



Weston Schools Federation

Bereavement Policy and Guidelines

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



Content	Page
Bereavement Policy Guidelines and Aims	3
Guidelines for Staff and Governors	5
Guidelines for Informing Students	7
In the Days After the Death	8
Bereavement Flowchart	9
Guidelines for Supporting a Bereaved Student Return to School	10
Guidelines for Providing Ongoing Support For a Bereaved Student	13
Guidelines for Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs	14
Appendix 1 – Guidelines on HOW to Inform Children	16
Appendix 2 – Information Sharing Pathways	18
Appendix 3 – Templates	22
Appendix 4 – External Support Agencies	24

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



BEREAVEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

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 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. It is vitally important to everyone at Weston Park Primary School that we provide learning opportunities for children to develop their own appropriate range of emotional, spiritual and intellectual responses to manage these experiences. We pride ourselves on being a school community based on openness and mutual support, allowing children to know they are safe and secure to share their thoughts and worries. 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 support anyone when they could be feeling their most vulnerable, in the way that best meets their needs. By adopting a planned, open and considered approach we will ensure we do all we can to support the emotional well-being of the child, family and staff.

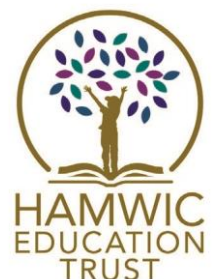
The purpose of creating a bereavement policy is to help everyone within the school community realise bereavement is a normal, natural part of life which needs to be discussed openly. It should outline ways to respond in caring for the wellbeing of children and staff at a time when they may be in shock, upset and confused, to ensure effective communication takes place, support available for each member of the school community to ensure there is as little disruption as possible to the daily school routine.

Aims of a Bereavement Policy

- To identify key staff within the school and Hamwic Education Trust, 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 and guidance about the way our school will respond to the death of a member of our school community, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

Date of last review: April 2020

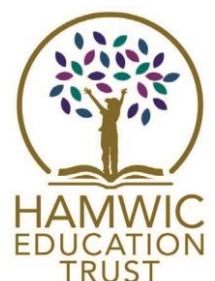
Date of next review: April 2022



- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement, accessing support from appropriate professionals or support organisations as appropriate.
- 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.

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND GOVERNORS

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

- 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

Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can even lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. 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. The school's policy and guidance around social media will be referred to in any response needed in this regard.

The following guidelines will be used when informing governors, staff, children and the school community:

- Where possible, discussion should 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 staff and wider school community.
- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- ALL staff (including support staff such as lunch time supervisors, PE coaches) will be informed as soon as possible using your normal method of communication, this will include clear communication with part time staff and measures will be taken to inform absent staff over the telephone.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- 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.
- A member of Senior Leadership Team 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).
- A member of SLT will be used 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. We may use a range of external providers to offer support.
- Arrange staff/pupil condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.

Date of last review: April 2020

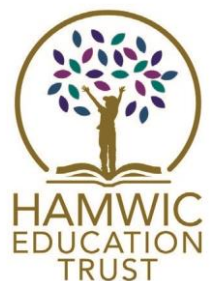
Date of next review: April 2022



- SLT will agree on 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. Any absent pupils will be identified and parents will be informed.
- Be prepared to follow this up with a special assembly, memorial service or memorial tree/garden.
- The Pastoral 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. Staff who will be alone that night could be identified and arrangements made for colleagues to contact them by phone if necessary.
- Where possible staff who have requested to attend the funeral or memorial should be released.

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



GUIDELINES FOR INFORMING STUDENTS

People often think that children do not grieve, but even very young children will want to know what happened, how it happened, why it happened and perhaps most importantly of all, what happens next?

