Bereavement Policy and Procedures

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Bereavement Policy and Procedures

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1.1 Aims and Ethos

Halterworth is a popular, happy and welcoming school. We work hard to achieve high standards in learning, offering many opportunities to learn creatively and explore imaginative ideas. Most importantly to us, children are encouraged to think deeply about their learning and their place in our world. Our staff work as a team, continually reviewing individual progress and exploring new strategies to inspire our young learners. Our children's happiness, health and safety are important to us, we are responsible for the pastoral care of your child and work closely with you to ensure that your child can flourish at Halterworth.

This policy links to the following policies:

- *Communications*
- *Safeguarding*
- *SEND*
- *Behaviour*
- *Privacy Notice*
- *Equality Objectives*
- *Health and Safety*
- *Leave of absence (staff)*

This policy applies to all staff, students, parents and carers, governors, visitors, and partner agencies involved with the school. It outlines the guidelines and procedures for how our school can effectively prepare for and respond to bereavement within the school community. In many cases, the empathetic understanding provided within the familiar and secure environment of the school may be sufficient bereavement support for some pupils, staff, and the school community. However, if the effects of grief are more complex, it may be necessary to consider referring them to specialised support services.

1.2 Background and Rationale

An estimated 46,300 dependent children (aged 0-17) are bereaved of a parent each year. That's 127 children newly bereaved each day. Every 20 minutes a parent of a child under 18 years dies in the UK, which is around 890 bereaved children each week. Around 1 in 29, 5–16-year-olds have been bereaved of a parent or sibling - that's one child in every class. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend, teacher, or other significant person in their life. [UK death statistics – Child Bereavement UK] (1)

In our school community, there will often be pupils dealing with bereavement, and at times, the entire community may be affected by the death of a staff member or student. Experiencing a bereavement can make children and students more vulnerable. Staff members may feel

anxious about supporting a bereaved pupil in school or addressing bereavement and loss in the curriculum, which is what this policy sets out to address.

Our school is dedicated to supporting the emotional well-being of both staff and children, pupils, and young people. We aim to integrate this focus across all areas of school life to help foster a positive atmosphere, environment, and curriculum that equips us to manage bereavement as effectively and sensitively as possible.

This policy is based on an exemplar developed by the Hampshire based Child Bereavement Charity 'Simon Says'. We have included input from school staff, governors, pupils, parents, and carers.

1.3 Objectives/Purpose

To provide a framework for all staff, teaching, and non-teaching and to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with difficult and upsetting circumstances.

To allow staff to be better prepared to support pupils dealing with the death of a parent, sibling, friend or someone else important in their lives.

To improve staff confidence in responding helpfully to bereaved pupils and parents/carers.

To support staff in using sourced curriculum resources to help pupils learn about managing bereavement.

To ensure effective communication and a clearly defined support process between staff members, pupils, families/carers, and the wider community.

To identify key staff within the school and LA, resources and further services needed to support the whole school community.

To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to the death, and how to provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

To provide support for bereaved pupils with opportunities to tell their story, express their feelings, remember the person who has died, share their memories and develop coping strategies to help manage the school day, home life and their futures.

To signpost children and their families to specialist support if needed.

To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after a bereavement. It covers expected and unexpected deaths.

To strengthen partnerships with local services such as 'Simon Says' and national services such as Child Bereavement UK for pupils who require additional support.

1.4 Safeguarding, confidentiality, and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm. The key principle of our safeguarding policy (2) is to promote the welfare of children and that this is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who meets children and their families has a role to play. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, all staff should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should always consider what is in the best interests of the child.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We request data regarding bereavement to provide appropriate pastoral care however this is provided to us on a voluntary basis. This is gathered using a bereavement form which is in the new starter packs.

To retain the trust of pupils, parents, and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation. We do not share personal information with anyone without consent unless the law and our policies allow us to do so as per our school Privacy Notice for Parents policy (3).

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our usual school systems: CPOMS and Arbor to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

2. Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

The Headteacher will take overall responsibility when dealing with bereavement with support from the Trust's Executive Head. In the absence of the Headteacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will take over responsibility.

In the event of the death of a pupil, the Headteacher and Senior Leadership will communicate with staff via a face-to-face meeting and disseminate information of the death of a pupil via email. The Headteacher will communicate initially with parents/carers about how information will be disseminated to other pupils.

In the event of the death of a member of staff, the Headteacher will communicate with staff via face-to-face meetings and via email if required.

In the event of the death of a pupil's significant person, the link adult for communicating with the family/families a member of the Pastoral Team (Mrs McStay) with support from class teacher and learning support assistant.

In the case of a multi-agency review, the school's representative is the Headteacher.

The responsible authority regarding press/media communication is the Headteacher with support from the Trust' Executive Head.

Staff will receive support from the Pastoral team (Mrs McStay, Mrs Kittley-Davies, Mrs Templeton and Mrs Lewis) and Senior Leadership.

Annual staff training will be provided via 'Simon Says' bereavement charity. Pastoral staff will access Grief and Bereavement training via Educational Psychology.

A Bereavement Box is available in the school staff room. This includes information, advice and resources that can be used with the pupil(s) but also support for staff who may have experienced a personal bereavement or a bereavement within the school community.

