



The British Junior Academy of Brussels

Bereavement Policy

Revised March 2022



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This policy applies to the whole school including Early Years.

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## **Rationale**

Every 22 minutes in the UK a child is bereaved of a parent, making up some 24,000 a year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or pupil.

A policy within school will help us to support pupils and/or staff before, during and after bereavement in an effective way, identifying key staff and a clear pathway. It fits within our ethos of caring for staff and pupils and providing support where necessary to ensure that staff and pupils receive optimum attention to promote their wellbeing.

## **Aims**

All staff and pupils faced with a bereavement will be provided with appropriate support. This will be by:

- offering opportunities to express feelings in a safe and supportive environment
- the development of an action plan to support staff and pupils
- gaining access to specialist help if necessary

## **The Role of the Headteacher**

- to be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned and subsequent communication
- to ensure that the school possesses the salient facts about the death
- to inform staff/pupils/governing body
- to monitor execution of the policy
- to ensure that 'bereavement' is established on the curriculum at relevant points during the pupils' education

## **The Role of Key Staff**

To identify and train bereavement support staff and ensure that their learning is communicated to other staff.

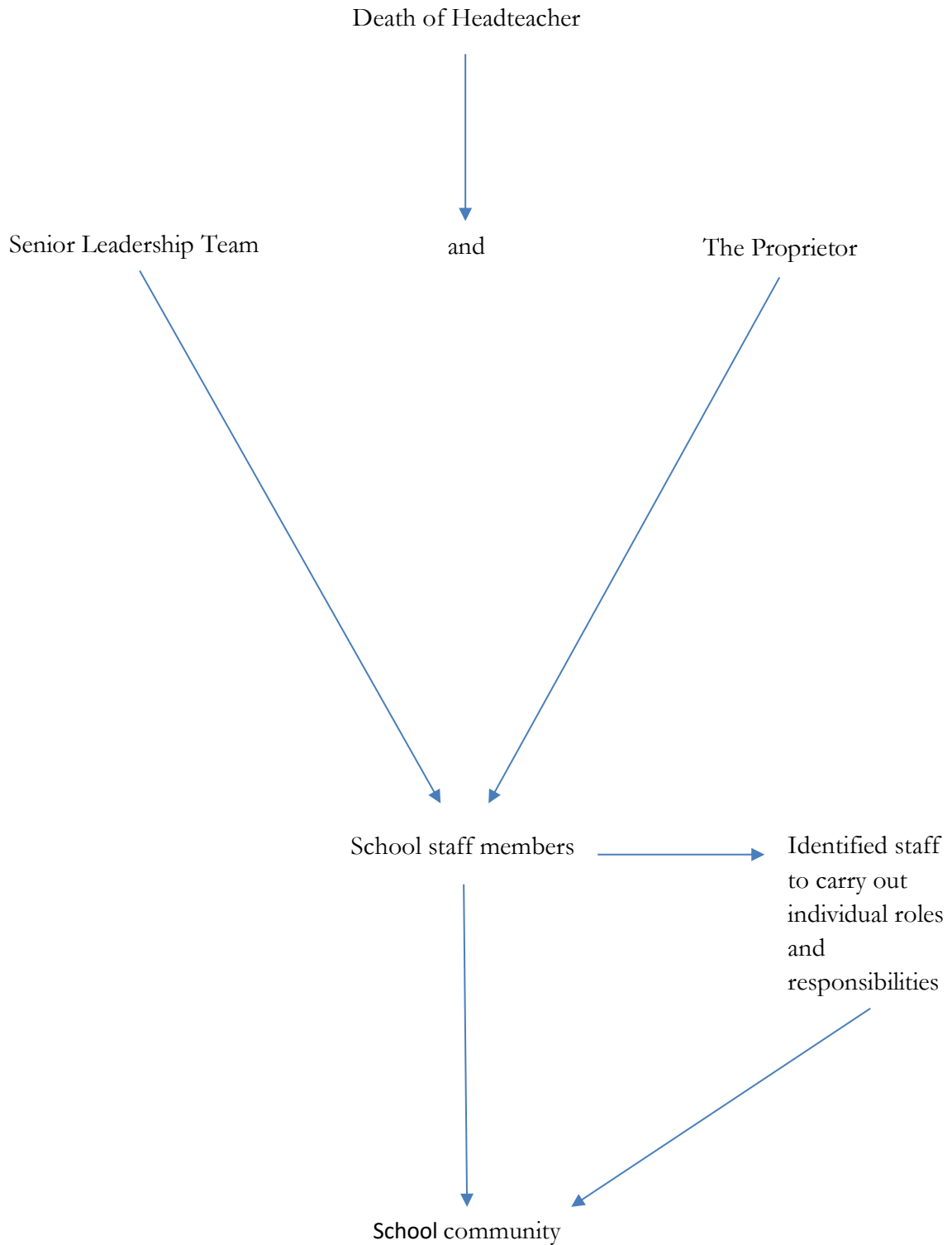
## **Procedure**

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and family members' wishes respected in communicating with others
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed by each individual circumstance
3. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them

