will be alone that night will be identified and arrangements made for colleagues to contact them by phone if necessary.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Simon Says Helpline (02380 647550).
- Staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released on compassionate leave.

4. Guidelines for Informing Children

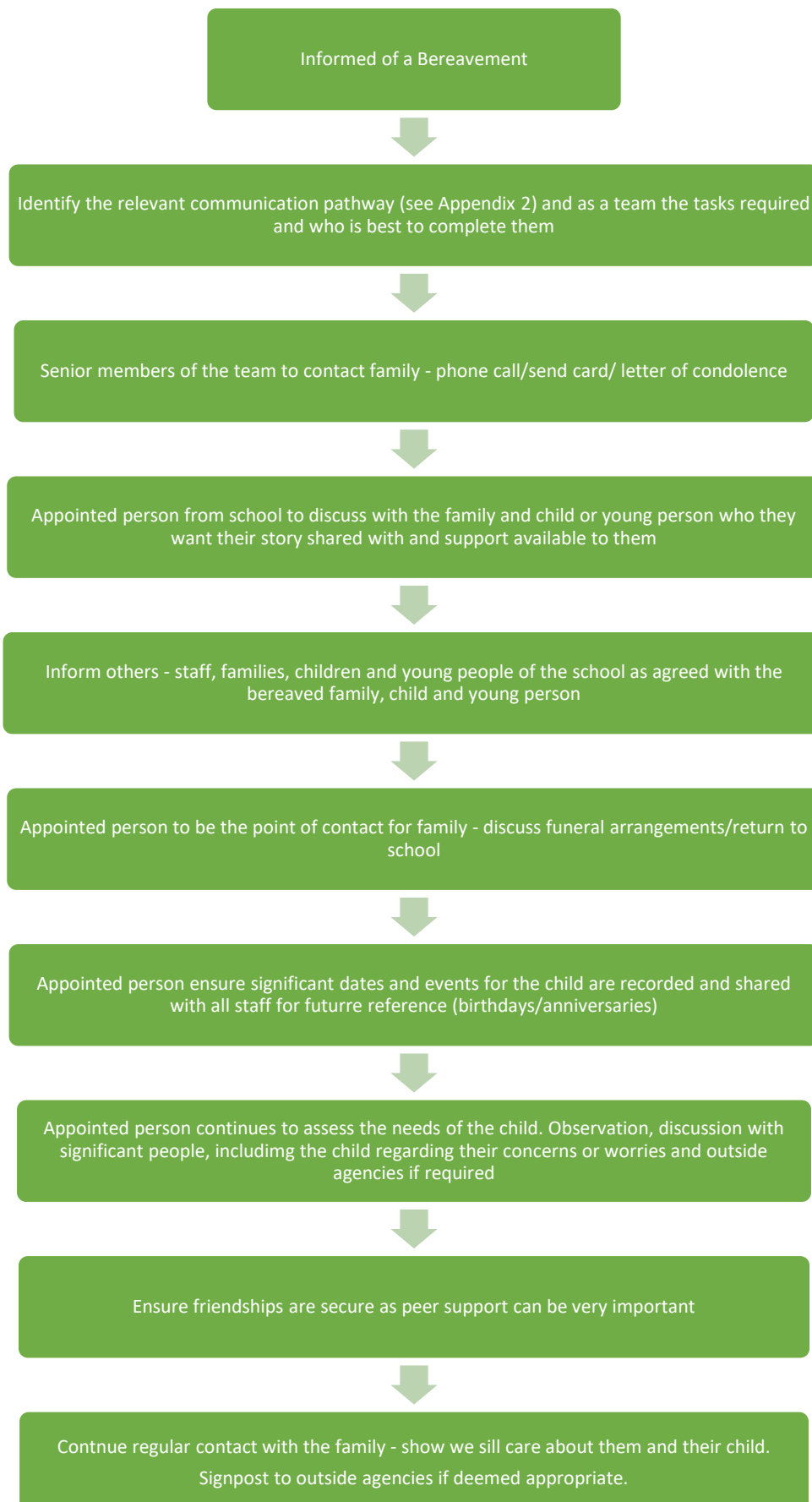
Children will naturally want to know what happened, how it happened, why it happened and perhaps, most importantly of all, what happens next.