Children will receive support from the Pastoral and Family Support Worker (Mrs McStay) who can provide 1:1 support if required. Children have access to a Bereavement Sack which the class teacher and learning support staff can access via the Bereavement Box to loan out to children.

Our school bereavement group, *'Raindrops and Sunshine',* will meet every half term to support those children within school who have experienced a significant bereavement. This is run by our Pastoral and Family Support Worker (Mrs McStay) and ELSA (Mrs Templeton and Mrs Lewis).

2.1 The Role of the Governing Body is to:

- Approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation.
- Ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change.
- Ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum.
- Ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs.
- Ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection, and access to support if they need it.

2.2 The Role of the Headteacher and Leadership Team is to:

- Lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff.
- Contact the University of Winchester Trust in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. link

Educational Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker, alongside relevant colleagues, and managers.

- Be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement.
- Record bereavements affecting children.
- Designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate.
- Monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies.
- Keep the governing body appropriately informed.
- Deal with media enquiries - University of Winchester Trust.

2.3 The Role of all Staff in our school is to:

- Access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate.
- Know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed.
- Know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm.
- Know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed.
- Have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change.
- Provide individual support as and when needed using the school's Bereavement Box and Bereavement Sacks and in consultation with the Headteacher and Pastoral Team.
- Teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum.
- Inform the Headteacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community.
- Our Pastoral Team has had more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other members of staff – Mrs McStay and Mrs Templeton.

2.4 The Role of the Local Authority, Trust etc:

- The University of Winchester Trust in 2023 has assembled a panel of experts for a public seminar on death, dying and bereavement.
- The University of Winchester Academy Trust will provide the Headteacher and staff with support, information and advice.

3. Procedures

- Headteacher/senior leadership or Pastoral and Family Support Worker will clarify the facts, circumstances, and wishes of the family for information to be shared.
- Headteacher and Senior Leadership will then ensure that the information shared correlates with the information provided by the family. Class teacher will disseminate information provided by Senior Leadership to their class with support from Senior Leadership.
- Friends of the pupil(s) will be supported as a group or 1:1 by the best placed adult: a member of the Pastoral Team, class teacher or teaching assistant.
- Headteacher and Senior Leadership will then ensure that the information shared correlates with the information provided by the family that can be shared with the school community. This will be via a letter written by Headteacher which is then sent to all parents via Arbor.

Bereavement Flowchart

See the Bereavement Flowchart and the information sharing pathways (Appendix 1) to demonstrate the order of actions for the school.

Information Sharing pathways

Information sharing pathways may vary depending on the staff structure at the setting and whether the school is linked to a local faith community. See appendix 2-5, which can be adapted to suit your setting.

3.1 Pre-bereavement/death

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a prolonged illness.

In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

<u>When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:</u>

- contact the family to confirm information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact from the Pastoral Team in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change

- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Simon Says, Child Bereavement UK, Winston's Wish, or a local hospice
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death.

3.2 Immediate actions following a bereavement/death in the school community

Our school/college will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from our setting is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate.

- Refer to any relevant and current school policies such as a Bereavement or Critical Incident Policy.
- Form a team of key people to support you and to carry out aspects of the flow chart below.
- Nominate one key person to contact and liaise with the family.
- Inform all staff and other key people as agreed with the family, before informing pupils and students. Some pupils may know the facts from other means.
- If a death is likely to attract media coverage, appoint a designated spokesperson (e.g. Head Teacher, Chair of Governors) to deliver a news statement at a scheduled time, managing media intrusion. It is essential to liaise with the LA's communication team and the individual's family, before providing information to the media to respect their privacy.

The days following a death - *practical considerations*

Family Wishes

- The key staff member, headteacher, responsible for liaising with the individual's family.
- Contact the deceased's family with the aim to offer condolences and establish the facts and avoid rumours.
- Determine their wishes regarding who they want their story shared with and how.
- Show the school's/settings support by sending a card, flowers, or set up a collection.
- Inform the family about who has been notified and what has been communicated within the setting.
- It is important to consider any cultural or religious implications of the bereavement process and seek advice if necessary.

Flexible normality

It is preferable for there to be minimum disruption to the timetable, but some flexibility may be required. Consider using the Mini Lodge (Pastoral room) as an allocated quiet place where children, young people and staff can go if necessary. Staff to use the Bereavement Box (in staff room) which contains resources to support the recording of thoughts and memories and to provide a safe and supportive space for the child. Pastoral staff/class teacher/LSA/Leadership (key person) to be on hand in the quiet place to listen and respond sensitively to pupils and staff.

3.3 Informing staff and governors

Upon receiving news of a death, the lead person or senior management team must determine the strategy to adopt to respond appropriately and sensitively to the death. They should contact the family or families involved to offer condolences, support and to clarify that the information received about the death is correct. They need to consider the wishes of the family and preferences for support and information-sharing wherever possible. Announcing the news to the school community can be challenging and requires a sensitive and effective approach.

The following guidelines may help when informing the school community:

- All staff should be informed as soon as possible using the normal method of communication, e.g. a whole school staff meeting or team meeting. Ensure measures are taken to inform absent and part-time staff in a telephone call if possible.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred and if applicable the circumstances of what happened leading up to the death.