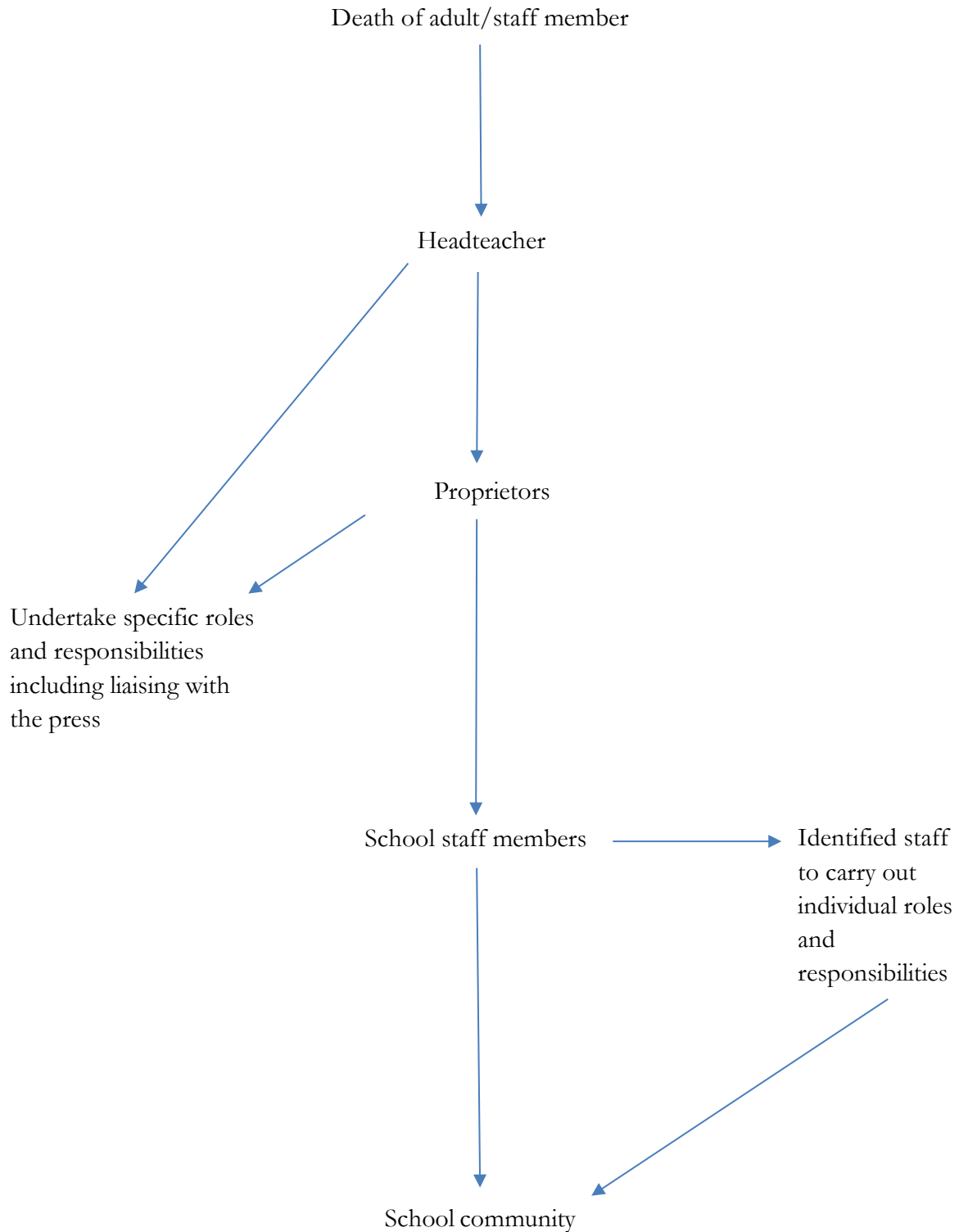
4. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed. A letter proforma is included but this should be modified according to the circumstances
5. The school should be aware that the timetable may need some flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation
6. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate
7. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for staff and pupils to attend the funeral will be decided and communicated
8. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher
9. School is aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life, so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points. (How this is achieved should be the particular consideration of individual schools.)

