

Pencalenick School's Bereavement Policy



This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the managing medical conditions policy, leave of absence policy and critical incident protocol

Introduction

Why we need this policy:

Sadly, all schools at some point will be affected by a death: the death of a pupil, a member of staff, someone close to the school community or a pupil's family member.

Most adults struggle to know what to say to another adult who is mourning, but when it is a child who is bereaved, they often ignore or try to avoid the issue of the death. This can be a result of fear that they will do or say the wrong thing – or because they think avoiding the subject protects the child from any extra sadness and distress.

It is our natural instinct to protect children, but trying to protect them from death and the emotion of grief is unwise and unhelpful.

Children who have SEND may communicate their grief differently, but grief is grief, and their grief is just as valid and powerful as anyone else's and must not be overlooked, ignored or forgotten. Doing so will only leave them in a greater state of confusion and, just like anyone whose grief is neglected, this could impact on their emotional and psychological health.

This policy has been constructed to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately, with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances relating to bereavement/critical incident. It seeks to reflect the values and philosophy of Doubletrees School.

Aims:

This policy aims to:

- Provide information and guidance to staff so that any pupils, staff or members of the school community faced with a bereavement or loss are given the support they need and in a manner that is appropriate to them
- Outline the range of support mechanisms available to pupils, staff and members of the school community (including parents, carers and the wider family)

- Give an overview of the procedures to be deployed by staff following a bereavement

Key People in supporting this policy:

- Key coordinator: Deputy Head Teacher (SMHL for School)
- Bereavement Coordinators*
- Crisis Team (Head teacher, Bereavement Coordinators, Wellbeing Team Coordinator & Champions, Senior Leadership Team)

Roles and responsibilities:

Key coordinators:

- Has overall responsibility for support and liaison in the event of a death or traumatic loss. If the Head Teacher is absent, then the Head Teacher will assume responsibility
- The safeguarding team will also have a key role to support staff.

Bereavement Coordinators (Angela Whitfield, Rosalind Blight):

- Monitor and review the policy and information sharing pathways
- Provide emotional support to staff in times of loss and liaise with staff wellbeing champions regarding on-going support
- Ensure all actions identified by the information sharing pathways are adhered to
- Attend up to date bereavement training and disseminate accordingly
- Ensure the bereavement toolkit is up to date and resources are organised accordingly to uphold the aims of our policy.
- Coordinate with any outside agency support (e.g. counsellors) deemed necessary
- Offer advice and guidance in regard to memory/celebration events to be held in school (with consideration to family views)

Crisis Team (Angela Whitfield, Rosalind Blight, Anne-Marie Moore, Shyama Whittle):

- Role of communication: with staff, pupils, families, governors, the wider school community, emergency services, press/media (as appropriate), medical teams and authorities (Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England regarding any infectious diseases).
- Role of liaison: with the affected family/families,
- Role of trouble shooting: resolving any issues related to the school site following the death, especially if the death occurred at school; repairs, maintenance, informing outside agencies and so on
- Monitor how staff and pupils are coping with the bereavement
- Have a regular presence around the school to see how people are doing (pupils, staff, parents) and be available to provide support to these people as required
- Have information available to signpost pupils, parents/careers/families and staff to extra support as required

Guidelines and key responsibilities:

It will be part of the Bereavement Coordinators role to identify the key responsibilities for all staff members to guide us on how to deal professionally, sensitively and compassionately, with difficult matters in upsetting circumstances relating to bereavement.

The development of our bereavement support kit will aim to provide resources, signpost support, suggested lesson/assembly outlines, key vocabulary, and information in relation to pupil's cognitive understanding of death and associated grief.