- Ensure Senior Leadership team, leaders and key people are prepared for reactions to this news, including visibly 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. This is perfectly natural.
- Agree a set time for teachers to inform their class about what has happened. Leaders may offer to do this or be present in the classrooms if staff request support or are unable to do this. Provide staff with a script detailing exactly what to say, to ensure consistent information is communicated to all pupils. Where possible, include answers to difficult questions that children may ask, helping staff avoid the need to come up with appropriate responses on the spot.
- Be prepared to follow this up with a special assembly, memorial service, or memorial tree/garden.
- Ensure a member of Senior Leadership is available to support members of staff, parents, or children if they are finding the situation particularly hard. Encourage everyone to consider how to meet their own support needs and self-care, whether through friends, family, support services, or partnering with other staff members.
- Share contact details for local support resources. Seek the advice of external support services as appropriate (e.g. Simon Says, Winston's Wish, Child Bereavement UK, Cruse, Compassionate Friends).

3.4 Informing pupils

Many people believe that children do not grieve, but even young children will have questions about *what happened, how it happened*, *why it happened*, and perhaps most importantly, *what will happen next.* Remember that it is ok to show your emotions in moderation. It is important that staff/adult's model to children and young people healthy responses to sad news. Often a natural response to hearing about a death is to shed a tear, gasp, hug others, quiet reflection etc.

The following guidelines may help you to inform pupils of the death:

- Identify children who are most likely to be impacted by the news because they had a close relationship with the deceased, are newly bereaved, are vulnerable or have additional needs. Arrange for them to be told together as a separate group.
- Where possible inform pupils in the **smallest** group, preferably class groups. This should be done by **adults they know**.
- It is always a shock when a death occurs in a school even if it may have been anticipated. Use clear and simple language that is appropriate for the child's age and stage of understanding. Use the real words '*dead*' and *'died,'* **avoiding euphemisms**

such as 'passed away,' 'lost', 'gone'. This is to avoid adding a layer of confusion for the pupils.

"I have some incredibly sad news to tell you which you might find upsetting. Many of you will have heard of cancer (or the illness/condition). Lots of people who have cancer do get better but for some people, they do not get better, and they die. Mr Jones, who is our caretaker, has been ill with cancer and he sadly died yesterday in hospital. We know that he was with his family when he died etc."

"Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt, and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so severely injured that he died."

- Give pupils time to say what they are thinking or just to be quiet. Allow them opportunities to verbalise feelings and ask questions. Be honest, it is ok to say if you do not have the answers but remember to revisit the question later when you do have the answer. Make notes of any such questions. Other staff may have been asked the same questions, and the setting may decide on an agreed answer to these.
- Work together to identify any key answers that you may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness, or dates which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing class or schools.
- Allow gentle discussions. Some pupils may well want to share their own experiences of the death of a loved one, even a pet and may want to share their feelings with others.
- Pupils want to do an activity to express their thoughts and feelings for instance, they may want to draw pictures, cards, write messages or create a memory board to support the family or to help each other with their feelings. Books about bereavement and stories may be on display and available for pupils and staff to use during this sad time. A quiet space/char with covers and cuddly toys may be used more by the pupils at this time.
- Ensure the pupils understand that the death has nothing to do with anything they have said or done. It is in no way their fault.
- End the discussion on a positive note - not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better.
- Put an appropriate time limit on the discussions. It is preferable to resume normal school activities as soon as possible. This ensures minimal disruption within the school day which offers a sense of security and familiarity. However, do not expect to go straight

into learning, allow for a time of restoration preferably with a physical activity outside or in a large space.

3.5 Informing parents and the local community

It is essential that parents and carers receive information as quickly as possible about the death if appropriate so that they can support their children and help them understand what has happened.

We will contact people via ARBOR.

The following script may help to form a letter to 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 the family at this difficult time. The pupils have been gently informed today. They were told that <name> died from an illness called <cancer>. Many 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 - 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. We also have the following key people……who are available over the next few weeks to offer extra support to you and your children at this difficult and sad time. Please bear with us, we will update you with any latest information as we receive it.*

- *The Hampshire based Child Bereavement Charity- Simon Says have a helpline open Monday-Friday 9-5pm if you need further support or advice. Their Helpline number is 02380 647550 or visit their website www.simonsays.org.uk*

- *We have made available the following books/our toolkit about bereavement, death, and the journey of grief. We are aware that the following libraries also have a supply of Death Positive books for children and adults to borrow.*

- *We have been informed that 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 teacher.*

- *As a school, we will be holding a special assembly, and some pupils will be involved in various aspects of this to remember the special person and to offer our condolences.*

Do contact us if you wish to receive more information about this or to discuss this further.

4. Funerals

Senior Leadership will link with the family regarding the funeral arrangements.

Senior Leadership will decide whether it is appropriate to send a collection/card/flowers/messages?

Staff and children will have access to support information provided by the Pastoral Team, and access to the Bereavement Box which has information and advice for both staff and children on death, grief and loss.

Simon Says guidelines/points to consider

For the funeral

- Link person to liaise with the family regarding whether pupils/staff are welcome to attend the funeral, memorial gathering etc.
- Involve pupils with a collective card, collection, memory board, choice of flowers.
- Consider cover for staff who would like to attend, sometimes it may be appropriate to close the school for part of the day.
- Consider support for pupils and staff who are attending the funeral and how they will be supported in the following days.
- It can be difficult for staff to support pupils while also coping with their own emotions and reactions. It can also bring to the surface previous bereavements in their own lives. Search for support via The Childhood Bereavement Network to see what support is available in your area.