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more often if needed.

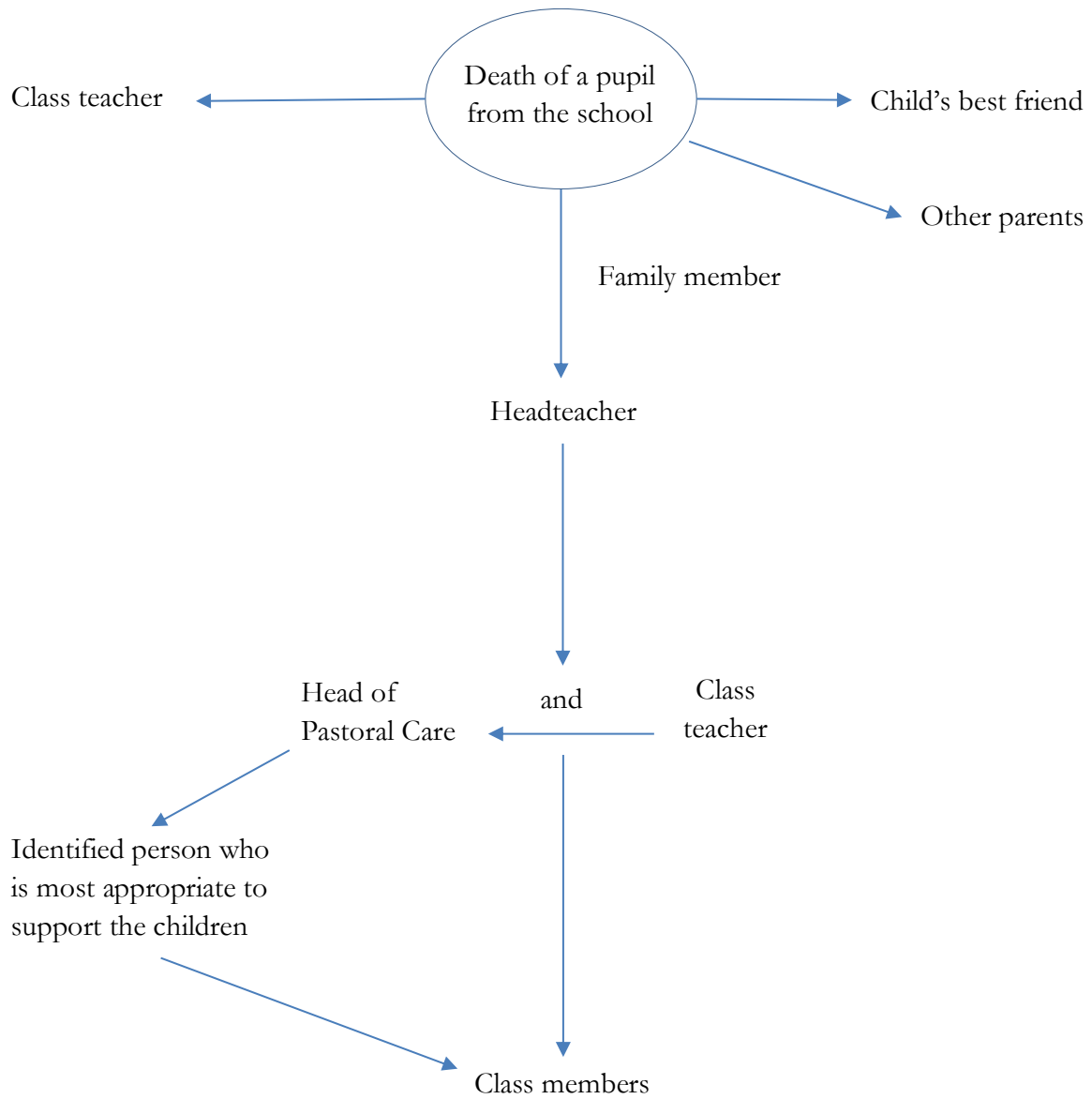
### Information Sharing Pathway following death of Headteacher