The following guidelines will help you to inform children of the death:

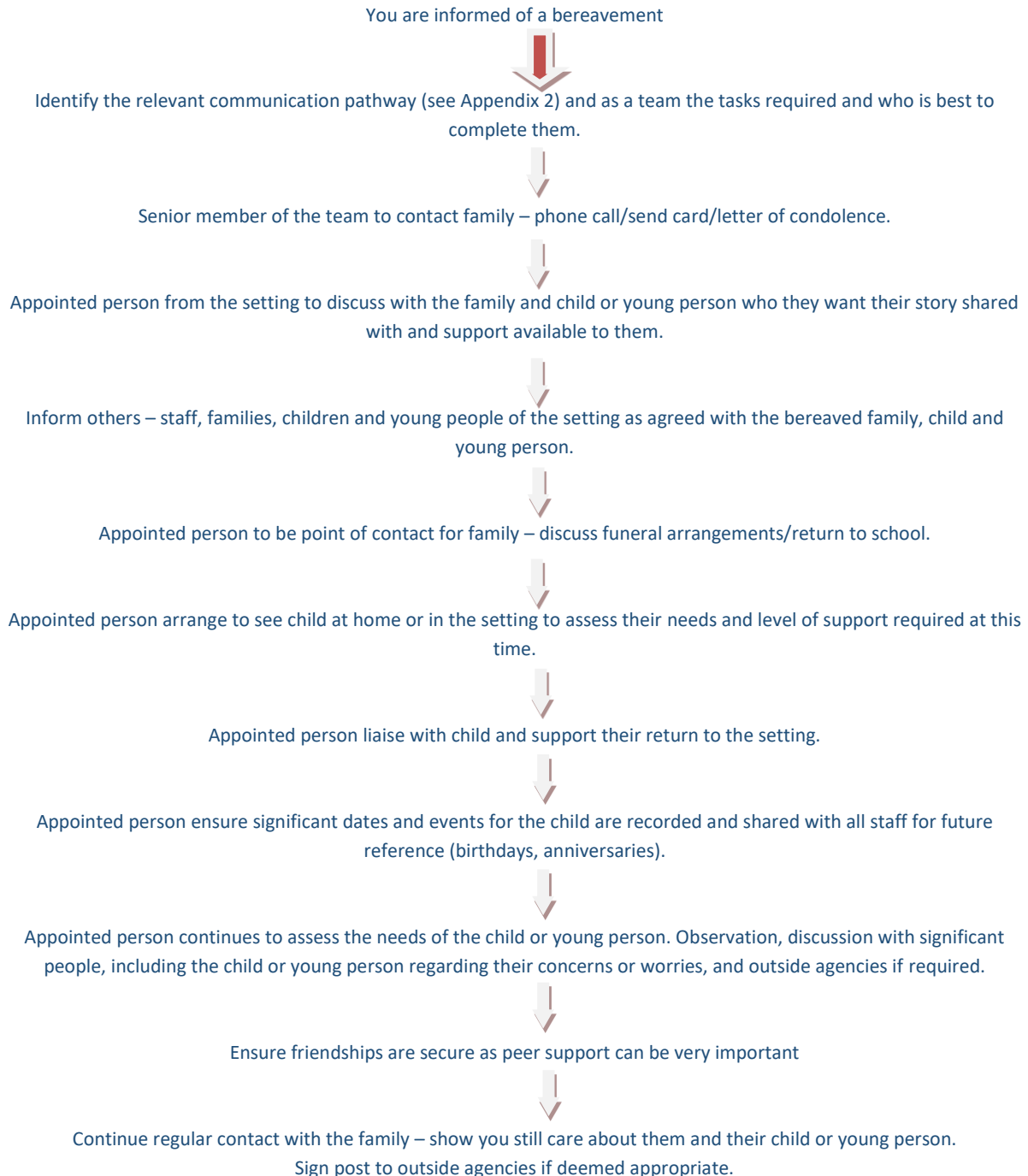
- Children who are most likely to be impacted by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased or are already bereaved, where possible, will be told together as a separate group.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children; be honest, it is ok to say if you don't have the answers but remember to revisit the question at a later date when you do have the answer (See Appendix 1).
- Staff need to be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, no apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
- Try to identify any key answers that you may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness.
- End up discussion on a positive note - not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better. Classes can use circle times to ensure that all pupils feelings are heard

IN THE DAYS AFTER THE DEATH

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary.
- SLT will ensure that nominated staff with responsibilities for supporting staff and children, are available to do so.
- It may be necessary temporarily to provide staff cover for their normal activities.
- We have this within our current provision
- It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable but some flexibility may be required.
- Try to engender an awareness of when people need help and support, particularly those who worked closely with the person who has died and secretaries /administrative staff who are taking telephone calls, dealing with parents etc.
- The designated member of SLT will has been assigned as the point of contact with the family should ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any.
- It will be important to acknowledge that often, for children, there is a period or shock or delay before a full grief response is apparent – typically up to 6 months.