After the funeral

The school will continue regular contact with the family and show that care is available over time for them and their child/children.

The school will monitor the emotional needs of pupils, staff and provide the most appropriate support.

The school will continue to assess the needs of children most affected and record and plan support accordingly.

Longer term

The school will be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child/ren throughout their school life. Information will be recorded on CPOMS and shared with relevant people especially

at transition points. This may include significant dates, special days, anniversaries, annual festivals/remembrance services.

The setting may continue to signpost families about bereavement and counselling services.

The curriculum will be reviewed and adapted annually to ensure that learning about death, bereavement is embedded into specific curriculum areas.

5. Following a sudden and unexpected death - suicide

Suicide is not just a difficult event to deal with; it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

As described in section 4.3 we will seek advice from Papyrus (suicide charity). As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days

It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide. https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/ and Papyrus Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify, or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note

- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as 'died by suicide' or 'ended his / her life' rather than 'committed suicide' or 'successful suicide' and saying, 'attempted to end his / her life' rather than 'unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed attempt at suicide'.

6. Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

Simon says recommend taking an honest and consistent age-appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Simon Says can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their websites https://www.simonsays.org.uk

7. Equality and inclusion, values, and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations.

Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make pupils aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

8. Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate.

9. Supporting staff

9.1 Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care http://www.cruse.org.uk/; or staff counselling, information, and advice.

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with the council or trust's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

9.2 Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Simon Says offer staff training as part of the Champion Schools initiative.

10. Curriculum

Children and young people engage with the topics of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of our statutory PSHE curriculum [Relationships_and_sex_education_policy.pdf]. These themes are also explored through cross-curricular opportunities, such as lessons on body changes or life cycles, and integrated into subjects like art, literacy, and religious education.

Various aspects of death can be considered during assemblies, such as on occasions like Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, or other commemorative events. We also participate in a national minutes of silence and explain their significance to students.

In response to a tragedy or serious incident, we discuss it in class, using carefully considered language agreed upon by the staff to ensure a sensitive approach.

Teachers receive training to deliver these topics within a safe and supportive learning environment. We also provide parents and carers with guidance on how to talk to their children about these events when needed.

Any questions related to loss or death will be answered in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest, and factual manner. While students will not be expected to share individual experiences, they will be directed to support services if they seek assistance.

We encourage students to learn about and discuss cultural and religious perspectives on death, and to express their personal feelings and responses in a respectful and supportive environment.

Extra Guidance 11-13

11. Remembering - Ideas for collaborative projects

Moving forwards, the school community may welcome a collaborative project to help to remember the person who died, creating something positive for everyone to share. This may be a plant, or plaque in Amelia's garden or around the boundary lines of the school playing field. It may be a piece of art. In this way, pupils and staff may feel more connected to each other and take comfort in working together. The finished project could be shared within the school and, if appropriate, with the family of the person who died.

Some examples of collaborative projects include:

- Audio or video messages that can be compiled within classes, tutor groups, year groups, or as a message from the entire school. These can also be recorded and collated digitally.
- Individual artworks centred around a common theme, such as a season, time of day, special place, sport, hobby, or interest. These can be uploaded to a virtual gallery.
- Plant a tree in the school grounds and children/staff add a decorated pebble around the base. A special bench, sculpture or specially designed clay tiles may also help to recognise the life of the person who has died.
- Set up an online memorial or fundraiser in memory of the person who died.
- Add a special trophy in memory of the person who died, which can be handed out each year to a pupil for a cause close to the person's heart e.g. sport, kindness, determination, courage.

12. Supporting a bereaved pupil's return to school

A member of senior leadership, class teacher and a member of the pastoral team will meet with the family/carers to discuss the transition back to school. A chosen trusted adult, class teacher, teaching assistant or pastoral team member will be assigned as the link person for when the pupil returns.

When the child or young person returns to the setting they may want to get straight back into friends, work, and routine. They will have been surrounded by grieving family members and often a chaotic household of visitors. School will provide those familiar routines and structures which can be very comforting to a bereaved pupil.

Initial meeting structure:

- Acknowledge the death and pass on your condolences.
- Find out how the pupil would like their news shared and with who.
- Organise a place for the pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed and a member of staff who will look after them. The pupil may want to create a time-out card or a mood stone to indicate to the staff that they need to leave the classroom. The pupil may require mindful colouring, drawing, reading, or journalling.
- Ensure regular contact and set clear guidelines for communication for the pupil and between home and school including a 'catch-up' meeting.
- Before they return, ensure all staff are aware of the bereavement and the possible effects on them, their behaviour, and their learning, so that appropriate care and support can be given throughout the setting. Give staff ideas of how to acknowledge the death with the pupil, saying something simple like *"I am sorry to hear that your dad died – sometimes it helps to talk about it and if so, I am here for you?"*

13. Ongoing support for a bereaved pupil

The bereavement and the date of death and deceased's birthday will be required on CPOMS so that this information can be passed on at transition points. It will also be recorded on the pupil's Arbor page.

A note will be put on Arbor recording for significant dates for the bereaved pupil - date of their loved one's birthday, date of death, Mother's and/or Father's Day.