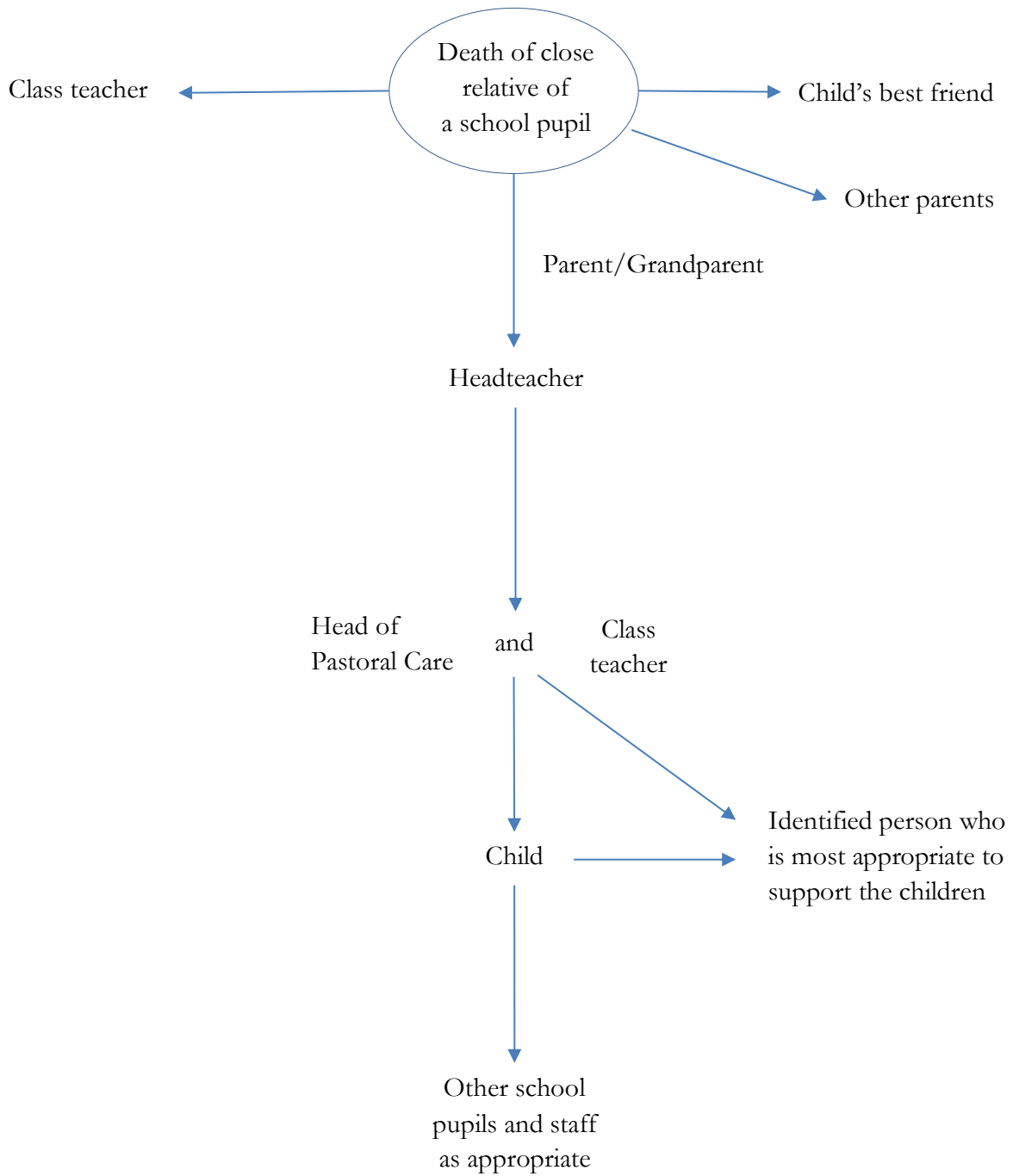
### Information Sharing Pathway following death of a staff member