- We will identify children who are most likely to be impacted by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased or are already bereaved to be told together as a separate group. Where possible, we will inform children in the smallest group, preferably class groups. This should be done by the adults they know.
- We will provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children. We will be honest, it is okay to say if we don't have the answers, but we will remember to revisit the question at a later date when we do have the answer (See Appendix 1).
- We will 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.
- We will 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.
- We will end the discussion on a positive note – not all people who are ill or who have accidents, die – many get better.

5. In the Days After the Death

- We will consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- We will ensure nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children are available to do so.
- We will may need to provide cover for the normal activities of staff.
- The nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family will ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral if any, such as:
 - Sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc.
 - Ascertaining who will attend the funeral
 - Cover staff attending the funeral
 - Informing parents of pupils involved
 - Possible closure of the school – informing ALL staff

6. Bereavement Flow Chart:



7. Supporting a Bereaved Child Returning to School

- We will identify a member of staff of the team who will be the main contact point for them and their family.
- We will ensure **regular** contact, this may be daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family. This will enable school to understand how the child is coping, what support they may need now and in the future, to discuss concerns and worries and plan strategies to cope.
- If the child is staying at home, we will have cards and messages sent to them from other children and key staff.
- Before the child returns to school, 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 school.
- We will maintain normal expectations for behaviour as part of 'normal' routine, helping the child to feel secure.
- We will consider providing opportunities for the child to take time to reflect privately.

8. Providing Ongoing Support for a Bereaved Child

- We will establish a peer network with agreement with the child.
- We will make a note of significant dates which might affect the child e.g. date of death, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries.
- We will consider possible reactions to class/assembly themes and discuss how these difficulties might be best managed.
- We will look out for signs of isolation, bullying or difficulties in the playground.
- We will consider using books/activities to help children explore feelings and ideas about death as part of the normal school curriculum.
- We will be alert to changes in behaviour.
- We will follow up absences and associated problems at home or school.
- We will carefully consider how transition to new year group/school is managed to ensure new teachers are aware of the circumstances.

9. Supporting a Child with Special Educational Needs

For further support visit: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/bereavement/professionals> or contact Simon Says.

When talking about death or bereavement, we will consider:

- **WHO** should be the key member of staff 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 child most receptive to new ideas? – quiet room, outside. Use this space for talking with them.
- **WHAT** should be talked about? (as agreed with the parents).
- **HOW** is new information normally given? Signs, verbally, pictures.
- **HOW** is new information normally backed up? Repetition, social story.
- **PROCEED** at a level, speed and language appropriate to them.
- **BUILD** on information given – small bites of the whole, given gradually.
- **REPEAT** information as often as needed.
- **WATCH** for reactions to show the child understands – modify and repeat as needed.
- **FOLLOW** the child's lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.
- **MAINTAIN** normal daily routine as much as possible.
- **LIAISE** with other agencies involved with the child to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

Appendix 1: How to Inform Children

We will model to children healthy responses to sad news and a natural response to hearing about death is to cry.

We will:

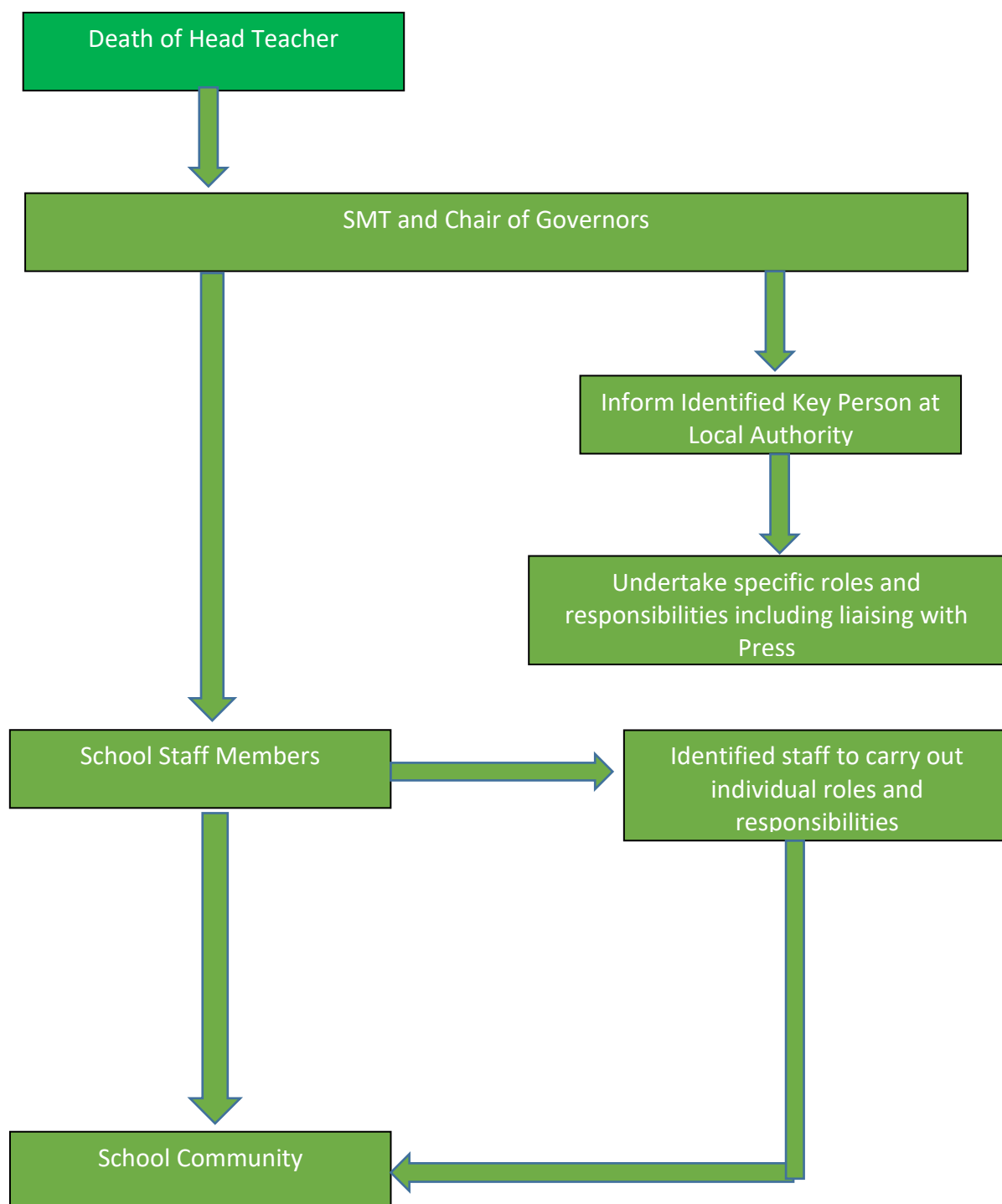
- Be honest and factual.
- Use clear language – not ‘passed away’ or ‘lost’, but use the words ‘dead’, ‘died’ and ‘death’ to avoid confusion.
- Allow the children to ask questions and answer them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- Allow the children to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death.
- Ensure the children 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 back to class to learn, allow for time of restoration.
- Put an appropriate time limit on discussion. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible ensuring minimal disruption and offering sense of security and familiarity.

Suggested Script:

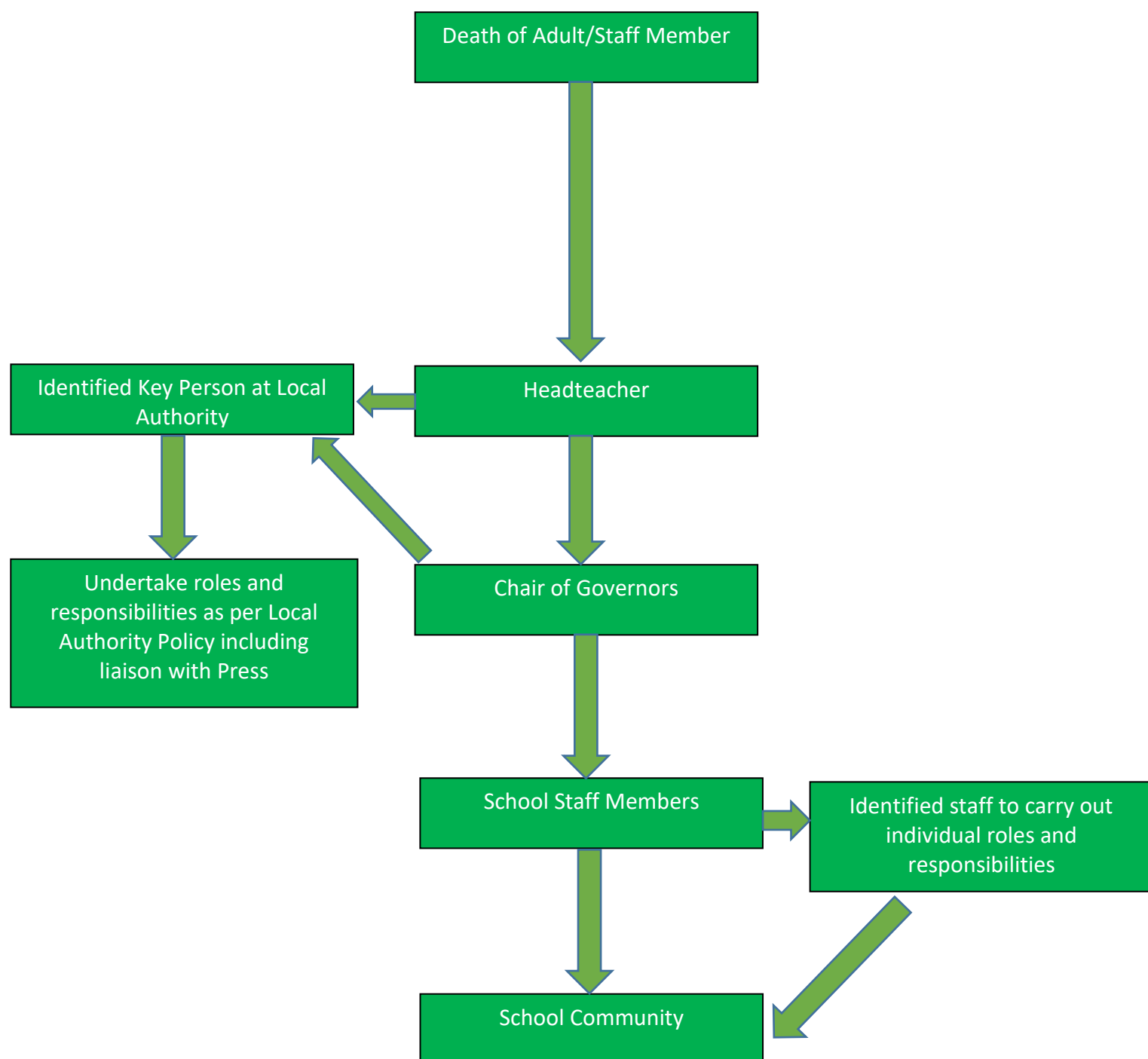
“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today which might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of (illness), and know that sometimes people with (illness) get better, but other times people die from it. _____ has been ill with (illness) for a while. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday.”

“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 new to tell you which might upset you. Yesterday, _____ was in an accident and was so badly injured that s/he died.”