Responsibility of Governors:

- Identified Governor to monitor the policy and any subsequent updates of this
- The identified Governor to attend any whole school training regarding bereavement
- To attend the funeral of pupil/staff member, representing the Governing body of the school (considering the wishes of the family)

Resources:

Bereavement toolkit to include:

- List of agencies/support groups, websites, specialist support
- Lesson and assembly ideas
- Bereavement support information (including child development – levels, cognitive understanding etc)
- Information sharing pathways
- Books/flyers
- Social story examples
- Bereavement Makaton signs and symbols

The Toolkit to be kept in Pastoral.

Equal Opportunities:

We will be receptive to personal needs and wishes and always consider cultural and religious differences. Through consultation with the family/staff member we will identify their particular needs and acknowledge their wishes when relaying information back to the members of the school community.

The school will adhere to all information relating to 'end of life' plans ('Wishes' document) which outline ways the school community will receive/share information relating to any pupil who are in receipt of such plans.

The school will continue to gather any information and cascade this to the appropriate people in relation to any pupil from appropriate agencies while they are not in school – e.g. – school nurse (in accordance to parental permission received), we acknowledge it is important not to make assumptions based upon a religious or cultural background;

however, knowledge of other backgrounds may make communication and understanding easier. At all times the family/staff should be treated sensitively and with respect.

School representation at funerals:

The school acknowledges the close relationships staff form with pupils via their everyday working practice with them. It is acknowledged that several staff members may wish to attend the funeral of a pupil; in such instances the bereavement coordinators will meet with the class team to determine the funeral arrangements and who will attend to represent the school/class team at a funeral. This measure aims to enable the school to carry on its everyday working practice and minimise any impact to the safety, teaching and learning of the class group.

The school recognises that the grieving process during the current coronavirus pandemic is severely disrupted. Communities across the world mark deaths by coming together to observe funeral rites; the fact that our usual mourning rituals are not happening, can lead to a sense of disbelief or a delay in the grieving process. In order to support during these difficult times, the school, will check in with any bereaved member of the community regularly, and signpost to any support that can be offered by the school's bereavement team and the wider community. Where appropriate, the school will find new ways to come together to mourn.

Supporting bereaved staff:

The procedures in this policy also apply to bereaved members of staff. Staff should also be guided to and offered support from outside agencies including the Educational Psychology Service.

Support for Bereavements during coronavirus pandemic:

Bereavement during coronavirus presents a special set of challenges as the usual school bereavement strategies may not be able to be put in place. The school will however, continue to let anyone in the school community that is bereaved, know that they are remembered and supported. We will offer many of the things that we usually would, but in a virtual context.

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Further Information Contacts
- Appendix B: Information Sharing Pathways
- Appendix C: Death of a pupil Guidelines
- Appendix D: Letter Templates

Policy last reviewed	01/11/2024
Policy to be reviewed	Every 2 years
Responsibility	Head Teacher

Further Information: Appendix A

Child Bereavement Network:

www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Child Bereavement Network supports professionals working with bereaved children and young people.

Child Bereavement UK:

www.childbereavementuk.org

Child Bereavement UK provides:

- A confidential information and support line for families and professionals when a child has died and when a child is bereaved
- Direct support for children and families
- A nationwide database of other local support services
- A web discussion forum for families
- Resources for bereaved children and young people, families and all professionals
- Training courses on bereavement for health care and other professionals

Cruse Bereavement Care

www.cruse.org.uk

Cruse provides support after the death of someone close. Many local branches of Cruse offer individual or group support for bereaved children. Cruse also has a special website for young people: www.hopeagain.org.uk

Grief Encounter www.griefencounter.org.uk

Grief encounter helps bereaved children get help, recognition and understanding following their loss.

Penhaligon's Friends

www.penhaligonsfriends.org.uk

Penhaligon's Friends are a Cornish Charity supporting bereaved children, young people, parents and carers throughout the county. They offer children and young people the chance to meet others and share their experiences, as well as practical resources for children and parents.

They also deliver an extensive programme of training and advice for other childcare professionals.