BEREAVEMENT FLOWCHART

This flowchart will support you to build your school plan to respond to a bereavement:



GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING A BEREAVED STUDENT RETURN TO SCHOOL

When a child returns to school after a bereavement they may want to get straight back into a school routine. They may have been surrounded by grieving family members and often a chaotic household of visitors. School maybe their break from that.

As a school we will ensure that these steps are followed when supporting a child back into school after a bereavement;

- Identify a member of the school team who will be the main contact point for them and their family.
- Ensure regular contact, this may be daily or weekly depending on needs and wishes of the family. This will support us as a school in understanding how the family are coping, what support they may need now and in the future, to discuss concerns and worries and plan strategies to cope.
- If the child stays at home, remember them. Have cards and messages 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, you may want to collate them into a book. This death may remind others of their own experiences and so be prepared to support them. You may find out information about a child in your class that you didn't know before. Be ready to listen to them all.
- Before the pupil returns to school after a bereavement ensure all staff are aware and how this may have an effect on them, their behaviour and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be given. It is important to remember that bereaved children and young people have 'physical' illness, such as headaches, tummy aches and feeling sick, as well as mental sadness including lack of concentration, feeling tired, disorganised anger and frustration. These will have an impact on work load and learning. Monitor how things are going on their return and maintain communication with all staff involved.
- Maintain normal rules and expectations of behaviour. This is important for the children at Weston Park Primary School and the child or young person who have been bereaved. The rules and expectations are all part of the 'normal' routine and will help to make them feel secure. Remember the impact of bereavement on the whole family when giving sanctions and the impact the sanctions may have on the whole family.
- Consider 'time out' strategies that are personalised to the pupil who is grieving. The pupils will know they have a safe place to go to that they can seek support from their trusted member[s] of staff.
- Remember, 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

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



they will have new questions requiring answers and questions requiring a re-visit of what happened; to develop a better understanding and acceptance.

- It is not unusual for bereaved children to take time off school during the early stages of their bereavement. For some, the need to be with their families will be strong, and indeed they may suffer from separation anxiety when the time comes for a return to school. For others the familiarity, stability and routines of school life may prompt an early return. The time away from school will vary from pupil to pupil but when they do return, they may have a number of concerns – you will only know what these are and how they might be resolved if you ask. Some of the more common concerns might be:
- Members of the school team will meet with the child[ren] when they return to school to welcome them back, acknowledge the death and talk through their concerns – if this is considered appropriate and is in line with the family / carers wishes. Saying something simple like *“I am sorry to hear that your dad died – sometimes it helps to talk about it and if so, who would you like to be there for you?”* Let staff and classmates know how they want to be received and supported.

Appendix for strategies to support

- **Fear when they realise they may not remember what the deceased person looks like**

A laminated photo of the deceased person may give enormous comfort when the visual image begins to disappear. A special teddy or other memento will often give great comfort in times of distress and upset. They may also want to show this when talking about the person who died. It should be stressed that whatever helps the child within reason should be encouraged.

- **Fear of being behind with work and unable to catch up**

You can help by - clarifying with other staff what is essential to accomplish and what can be left, and offering appropriate help to achieve what needs to be done.

- **Inability to concentrate and feel motivated or sit still**

You can help by - Reassuring them that this lack of motivation and concentration is normal and will pass. Offer shorter more manageable tasks, write down the task, give encouragement for achievements, and minimising difficulties can often help.

- **Family grief impacting on normal family functioning**

Disrupted routines, sporadic meals, chaotic bedtimes are possible reasons why they may be inadequately prepared for school, does not have the necessary equipment, and may be tired or hungry.

You can help by - Talking with them to ascertain where areas of difficulty lie and try and work out strategies with them and their family to help keep things on an even keel in school. Identify their strengths and help them build on them.

- **Unable to meet homework/project deadlines because of altered responsibilities within the family and home**

You can help by - helping them work out and meet priorities. Be flexible where possible and offer additional support where needed.