A member of the Pastoral team will continue with regular check ins with the pupil and family. This can be done weekly, and with time and through discussions with the pupil and family, this may be fortnightly moving to monthly. Emotional check ins with class teacher and teaching

assistant occur regularly in class and therefore the child/ren would be monitored on their presentation and provided opportunities to talk when required.

Academic progress is fed back to parents during annual parent's evenings but if a parent/carer has a concern, or the class teacher raises a concern, then a telephone call and a meeting may be arranged. The child/ren's emotional wellbeing will be monitored in class with emotional check in's but will also be monitored by the Pastoral team. Concerns will always be fed back to parents/carers/family via a telephone call and if required, a meeting.

Most grieving children/pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert' they need people who care and will be there for them, over time. Schools, by carrying on with their normal day-to-day routines, can do a huge amount to support a grieving pupil.

Staff can help by listening and providing the time and space to enable children to use different ways to cope with some of the changes in their lives.

Please refer to Simon Says materials – **Guide to supporting bereaved pupils.**

Looking after staff

Supporting a child or young person following a bereavement can be difficult for the adults around the child. It can bring back their own experiences of death, especially if the death has been recent.

Support for staff is available from: and using the information provided in the Bereavement Support Folder in the staff room. Staff will be made aware that there are options for supporting pupils who are grieving if they feel unable to do so effectively due to their personal circumstances – this includes a different member of staff stepping in to support. Pastoral team members are trained in grief, loss and bereavement and can support staff members. Senior leadership will also be present to support if they feel able to do so.

14. Supporting a pupil with additional needs

The child's one to one support staff member, or class teacher working directly with the child would be best placed to inform parents and keep in contact.

The place where the student is most receptive to new ideas would be the area that would be used to inform the student and communicate with them about a bereavement.

As agreed with parents/carers, the same information using the same language and ideas would be used to avoid confusion. The information could be supported by widgets, social story, signs of pictures. The normal communication methods should be used to talk about illness and death.

All children benefit from being given simple, honest "bite size" pieces of information about difficult issues - often repeated many times over.

Communicate at a level, speed, and language appropriate to them.

Jigsaw information- gradually give small bites of the whole which can then be processed before the next piece.

Be ready to repeat information as often as needed.

Watch for reactions to show the pupil understands – modify and repeat as needed.

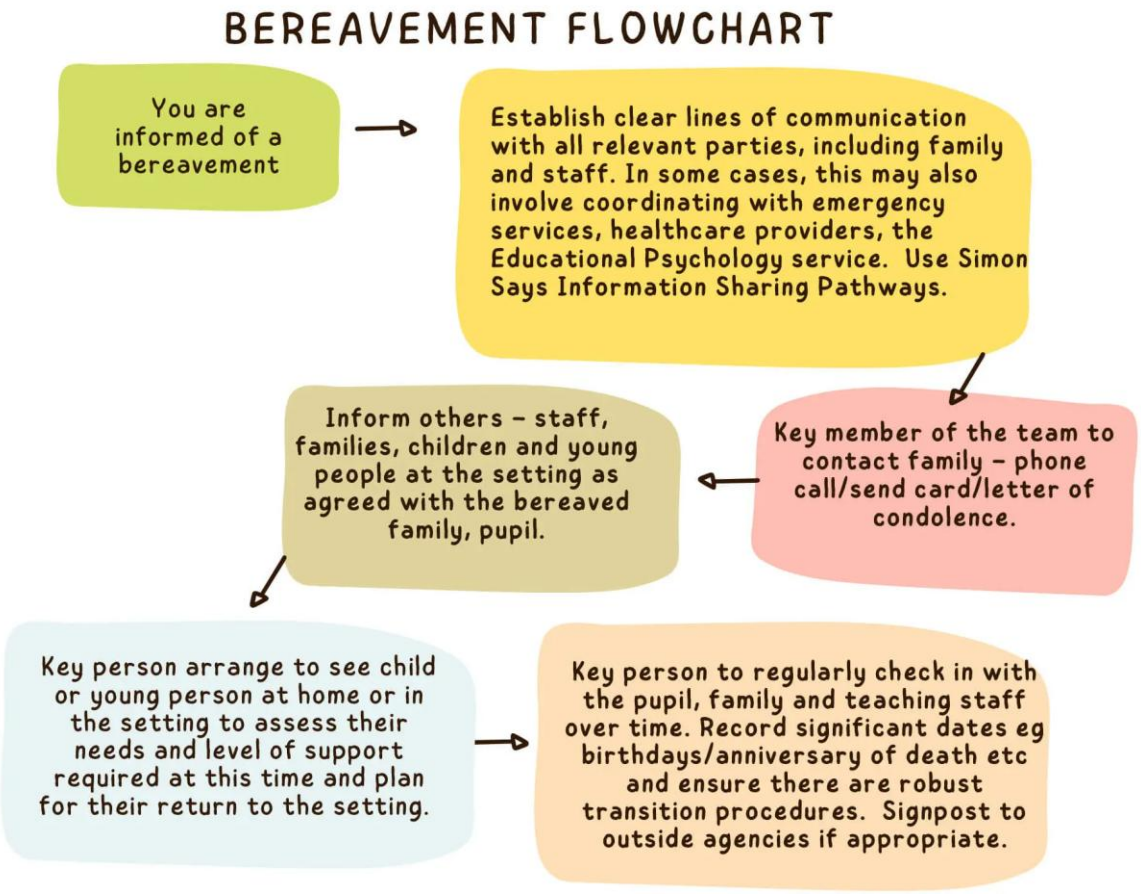
Follow the pupils lead – if indicating a need to talk or have feelings acknowledged, encourage as appropriate.