Pets as Therapy www.petsastherapy.org

Pets as Therapy seeks to enhance health and wellbeing in the community through visits of trusted volunteers with their behaviourally assessed animals. It provides a visiting service in hospitals, hospices, nursing and care homes, special needs schools and a variety of other venues all across the UK.

Rainbows

www.rainbowsgb.org

Rainbows helps children and young people grieve and grow after a loss.

Sudden

www.suddendeath.org

Sudden supports people after they have experienced a sudden death.

Support after Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM)

www.samm.org.uk

SAMM supports families bereaved by murder and manslaughter

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide is an organisation offering emotional and practical support for people bereaved through suicide.

Victim Support

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Victim Support helps people affected by crime and traumatic events.

Winston's Wish

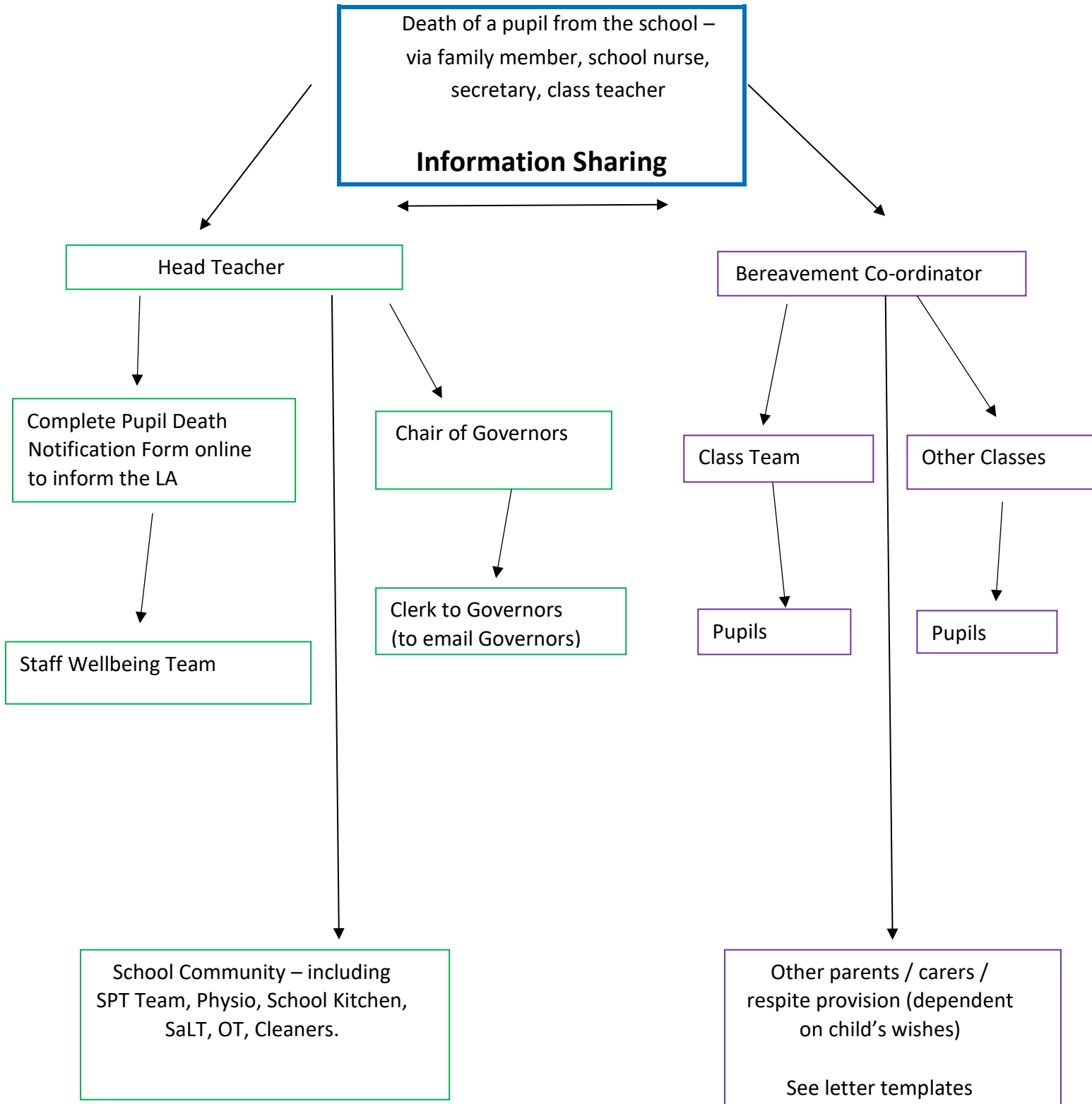
www.winstonswish.org.uk

Winston's Wish provides:

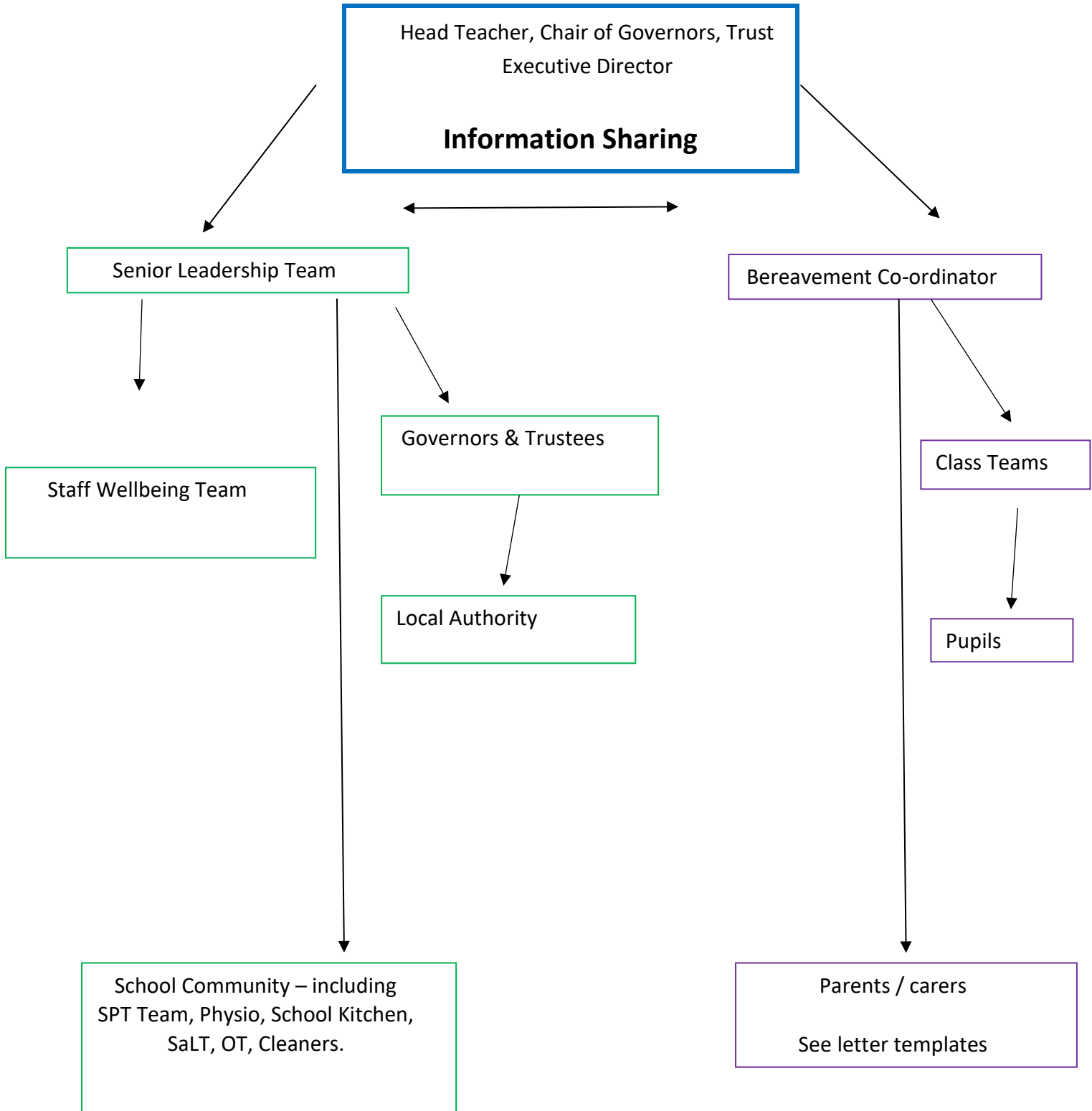
- A National helpline for all those caring for a child or young person who has been bereaved
- A website with activities for children and young people (plus the facility to ask questions of a trained clinician)
- A programme of direct support for families bereaved through suicide, murder or manslaughter
- Resources including books and memory boxes
- Training courses and bespoke training
- Provides a clear break down of how to support bereaved children and young people during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Appendix B