- **Forthcoming examinations**

You can help by - Explaining the process of notifying examination boards and the possible outcomes.

GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING ON-GOING SUPPORT FOR A BEREAVED STUDENT

- If the child 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, 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 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 (*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 school 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 or contact Simon Says.

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.

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 but this must be done sensitively and appropriately. If the adult feels that they will not be able to manage to have this conversation they must inform their year leader or a member of SLT.

- 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 time to ask questions or use the class worry boxes answering them honestly and factually in terms they will understand.
- Allow the children time to verbalise their feelings.
- Allow the children time to discuss the situation and share their experiences of death (even if that is the death of a pet).
- 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
- The conversation needs to take place during a circle time so children feel they are being listened to and know they have the freedom to share their worries and thoughts.
- 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:

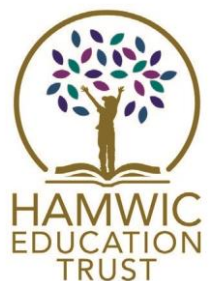
“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. _____, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have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

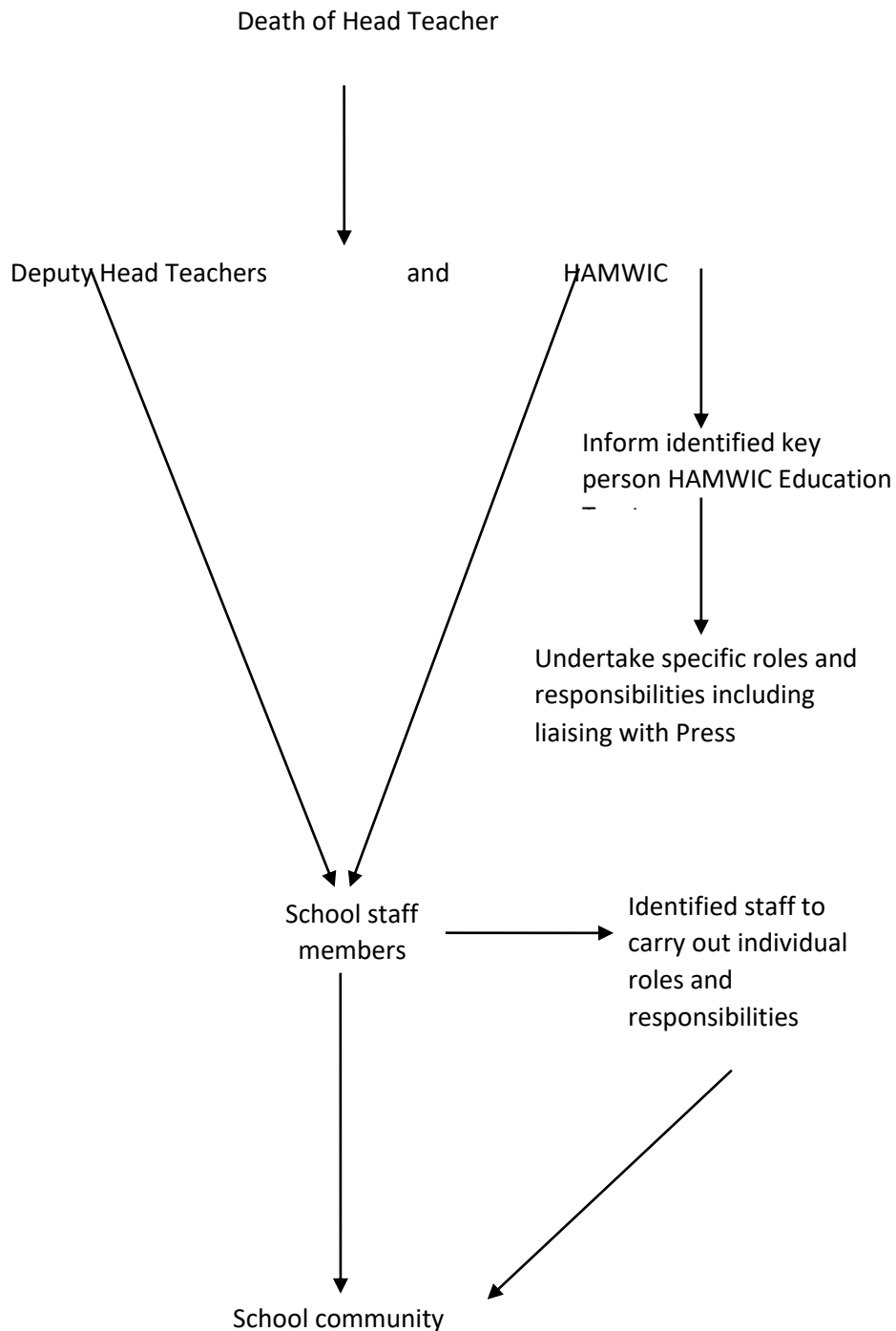
Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.