Look out for changes in behaviour over time that may indicate the child is struggling more than they can say and offer support as needed.

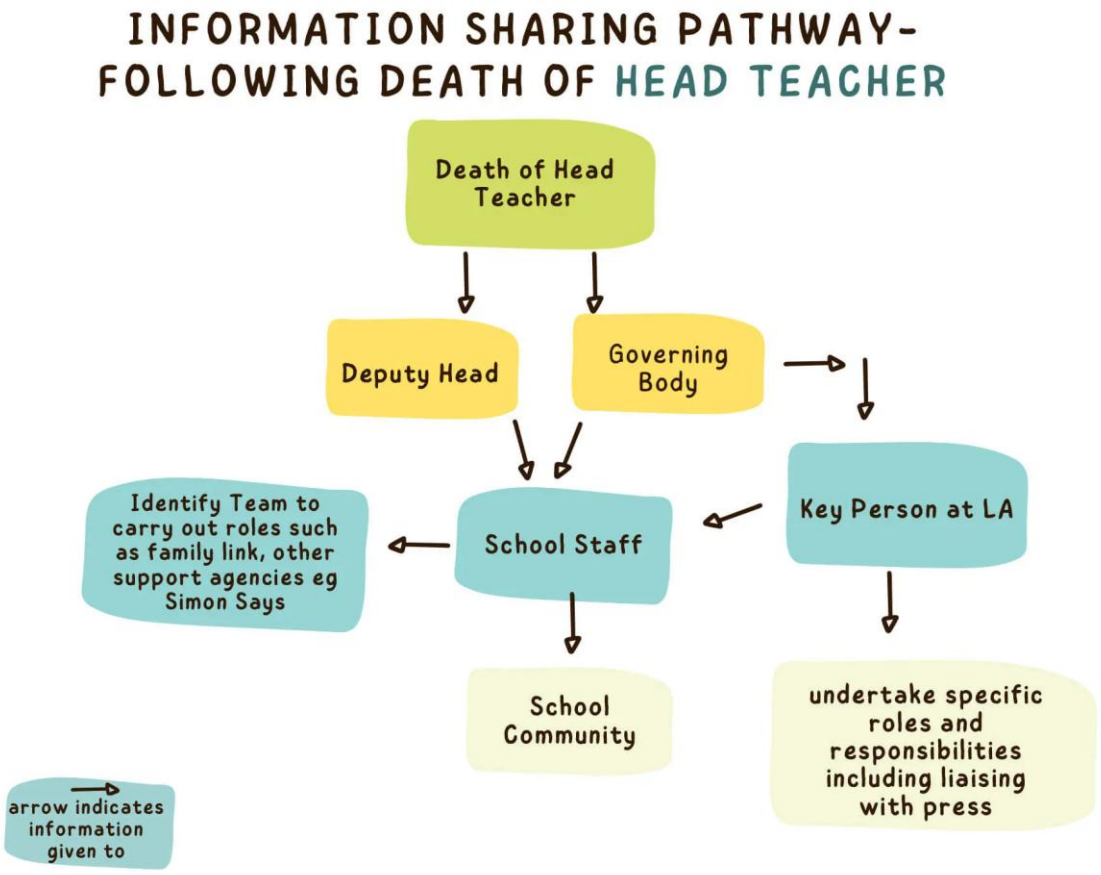
Maintain normal daily routines as much as possible.

Liaise with other agencies involved with the student to ensure accuracy and continuity of information.