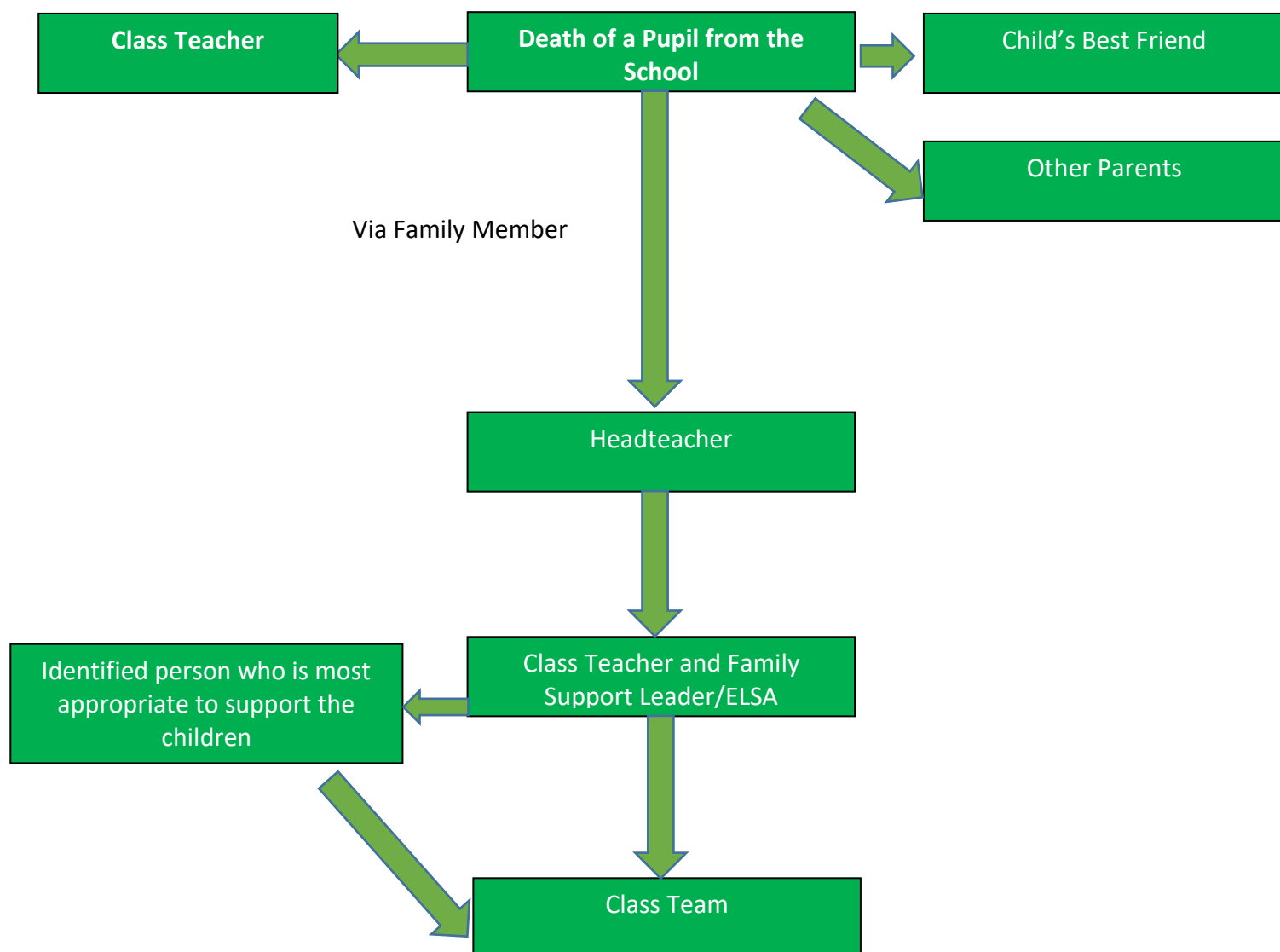
**Appendix 2 –
Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of Head Teacher**



