

# BOURNE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



*Aspiration, Innovation, Motivation*

## BEREAVEMENT POLICY

**September 2020**

Next review July 2021



***Our Mission:***

*To ensure every student achieves great outcomes to flourish and be successful*

*To have high expectations of all staff and students*

*To respect those in our community locally, nationally and internationally*

***Our Vision:***

*To be the school of choice and the Learning Hub for the locality*

***Our Values:***

*Our values respect the charter of the UNICEF rights of the Child and our Bourne ID mirrors this.*

*We gained GOLD status as a Rights Respecting School and are building on this great achievement.*

***Our strap line:***

*Aspiration, Innovation, Motivation*

# Bourne Community College

*"The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning students"*

Article 3 - UNCRC

## 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 students die in the UK each year.

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

This Policy helps us to support students 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 students and providing support where necessary to ensure that staff and students receive optimum attention to promote their wellbeing.

## Aims:

All staff and students 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 students.
- 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/students/governing body.
- To monitor execution of the policy.
- To ensure that 'bereavement' is established on the curriculum at relevant points during the students' education.

## Procedure

- Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Headteacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others.
- Staff should be informed before students and be prepared to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed by each individual circumstance.
- Students who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
- 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.
- The school should be aware that the timetable may need some flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of students affected by the situation.
- Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
- In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for staff and students to attend the funeral will be decided and communicated.
- Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Headteacher.
- School should be 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.

### *Sample letter on death of a staff member*

Dear Parents

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved and respected member of our staff (Name) has died. The students were told today and many may have been distressed by the news. Students respond in different ways and may raise issues around 'death'. If you feel you need any advice/support please ring the school office and we will return your call. You will find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk). The students will have the opportunity at school to discuss the death. The school website will give details of the funeral and arrangements re staff/student attendance. I regret being the bearer of sad news. Our priority is to respond sensitively and thoughtfully to any issues that arise.

Yours faithfully

### *Sample letter to parents re the death of a student*

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor had the sad task of informing the students of the death of (Name), a student in (year/Class...) We have the permission of the parent(s) to notify you and they have approved this letter.

(Name) died from cancer. Many people who have cancer get better but sadly (Name) had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/she was a very popular member of the class/school and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

The students 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 need to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school and someone will contact you. Please do inform us if you feel that your child is particularly distressed.

We will be arranging a special assembly to celebrate (Name's) life.

Yours faithfully

### **Guidelines for informing staff and other personnel**

- Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable. Ensure that absent staff are informed.
- Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious upset and feeling 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. This is perfectly natural.
- Inform absent staff over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical.
- If relevant, identify a nominated spokesperson to provide a 'news statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion. Essential to liaise with family.
- If the death is traumatic, such as suicide or murder, consider requesting bereavement support services or Winston's Wish.
- Arrange staff condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
- Identify someone who can be available to talk things through with a parent, student or member of staff if they are finding the situation particularly hard.
- Nominate staff to prepare a letter to parents and carers (to be given after school) sharing the news.
- Arrange a staff meeting for the end of the day to give staff the opportunity to express their feelings about the day.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Winston's Wish help line should you want to check out ideas during the following days, weeks and months ahead.