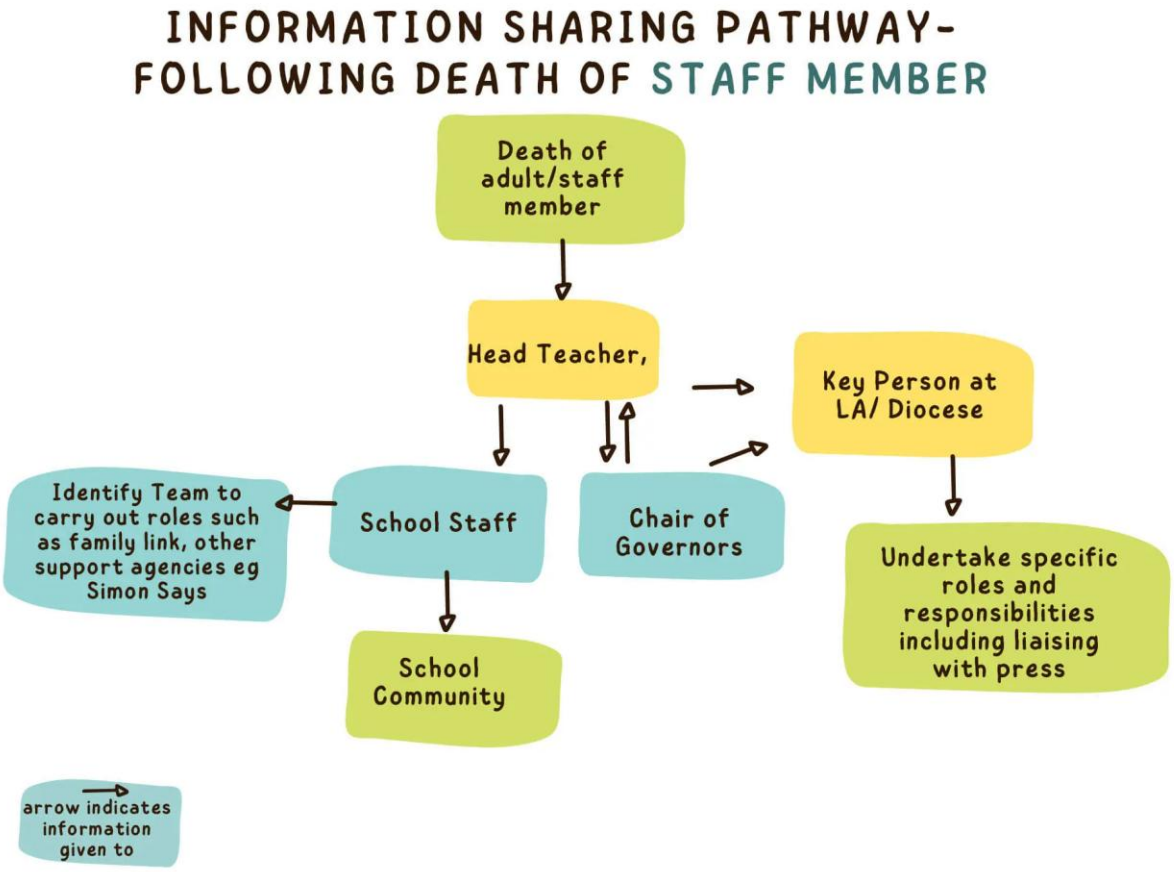
Appendix 1 - Bereavement Flowchart



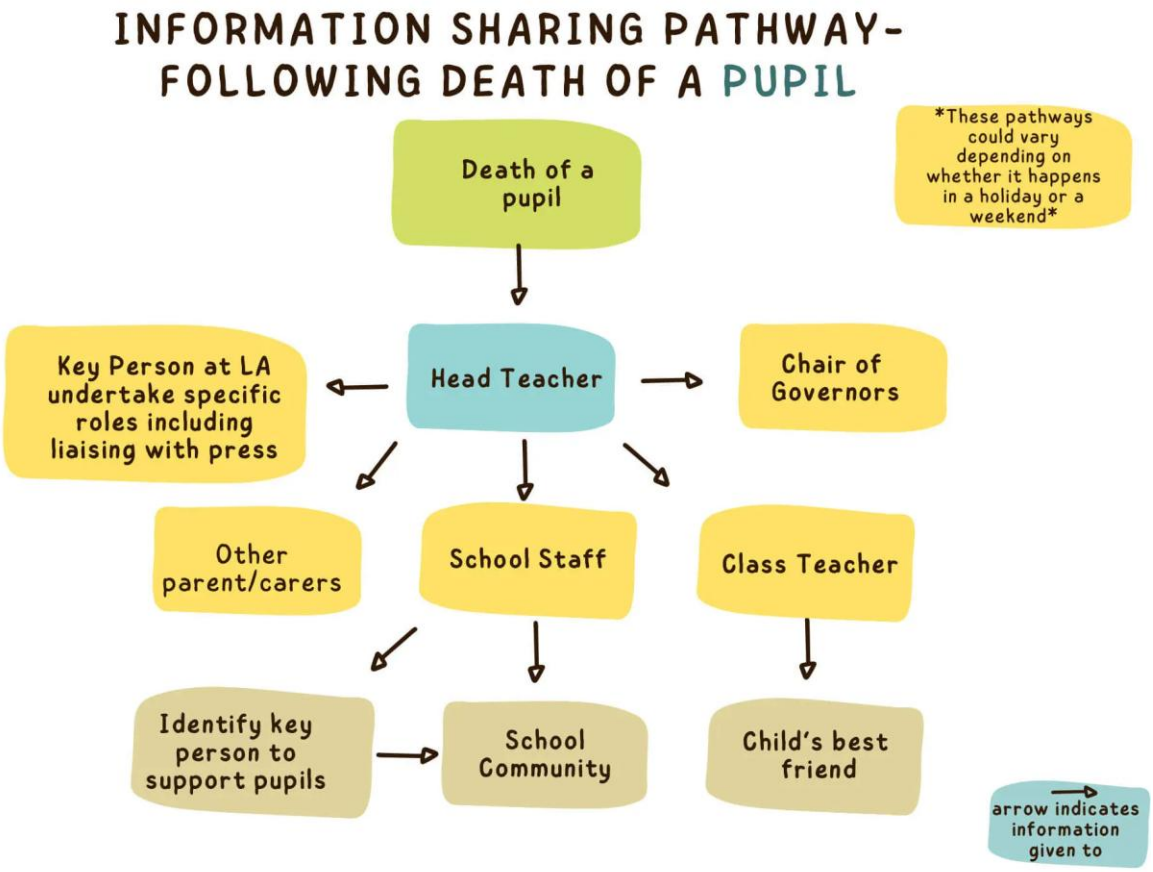
Appendix 2 - Information sharing pathway following death of Head Teacher



