

Bereavement Policy in Response to Covid-19 Addendum

Introduction

The Trust acknowledges the challenges and difficulties academies will face at this current time. Dealing with bereavement and death is challenging and needs a careful and considered response. This addendum sits within the wider Trust policy for supporting bereavement.

This policy is designed to be a support to our academies as they face the potential consequences of Covid-19 and its impact on the lives of our staff and pupils, and also their families. It is highly likely that by the end of this pandemic, everyone will know of someone who has either been ill or has sadly died.

Support from teachers and school staff is crucial for bereaved pupils, especially at this time. Pupils are isolated from their peers and other support networks. Although we probably will not see our pupils face to face, this policy addresses some of the ways we can continue to support pupils and their families.

How We Can Help When Schools Are Closed?

Keep in touch - Where possible, the provision of some contact and support from teaching staff should happen regularly during the period of COVID-19 measures. Academies may choose to make telephone calls or leave messages on learning platforms, for example. This will be helpful for pupils who may be feeling anxious and uncertain, or who may be experiencing the illness or death of a loved one. The academy should keep in contact through a variety of methods during the week. For pupils who are known to be vulnerable, we will offer additional opportunities to check in with a key member of staff and keep in touch with parents and carers especially if they are concerned about the pupil.

Keep a routine - Where possible, encourage parents and carers to try and bring an element of 'normality' to their days by supporting them to continue the school daily routine from home in order to create some structure, including during school holidays. The academy may choose to offer bereaved pupil/s a place in the current childcare arrangements in order to provide face to face support. This may also provide the family with some space to make arrangements for funerals and other death related responsibilities.

Listen and reassure - When in contact with parents/carers and pupils, the academy will acknowledge how strange and difficult this situation is, rather than trying to make it better. Listen to their worries and fears: these are real, and we can't take them away, but it will help children if someone they know, and trust hears them.

Be clear - Be as clear as possible about what help is available, both from academy staff and externally via the wider community.

Be guided by the family – If there is a death, ensure you take into account what the family need and how they would like information to be shared with the academy community. Appoint one member of staff to be the point of contact for the family and follow their lead. Appoint one member of staff to be in contact with the pupil/s to offer support as well.

Supporting Bereaved Pupils and Those Facing Bereavement

All the principles above are especially important when a child in our care is facing or has experienced the death of someone close. Usual school bereavement strategies cannot be put into place. There are, however, some things that we can do to show pupils that they are remembered and supported at a distance. Many of these are simply what you would normally do, taken into a virtual context.

Academy Response

This will be in line with the bereavement policy, but all actions will be taken at a distance, with the following additional actions where appropriate, dependant on how much communication with the family is possible.

1. Head teacher (or member of staff with the best relationship with the pupil or family) makes contact with the family to:
 - acknowledge what has happened;
 - expresses support;
 - discuss how to share the news with the rest of the school community as appropriate;
 - check if the family want their contact information shared.
2. Headteacher shares the information with rest of the staff and, where possible, follows the family's choice on how this news is to be shared more widely with the child's peers and the rest of the academy. (There are a few exceptions, for example, when the death is known about and already widely discussed within the school community).
3. The headteacher shares information with the governors.
4. The headteacher (or pastoral leader) contacts the pupil through a written card or letter to the pupil to acknowledge what has happened and expresses support.
5. One (or two) contacts are agreed with the family in order to liaise with them and the pupil. This may be the headteacher and/or pastoral leader, or a less obvious supporter requested by the child.
6. The information is shared with the school community as agreed with the family. A simple form of words that parents can share with their children is appreciated. For example:

"We have some sad news to share. We heard today that the [relationship e.g. father] of [name] in Year [X] has died. S/he died suddenly/had been ill for a long time. We are in touch with the family and have expressed our sadness and our support. The family would appreciate any condolences which can be sent to [contact details]/At the moment, the family would prefer some time to absorb what has happened but will appreciate your condolences in a while. If you have concerns about your child, contact their class teacher/tutor. "
7. The impact of this news on any other children in the school who have been bereaved or whose relative is seriously ill should be considered, and direct contact made by their tutor/pastoral leader.
8. Check in on staff response. Any death affecting a pupil can trigger other remembered griefs and, at this time of crisis, a sense of helplessness in not being able to respond as wished.