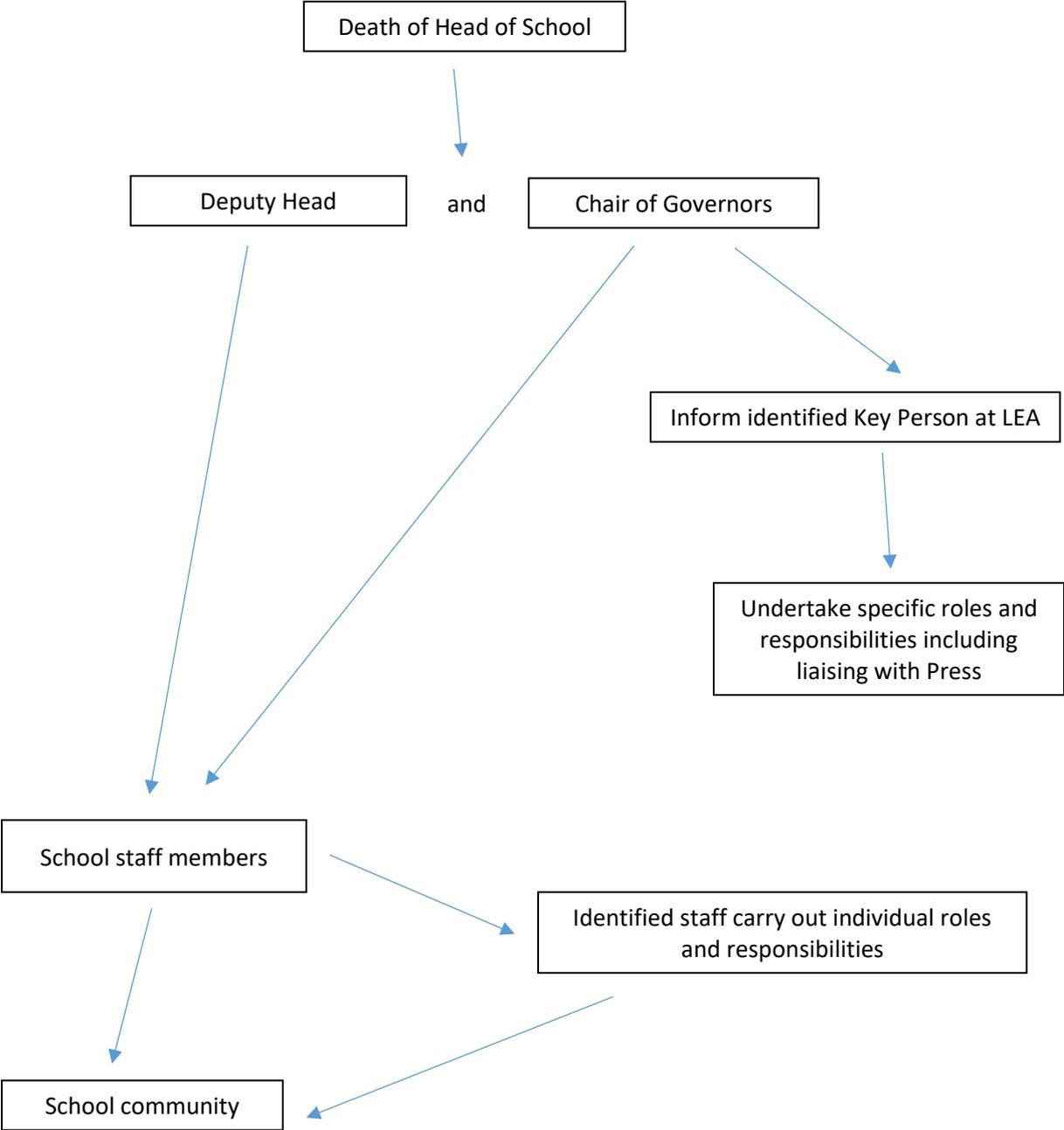
## Guidelines for informing students and young people

- Identify those students who had a long term or close relationship with the deceased to be told together as a separate group. Class or tutor groups are ideal.
- It is more beneficial if all students are informed. Teachers are not expected to die and students expect to live forever. It can be shocking.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform students.