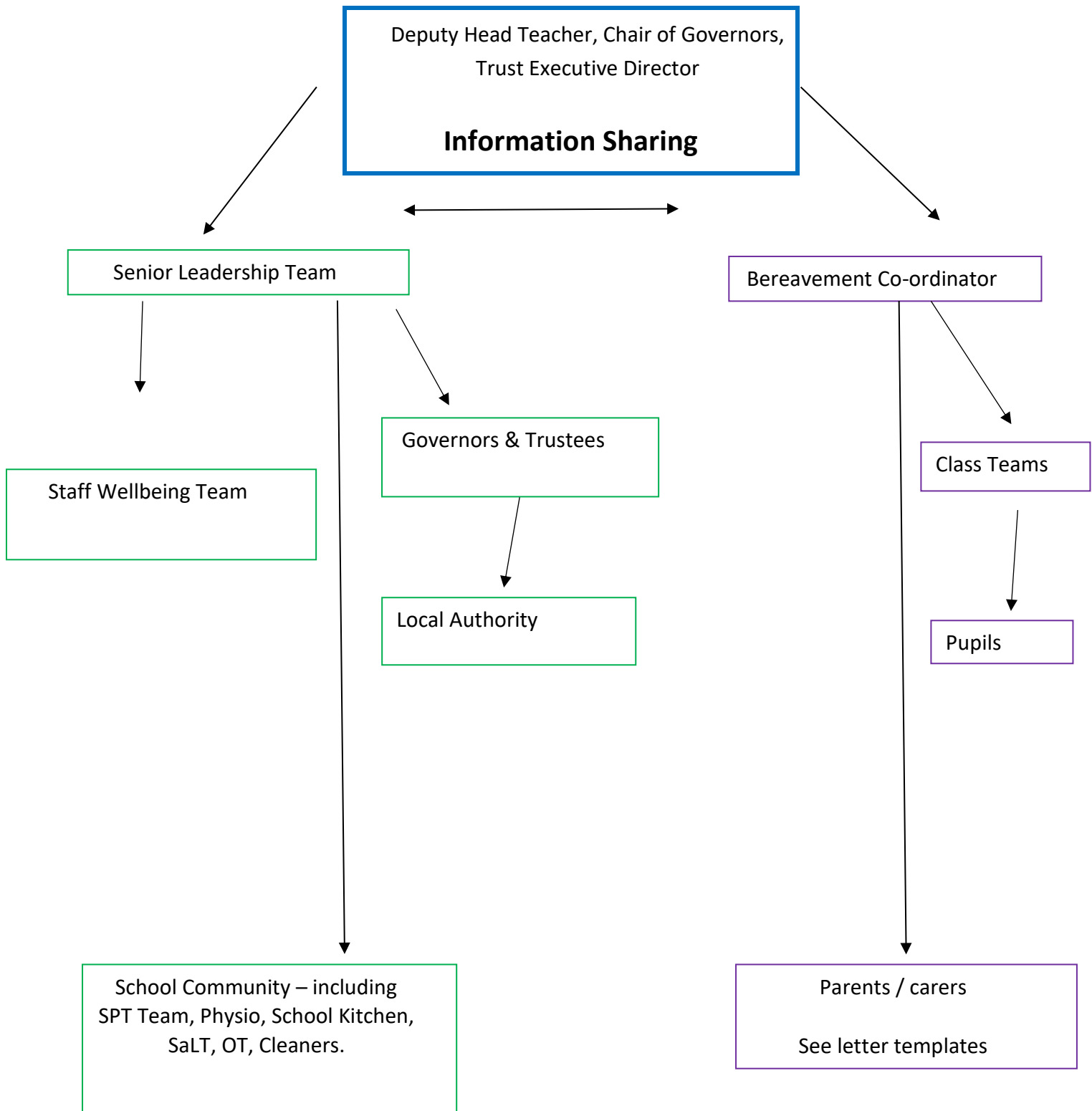
Information Sharing Pathway: Death of a pupil