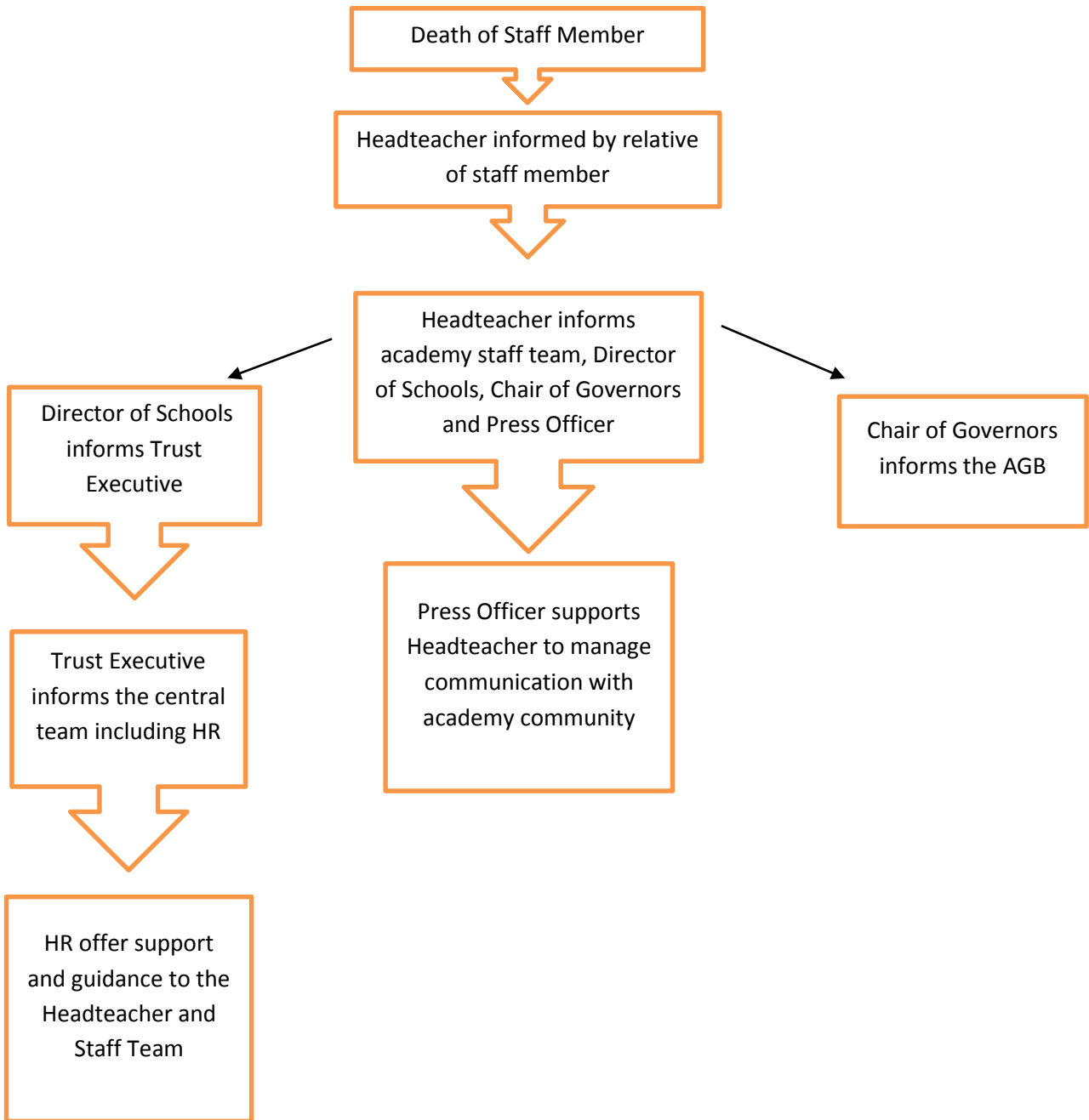
Further Support

1. Keep the 'at-a-distance' support coming through the chosen contact/s.
2. Consider compiling condolences for the pupil from their peers where appropriate. This could include collected messages or compiling an electronic book of condolence to email to the family. Other people might choose to send photos or drawings to show support. Once schools are open again, you could offer a memorial of these drawings to display in school and then give to the family afterwards (this will be very dependent on the nature and / or scale of bereavement(s)).

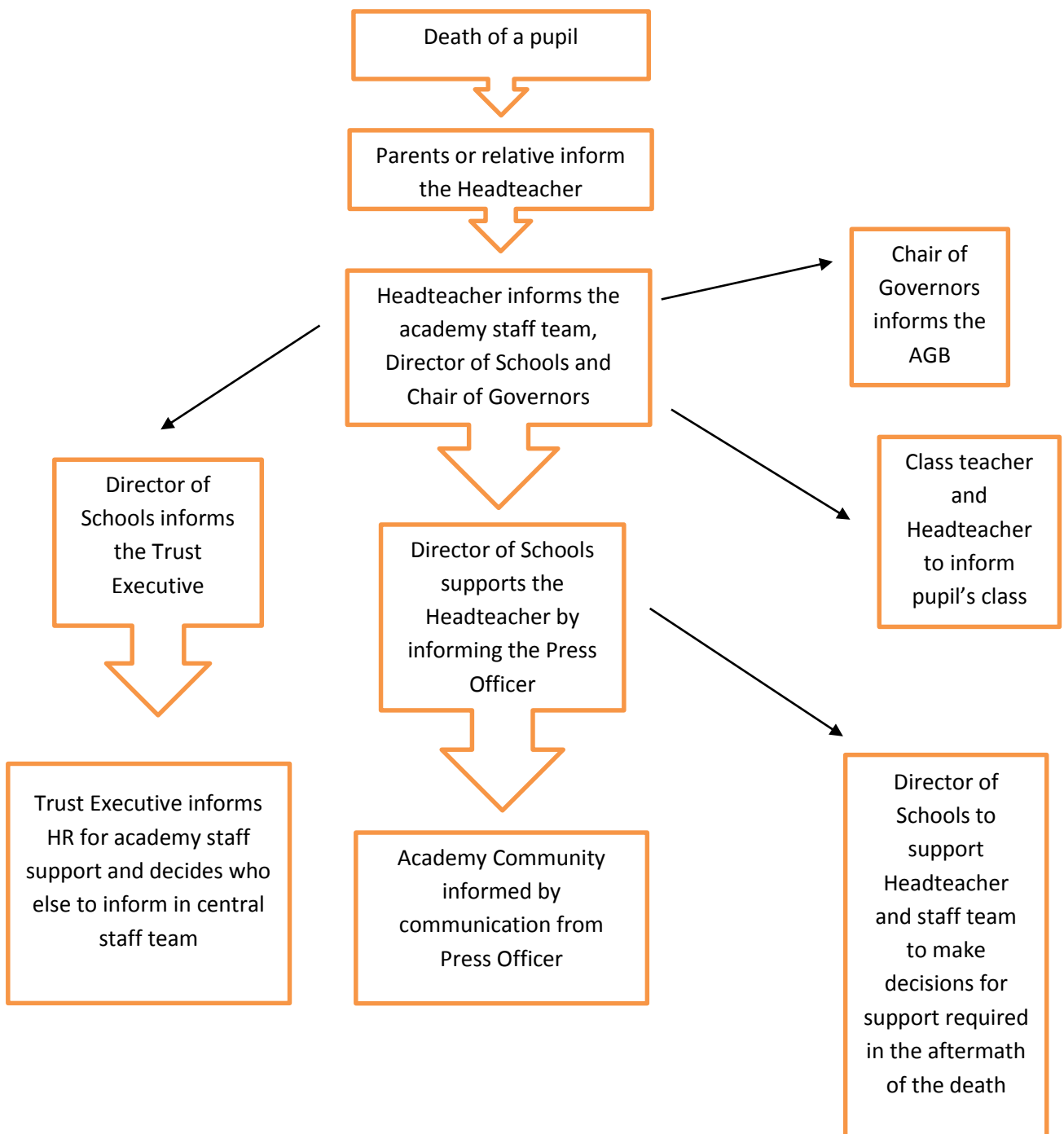
3. If possible, obtain resources for the family, for example, the free helpline number for Winston's Wish (08088 020 021). This organisation will provide information about grief and how it affects children. They may also suggest books and resources. If the pupils are teenagers, signpost them towards other helpful websites, eg: <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>, <https://www.themix.org.uk/> and the option to email Winston's Wish through ask@winstonswish.org or through online chat.
4. When schools re-open, remember the support needs of bereaved children when planning their return to the classroom.
5. Should any staff member be impacted by death in any way require further support, the Trust Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available through Health Assured. This can be accessed online (<https://healthassuredeap.co.uk>) using the username LeadAcademy and the password 'Trust' or via telephone on 0800 030 5182. This service is completely confidential and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
6. The following appendices provide additional support materials:
 - Appendix 1: Communication Flowcharts in the Event of a Death (pgs 4 - 7)
 - Appendix 2: Sample Letters to Parents (pgs 8 & 9)
 - Appendix 3: Additional Support Sources (pg 10)