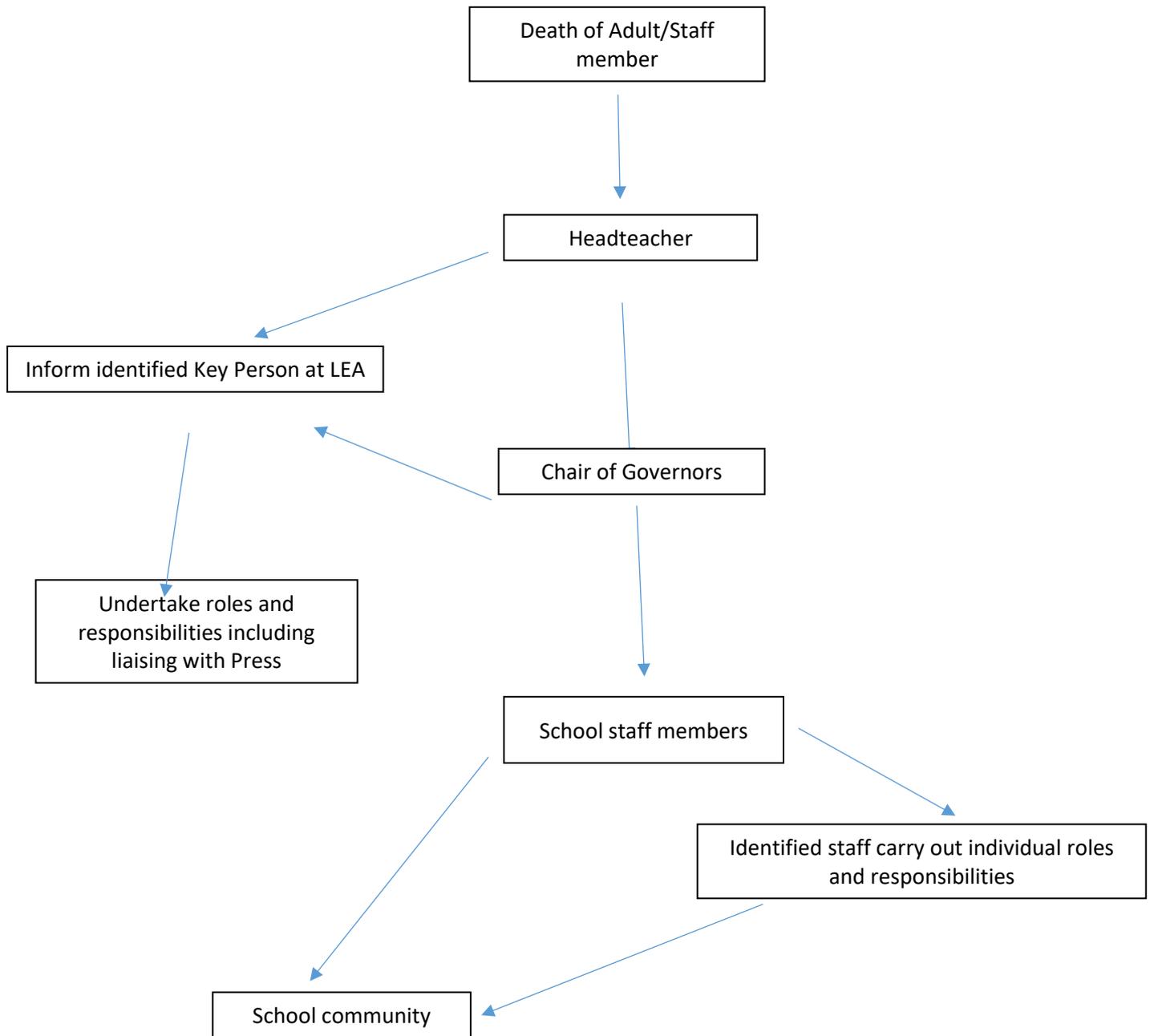
For example:

1. "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. Mrs. Smith, the Geography teacher and Year 11 tutor, has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that Mrs. Smith died yesterday in hospital."
  2. "Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and 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 Stephen Smith, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died."
- Allow time for fears and feelings to be verbalised or for students to share their own experiences of death.
  - Be honest about your own feelings and experiences and talk honestly about the relationship that you had with the person.
  - Answer students' questions factually, avoiding euphemisms like 'passed away'.
  - Be prepared for students to say or do the unexpected. Adults may be upset by some responses or apparent lack of response but this does not mean that a child does not care.
  - Perhaps end the discussion with a moment to remember the deceased and their family.