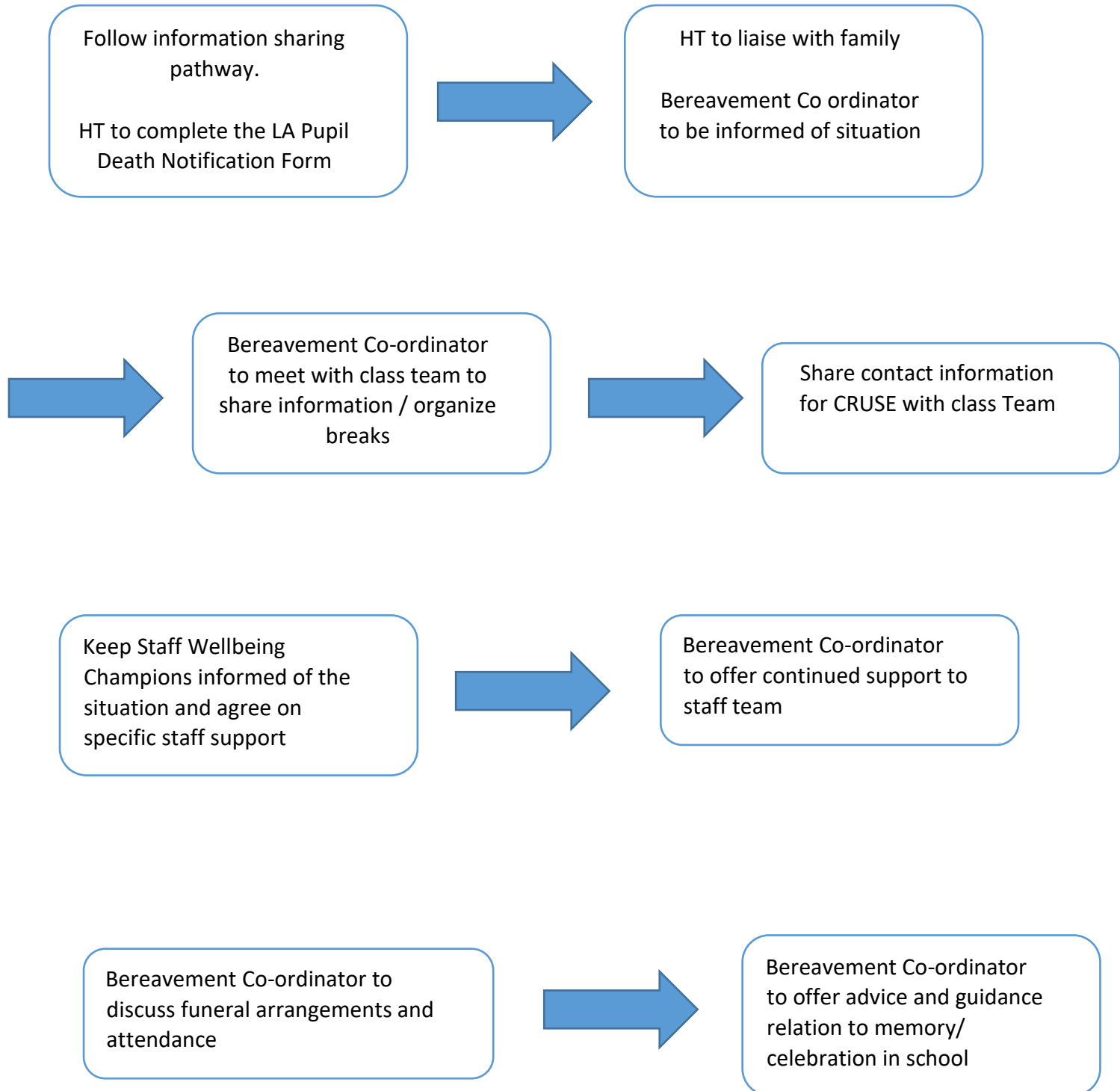
Information Sharing Pathway: Death of a member of staff