Appendix 1: Communication Flowcharts in the Event of a Death

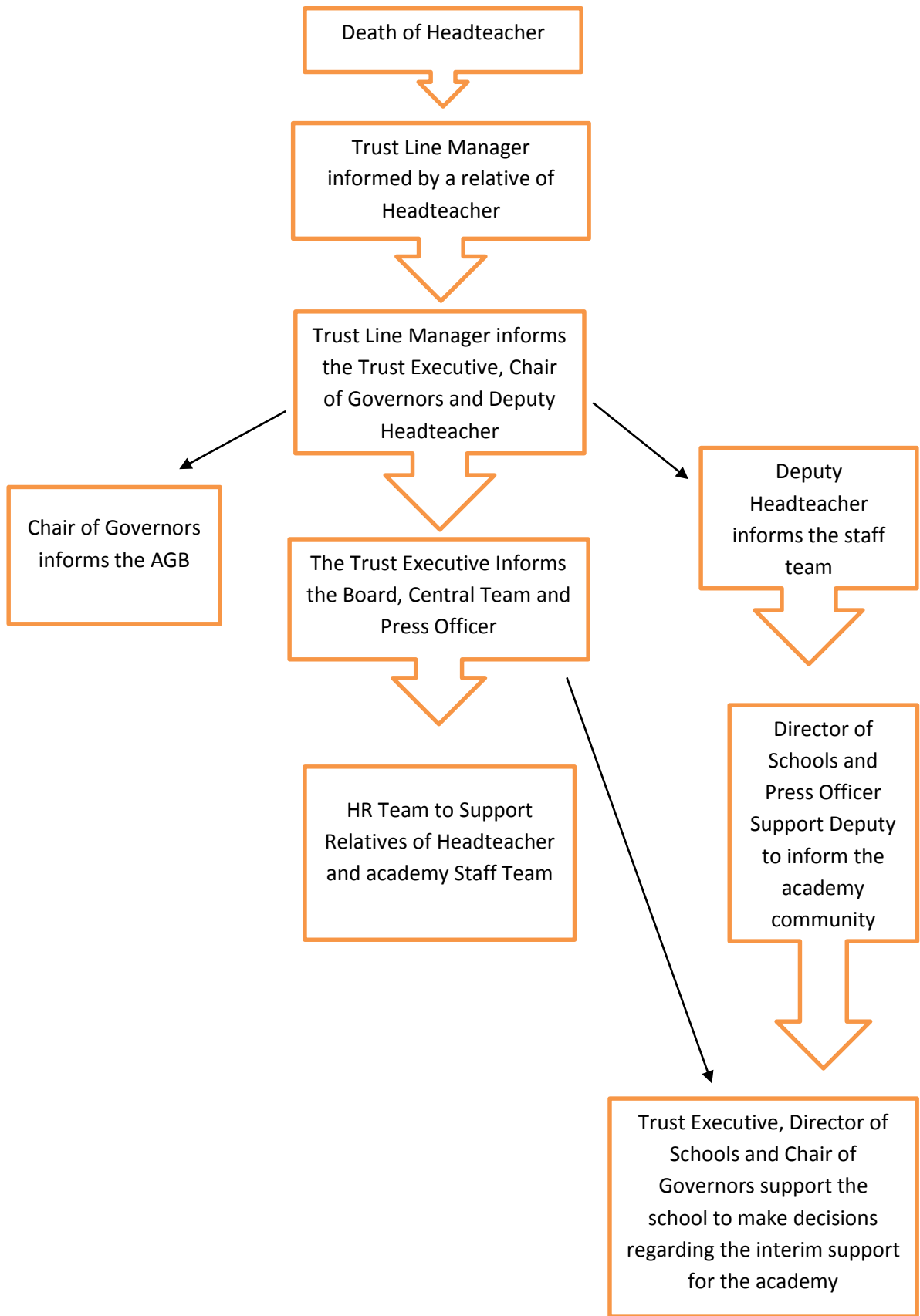
Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Member of Staff