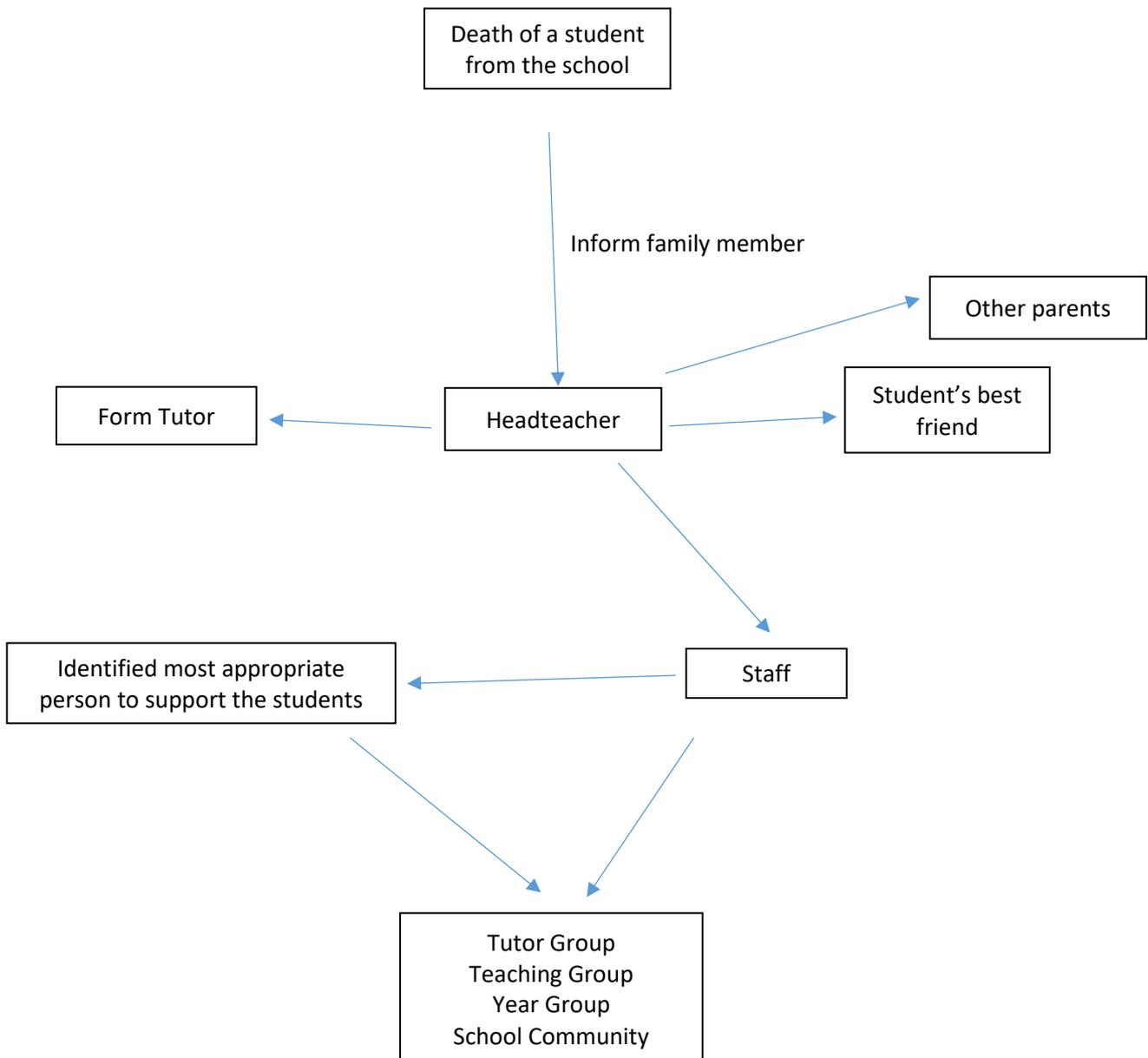
# Information Sharing Protocol following death of Head of School