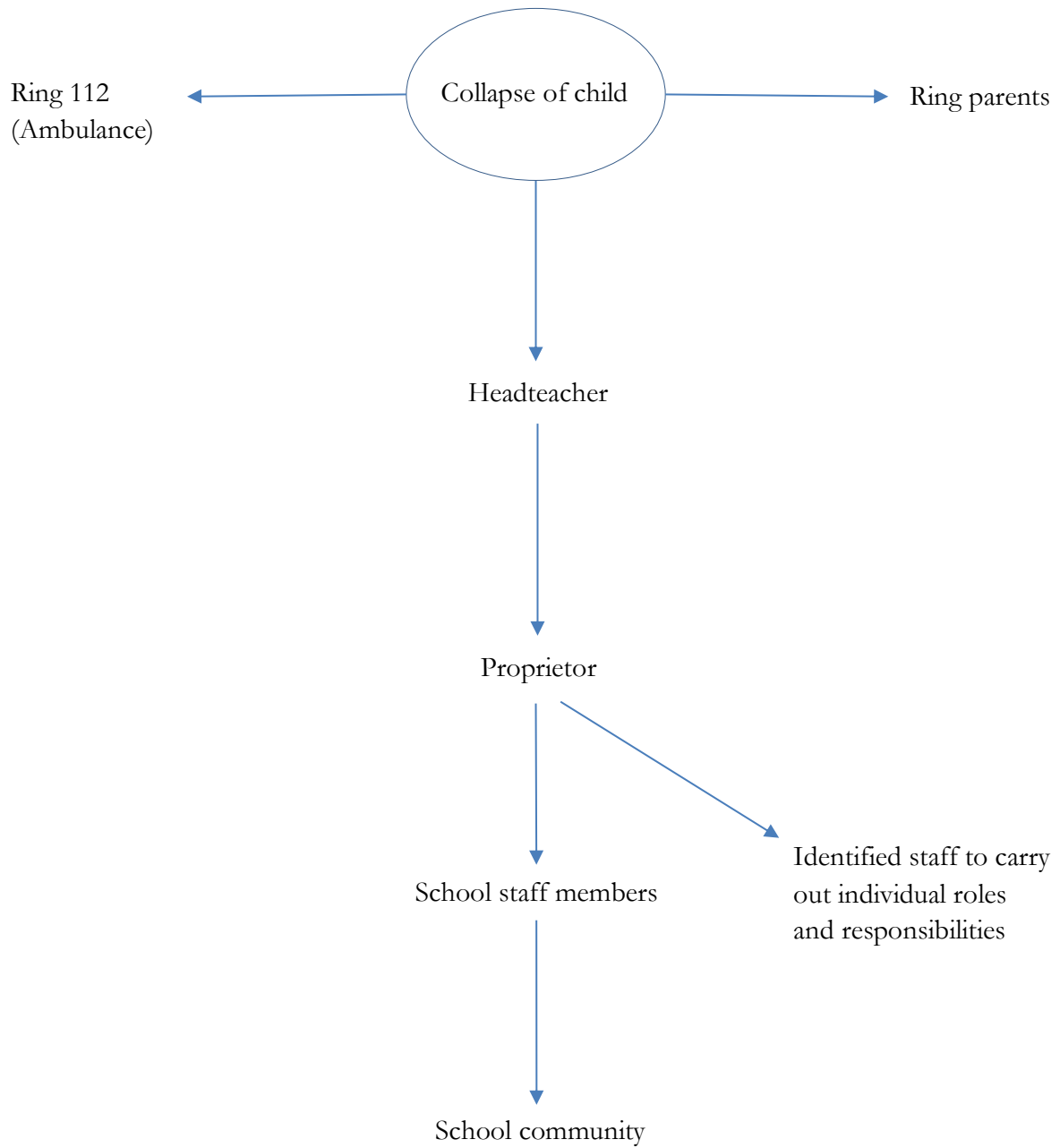
### Information Sharing Pathway following death of pupil