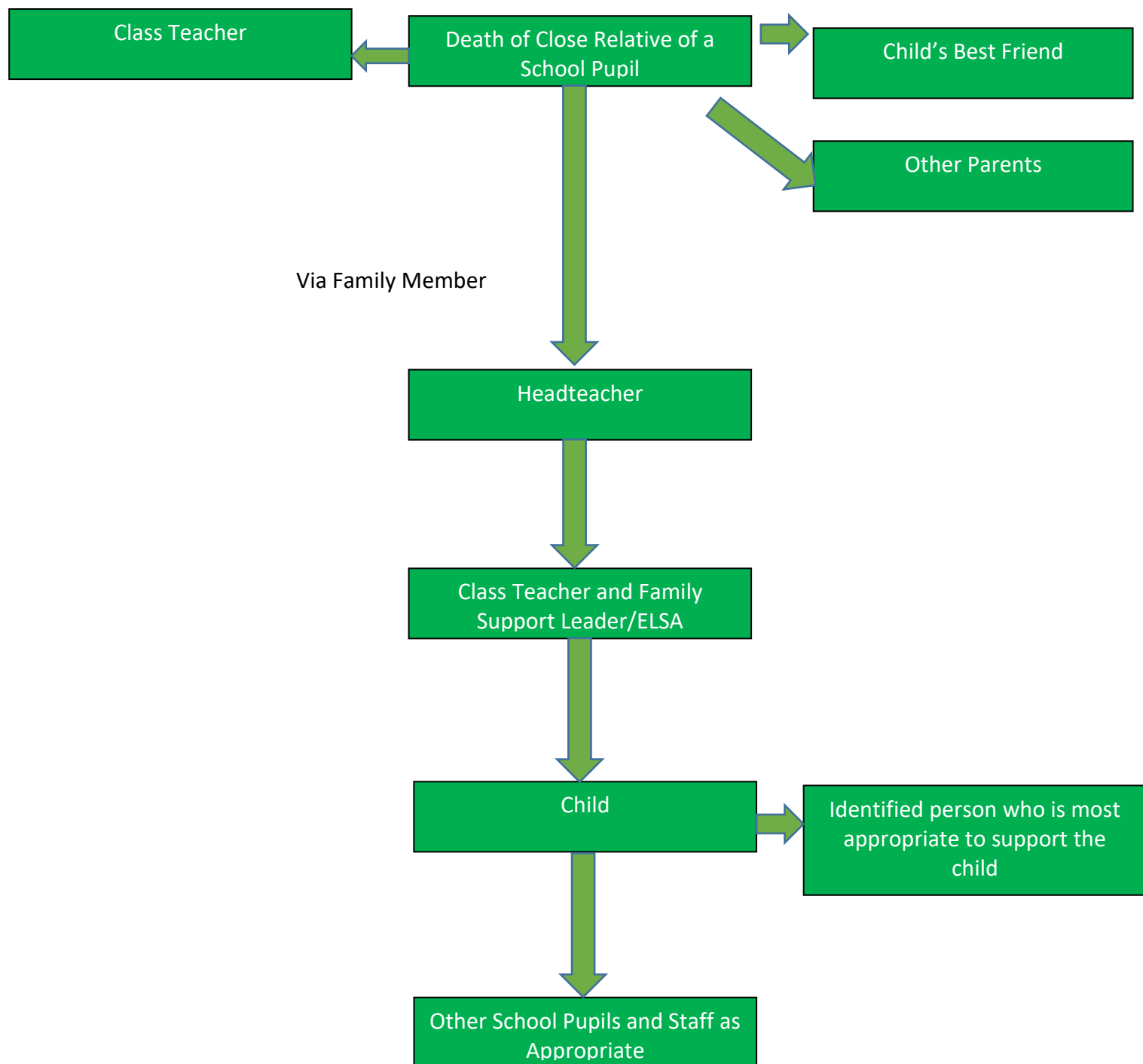
Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Staff Member



Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Pupil



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



Appendix 3 – External Support Agencies

- Simonsays.org.uk –Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support <https://www.simonsays.org.uk/>
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/bereavement/professionals> – Advice when supporting someone with autism cope with a death
- <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/> – Supports families and professionals when a child is bereaved or facing bereavement
- <https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/> – Childhood Bereavement
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/> – Free National helpline for children and young people
- <https://www.cruse.org.uk/> – All aspects of bereavement
- <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/> – Helps bereaved children and young people rebuild their lives
- <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/> – Specifically for young people aged 12-18
- <https://www.supportline.org.uk/> – Confidential emotional support for children and young adults
- <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/> – Provides resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers and young adults
- <https://www.sands.org.uk/> – Providing support for parents and families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth
- <https://www.teenissues.co.uk/> – discussing the issues teenagers face
- <https://mydiscombobulatedbrain.com/the-red-lipstick-foundation/> – Support for families bereaved by suicide
- <https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/> – peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday
- https://winstonswish.org/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqObChMIzvak-Z2OiQMvV5JQBh3oqDKJEAYASAAEgKwRPD_BwE – Help for grieving children and their families