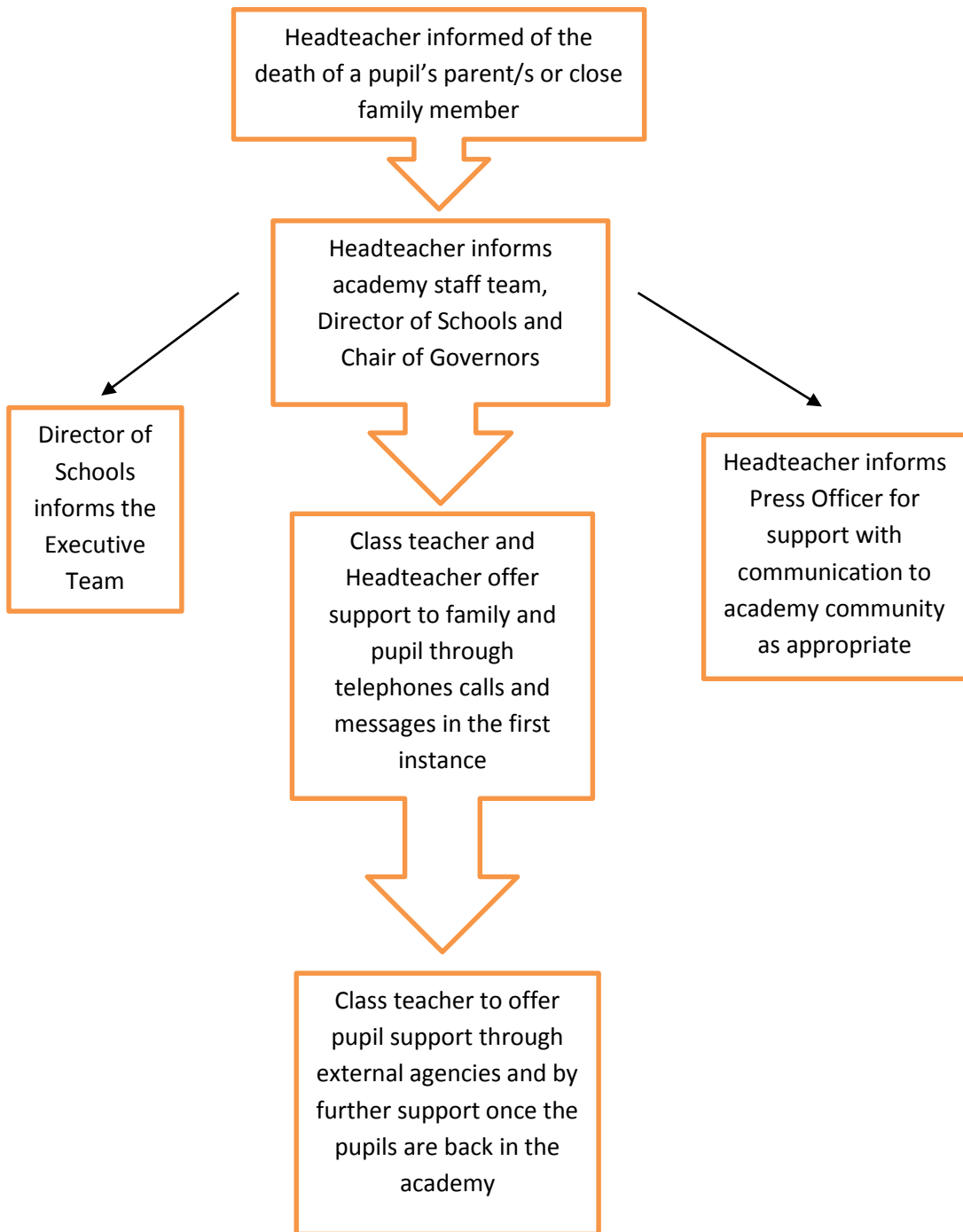
Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Pupil



Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Member the Headteacher



Information Sharing Pathway Following the Death of a Pupil's Family Member



Appendix 2: Sample Letters to Parents

Please feel free to change the following letters according to the needs of the situation.

Letter 1: Death of a staff member.

<Name of Academy>

<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 academy for <number> years. <Name> dies on <date> after contracting coronavirus.

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

When someone dies, their family and friends have lots of feelings - sadness, anger, confusion - which are all normal. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions via <insert communication method>, but I have made available some information which may help you to answer your child's questions as they arise. You can obtain this on the academy website.

Thank you for your support at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely

<Name>
Head Teacher

Letter 2: Death of a pupil.

< Name of Academy >

<Date>

Dear Parents

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

They were told that <name> died from coronavirus. Sometimes people who contract coronavirus can get better, but other times people die from it. <Name> had been ill over recent weeks and died at home yesterday. Our thoughts are with <Name's> family at this very sad time.

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 the academy, 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 the academy's website.

The funeral will take place at <Named Church or Crematorium> on <Day and Date> at <Time>. Your child may wish to attend the funeral (having checked with the family that this is what they want). Due to the restrictions on social gatherings at this point in time, the family have asked that anyone wishing to pay their respects do so in the following way: <insert here>.

Once schools reopen, we will be remembering <pupil> through <insert academy memorial information here>.

Yours sincerely

<Name>
Head Teacher

Appendix 3: Additional Support Sources

<https://www.simonsays.org.uk/>

Child/Adolescent Bereavement Support.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/bereavement.aspx>

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://www.childline.org.uk/>

Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

<https://www.griefcounter.org.uk/>

Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

Specifically for young people aged 12-18. supportline.org.uk - Confidential emotional support for children, young people & adults.

<https://papyrus-uk.org/>

Provides resources & support for those dealing with suicide, depression or distress – particularly teenagers & young adults.

<https://seesaw.org.uk/>

Grief support service for children and young people.

<http://www.teenissues.co.uk/>

Discussing the issues teenagers face.

<https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/>

peer-peer network for those widowed before their 51st birthday

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Help for grieving children and their families.