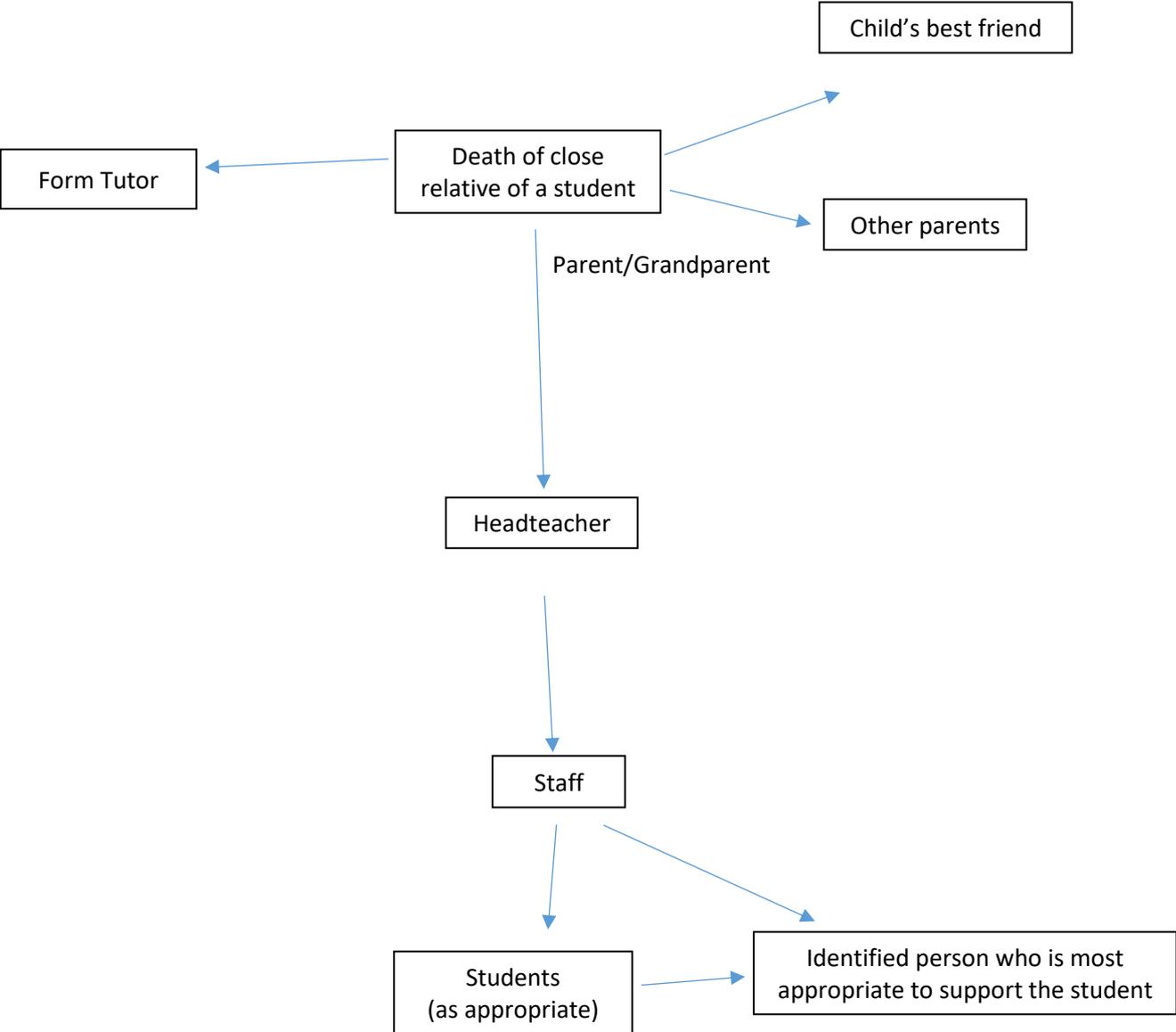
# Information Sharing Protocol following death of a staff member