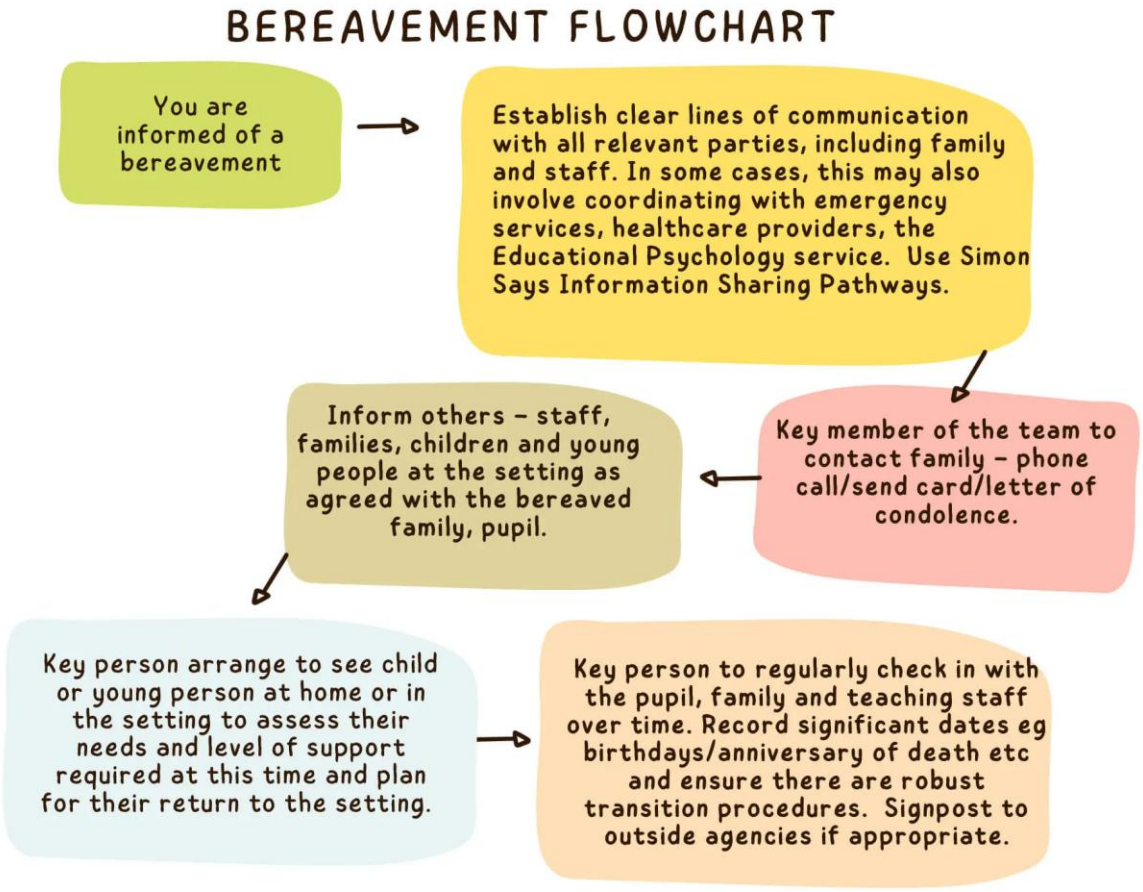
Appendix 2 - Information sharing pathway following death of member of staff



Appendix 2 - Information sharing pathway following death of pupil



Appendix 2 - Information sharing pathway following death of close relative of pupil



Appendix 3 – Template letters

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 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 Helpline details are 02380 647550 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

Appendix 4 – External Support Agencies

Simon Says- https://www.simonsays.org.uk/- Hampshire based charity supporting children up to eighteen.

Child Bereavement UK- https://www.childbereavementuk.org/ - National charity

Winston's Wish- https://www.winstonswish.org/ - National charity

Childhood Bereavement Network- https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/ - National hub supporting children and young people.

Autism UK- https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/bereavement -guides for professionals and families

Childline- https://www.childline.org.uk/ - Free national telephone helpline for children and young people.

Cruse - https://www.cruse.org.uk/ - All aspects of bereavement.

Hope again- https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/- Cruse website for young people.

UK Trauma Council- https://uktraumacouncil.org/ - Resources to support traumatic events.

Grief Encounter- https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/ - Helps bereaved children & young people rebuild their lives.

Let us talk about loss- https://letstalkaboutloss.org/ - Meet ups for 18–35-year-olds who have encountered bereavement.

UK SOBS- https://uksobs.org/ - Support those affected by suicide, telephone support line and signposts to local support.

Amparo- https://amparo.org.uk/- For those affected by suicide.

Papyrus- https://www.papyrus-uk.org/ - For those affected under thirty-five by suicide, helpline, text support.

The Red Lipstick Foundation- https://mydiscombobulatedbrain.com/the-red-lipstick-foundation/- For families bereaved by suicide.

The Samaritans Step by Step Guide for schools- https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/

Sands - https://www.sands.org.uk/ -Support for parents & families whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth.

The WAY Foundation- https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/ - Peer-peer network for those widowed aged fifty or less.

References:

(1) https://www.childbereavementuk.org/death-bereavement-statistics

(2) Schools Model Safeguarding Policy

(3) privacy-notice-parents-hw.pdf