Date of last review: April 2020

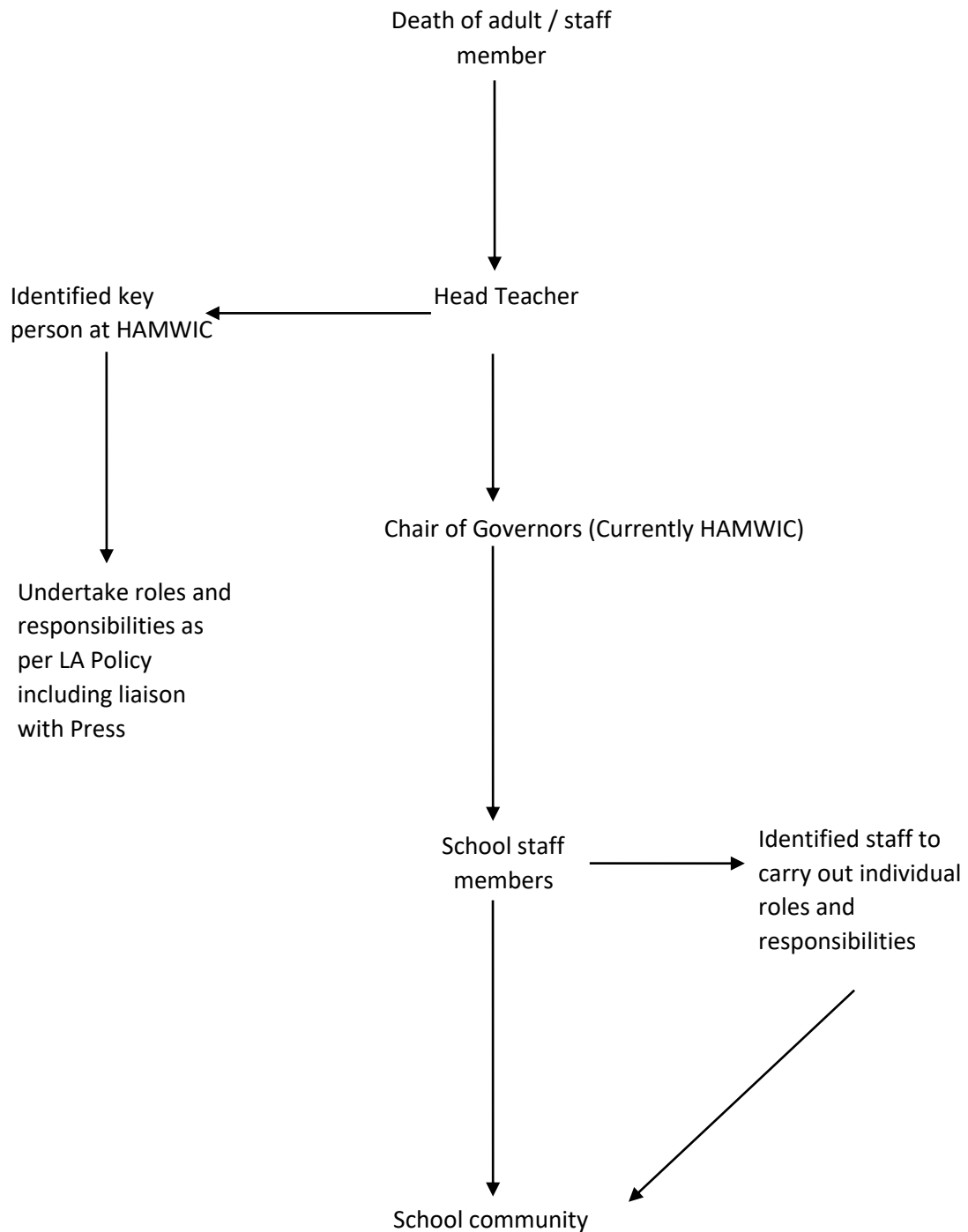
Date of next review: April 2022



INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF HEAD TEACHER



INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER

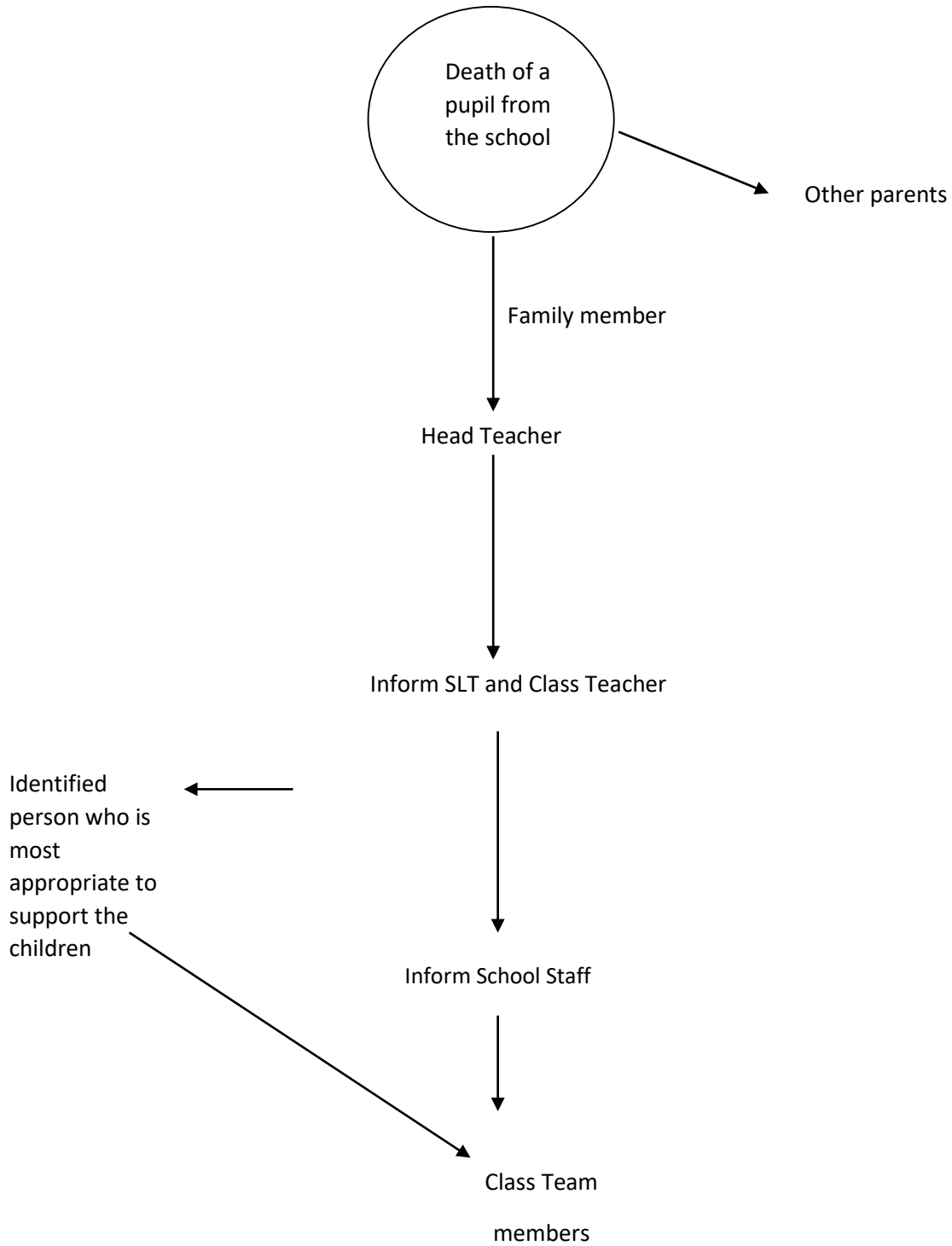


Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



INFORMATION SHARING PATHWAY FOLLOWING DEATH OF PUPIL

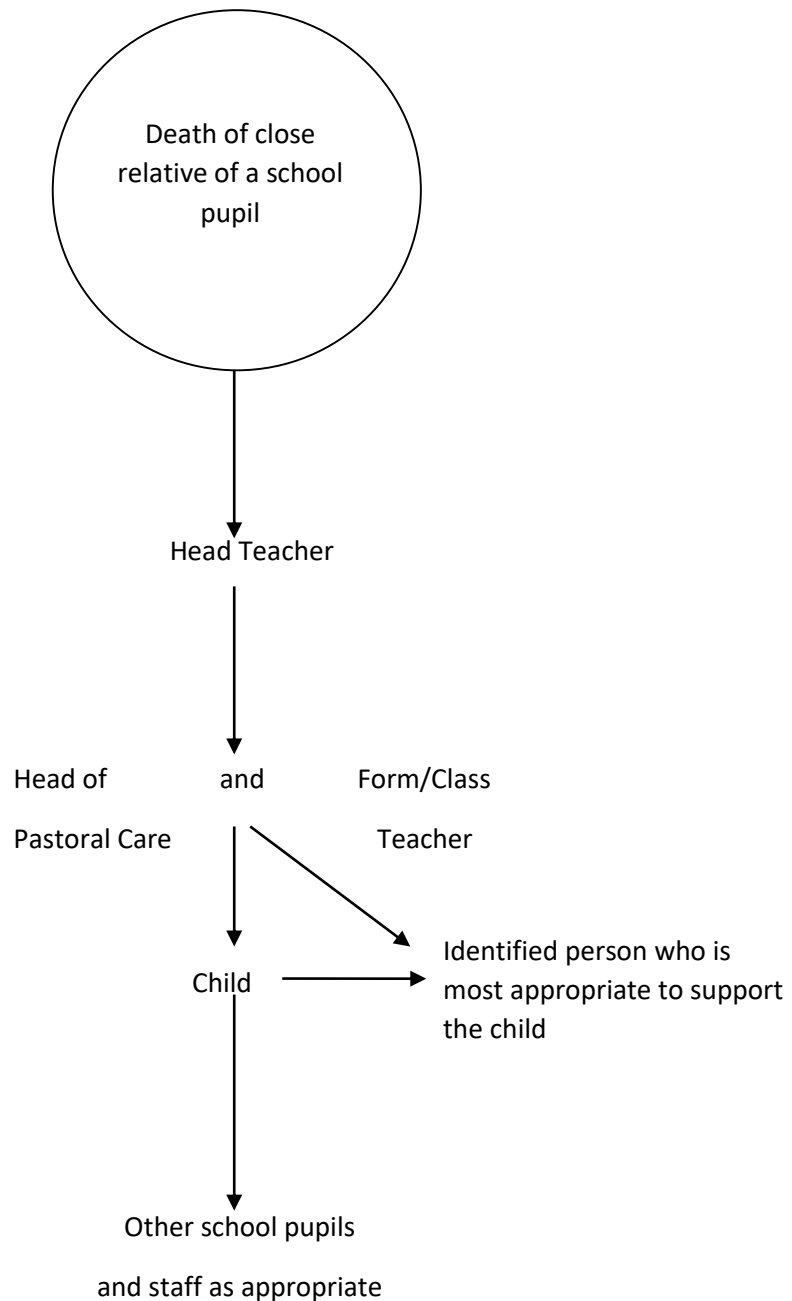


Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022



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



TEMPLATES

These are two examples of a letter to parents. Please feel free to change them according to the needs of the situation.

<Name of School>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task 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.

Yours sincerely

<Name>
Head Teacher

< Name of School >

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's tutor had the sad task 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 if this is the case.

Yours sincerely

<Name>
Head Teacher

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.



Signed Chair of Governing Body:

[date]

Signed Headteacher:

[date]

Date of last review: April 2020

Date of next review: April 2022