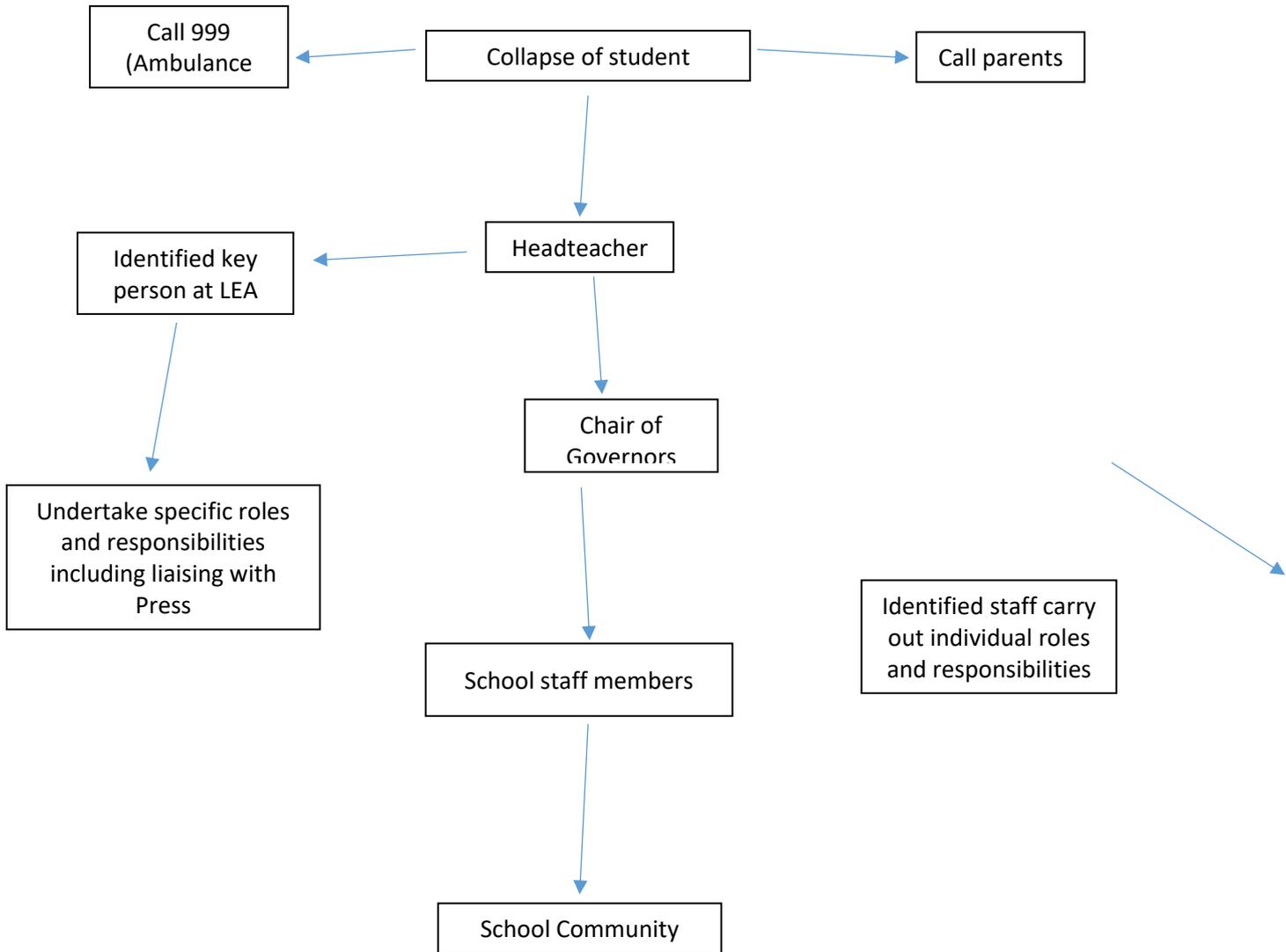
## Information Sharing Protocol following death of a student



**Information Sharing Protocol following death of a close family member of a student**



# Information Sharing Protocol following death of a student in school



## Information Sharing Protocol following Major Incidents involving death or injury to staff or students