Information Sharing Pathway: Death of a Head Teacher



'Death of a Pupil' Guidelines: Appendix C



Template Letters: Appendix D



Death of a pupil

PENCALENICK SCHOOL -

A member of The Special Partnership Trust

Dear Parents/Carers

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you of the death of [pupils name], a pupil in [class name] died [insert appropriate details about the death that have been approved by the family for release to the school community].

For those of you who knew [pupils name], we ask that you remember and celebrate her/his [insert some of the pupil's character traits]. For those who did not know [pupils name] we ask that you respect our sadness and support the school community at this difficult time.

Today, your child's teacher told the class of [pupils name]'s death and they will support the children in the coming days, weeks and months.

All of our teaching staff have been trained in how to support children with bereavements, and they are answering the children's questions and helping them to come to terms with the sad news.

It is very difficult for all of us to face the death of a young person and however much we wish to protect our children from sad news, we should not hide news of a death from them – it is best to explain the facts to them (to the level of their understanding) and answer any questions that they have. Children seek reassurance at a time like this and we can do this best with honesty, love and care.

I know you will join me in extending our heartfelt sympathy to [pupil name]'s family. When we receive information regarding funeral arrangements, I will share this information with you (if in line with the family's wishes).

Please do not hesitate to contact the school on 01872 520385 if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,

Template Letters: Appendix D



Death of a member of staff

PENCALENICK SCHOOL -

A member of The Special Partnership Trust

Dear Parents/Carers

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you of the death of [member of staff's name]. [Member of staff's name] worked in [class or position/office in school]. [Member of staff's name] died [insert appropriate details about the death that have been approved by the family for release to the school community].

For those of you who knew [member of staff's name], we ask that you remember and celebrate her/his [insert some of the member of staff's character traits]. For those who did not know [member of staff's name] we ask that you respect our sadness and support the school community at this difficult time.

Today, your child's teacher told the class of [member of staff's name]'s death and they will support the children in the coming days, weeks and months.

All of our teaching staff have been trained in how to support children with bereavements, and they are answering the children's questions and helping them to come to terms with the sad news.

It is very difficult for all of us to face a death and however much we wish to protect our children from sad news, we should not hide news of a death from them – it is best to explain the facts to them (to the level of their understanding) and answer any questions that they have. Children seek reassurance at a time like this and we can do this best with honesty, love and care.

I know you will join me in extending our heartfelt sympathy to [member of staff's name]'s family. When we receive information regarding funeral arrangements, I will share this information with you (if in line with the family's wishes).

Please do not hesitate to contact the school on 01872 520385 if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,