### Information Sharing Pathway following death of close family member of school pupil

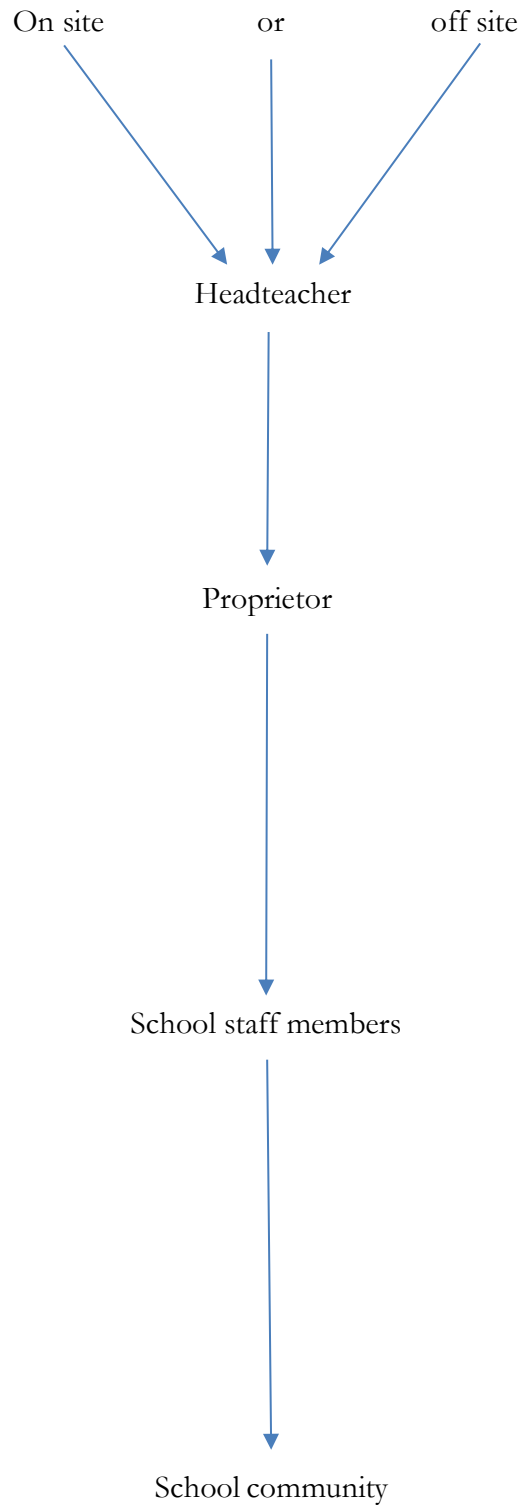


### Information Sharing Pathway following death of child in school





**Information Sharing Pathway following major incidents**



## Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years.

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

When someone dies, it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion, and children are likely to ask questions about the death that need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

## Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

*Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.*

*The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.*

<Address>

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

<Name> died from cancer. As you may be aware <Name> had been ill for a long time and died at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name.....'s> life.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

### **Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff**

- Arrange a staff meeting which should take place as soon as possible
- Impart factual information. Never make assumptions or repeat what has been said by rumour
- Give news sensitively and empathetically, being aware that people may react in different ways
- Be cognisant of the relationships staff may have had with the person who has died
- Ensure that there is someone responsible for telling people who are unable to attend the staff meeting i.e. part time staff, peripatetic staff, lunch time supervisors. Consider the best way of imparting the information to those absent e.g. by doing home visit, by telephone, text or e-mail etc.
- Identify individual members of staff who feel able to:
  - a) support members of staff
  - b) support groups of children

The most appropriate person to support the children should be well known to them and trusted

- Identify a member of staff who will liaise with the individual's family, to deal with staff condolences and any funeral arrangements (if necessary)
- Identify a member of staff who will provide a newsletter for parents (see examples of letter templates) which should be sent the same day
- Arrange a staff meeting at the end of the day to ensure staff are coping with the situation
  - Identify any unresolved problems or ongoing issues
  - Ensure that those staff who live alone have contact numbers of friends in case of need
- Identify sources of advice and support to access for help in coming to terms with the bereavement

### **Guidelines for breaking news of the death to the children/young people**

- Inform the children/young people as soon as possible about the death
- Where possible, the pupils should be informed in small groups i.e. class or tutor groups
  - Identify those children who had a long term and/or close relationship with the person who has died so they can be told separately
  - If appropriate, a special assembly could be held at a later time in the day to remember the person who has died
- 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
- Be honest about your own feelings and talk about your relationship with the person
- Avoid using euphemisms
- Those children/young people who have had more involvement with the person should be given the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences either within the group or on a one-to-one situation
- 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
- 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
- Conclude the discussion with a prayer or special poem to remember the person who has died and their family
- Be available for any child/young person who needs additional help and support

### Things to consider in the days following the news of the death

- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications and seek advice if necessary
- Ensure 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.)
- Identify an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary  
(It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required.)
- 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.
- Through the nominated staff member who has responsibilities for liaising with the individual's family, ascertain their wishes about the school's involvement in the funeral, if any

Consider practical issues like:

- Putting an obituary in the paper, sending flowers to the home or to the funeral, making a collection etc.
- Who will attend the funeral, making a collection etc.
- Cover for any staff who may be going to the funeral
- Transport to and from the funeral
- Informing the parents of those pupils who will be involved
- Possible closure of the school. If this is the case remember to tell lunchtime supervisors, caretaker etc. in advance

This policy is the responsibility of Sarah White, Headteacher, and Madame De Maertelaere, Proprietor	Revised: March 2022
<p><b>Sarah White</b> <b>Headteacher</b> .....</p> <p><b>Madame De Maertelaere</b> <b>School Proprietor</b> .....</p>	
<b>To be reviewed:</b>	March 2024