



A. INTRODUCTION

St Mary's Catholic Primary School believes in adopting a holistic approach to the support and care of its pupils and staff. Death is an inevitable part of human existence. When bereavement occurs, it can affect a variety of people not just the family concerned.

To this end, we recognise that work needs to be carried out to ensure that families, children and young people are given;

- the opportunities to develop skills to cope with loss and grief and;
- have access to appropriate information and support when needed

There is no single 'recipe' for provision and services will always need to be organised in the light of needs, priorities and resources.

Various Government legislative and guidance documentation provide a framework to support schools covering death and bereavement including the DfE Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Guidance 2013.

We recognise that, in order to fulfil our responsibilities in delivering the five outcomes outlined in the Children's Act 2004, as a school we need to be reactive in supporting pupils and staff through loss and grief taking into consideration the wishes of relevant parties.

The management of a bereavement situation will be a central role for the members of the Senior Management Team. Bereavement issues relating to death and other losses such as divorce and separation will be addressed specifically through the use of the Rainbows Bereavement Support materials (www.rainbows.org) alongside support from the school counsellor.

B. POLICY REVIEW

Consultation concerning the development of this policy was vital in ensuring all parties understand their role and responsibilities. The process itself also reflects the positive and caring ethos of the school. The following people were consulted in the preparation of the policy:

- Staff
- Governors

This policy will be made available to any OFSTED team in the normal way and will be made available on the school website. The policy and practices will be reviewed every two years and/or after a significant school event, such as the death of a child or staff member.

C. THE AIMS

This safeguarding bereavement policy is intended to reflect our positive ethos and contribute to the caring community which we wish to nurture. It is hoped it will contribute considerably to the emotional health and well-being of our school community.

The main aim of the policy is to ensure that pupils and all members of staff faced with bereavement are provided with support.

This support includes the opportunity for them:

- to express their feelings in a safe environment,

- to be given space and time to come to terms with their loss
- to be offered the opportunity to be part of a bereavement support group within school, where other children who have suffered bereavement, grief, loss or separation can gather and share experiences and express their feelings.
- where necessary, access to more specialist advice

It is recognised that the situation for the child, young person and/or family will be monitored over time. It is our hope that anyone faced with bereavement will regard our community as a place where children and young people can grow and face the challenges that lie ahead. This, in turn, will contribute to our learning community. Use will be made of the 'RAINBOWS BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT' materials to help support the individual(s) affected by bereavement.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES

The management of bereavement is a whole school issue but there needs to be clear lines of accountability to ensure our aims are fulfilled.

The following summarise the main areas of responsibility:

The Governors/ Head teacher/Senior Management Team (including SENDCO) must:

- ensure the policy is implemented
- monitor progress and deal with external agencies
- co-ordinate media enquiries
- be the first point of contact for the individual concerned and their family
- identify appropriate support within the school community for the individual concerned
- offer support as appropriate to pupils in the wider school
- work with the school's Parish Priest and School Chaplain to offer appropriate support within the school community.

(Please refer to **Information Sharing Pathways** detailed in Appendix 1 and additional resources and checklists in Appendices 2-5)

E. TRAINING

The training and development of staff is a fundamental aspect of our human resource management and as such, all staff members will have the opportunity to undertake relevant training in the management of bereavement through the delivery of the **Rainbows Bereavement** support materials.

F. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Senior Management Team and reported to the Governors on an annual basis following the delivery of the Rainbow Programme support groups for identified pupils.

This will include the following methods:

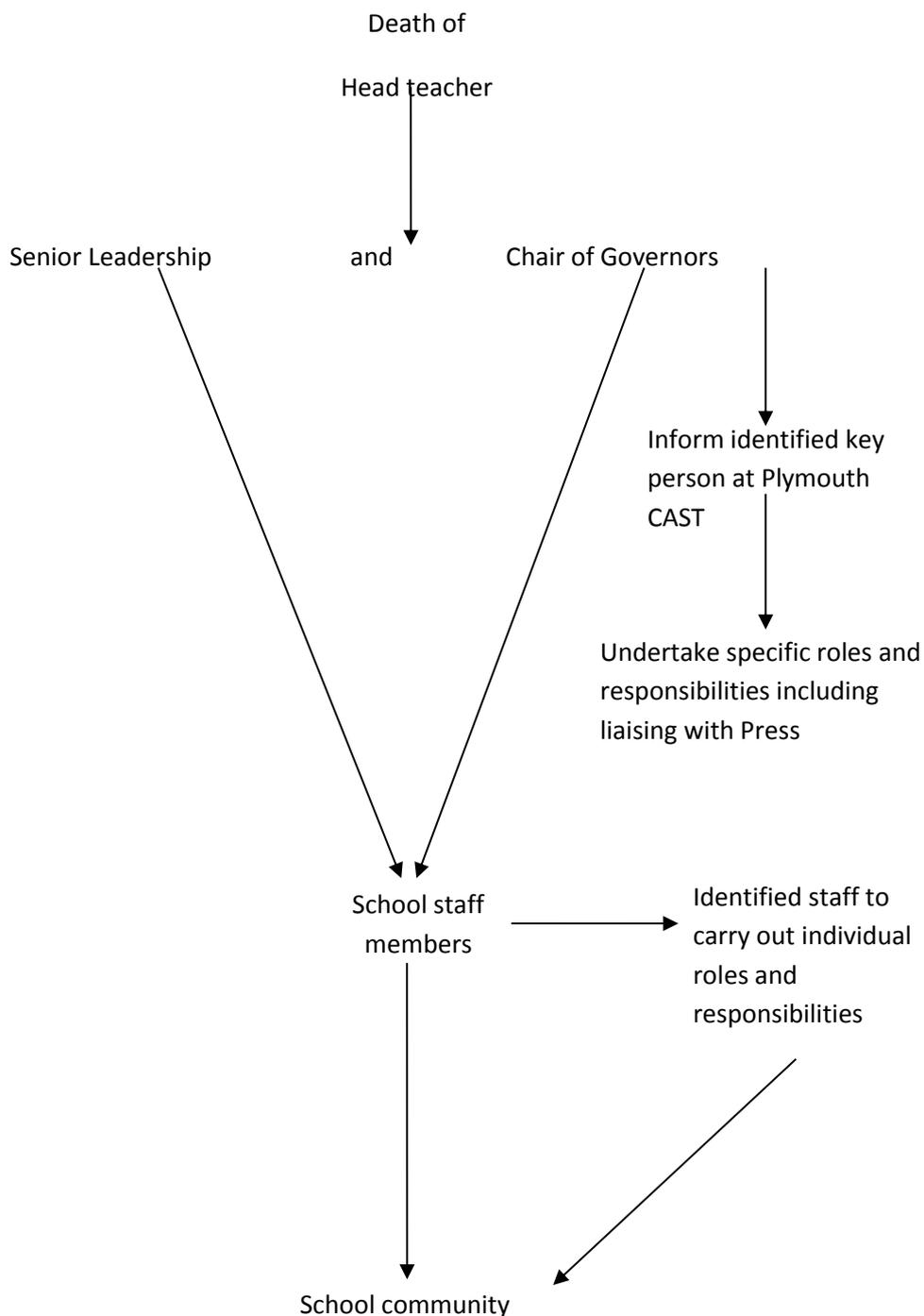
- Feedback from pupils and parents affected by bereavement, grief, loss or separation
- Feedback and evaluation from the Rainbows co-ordinator
- Feedback from trained facilitators delivering the Rainbow Support programme.
- Feedback from class teachers/TAs involved in supporting a bereavement situation
- Discussions with external agencies involved

Signed Committee Chair:

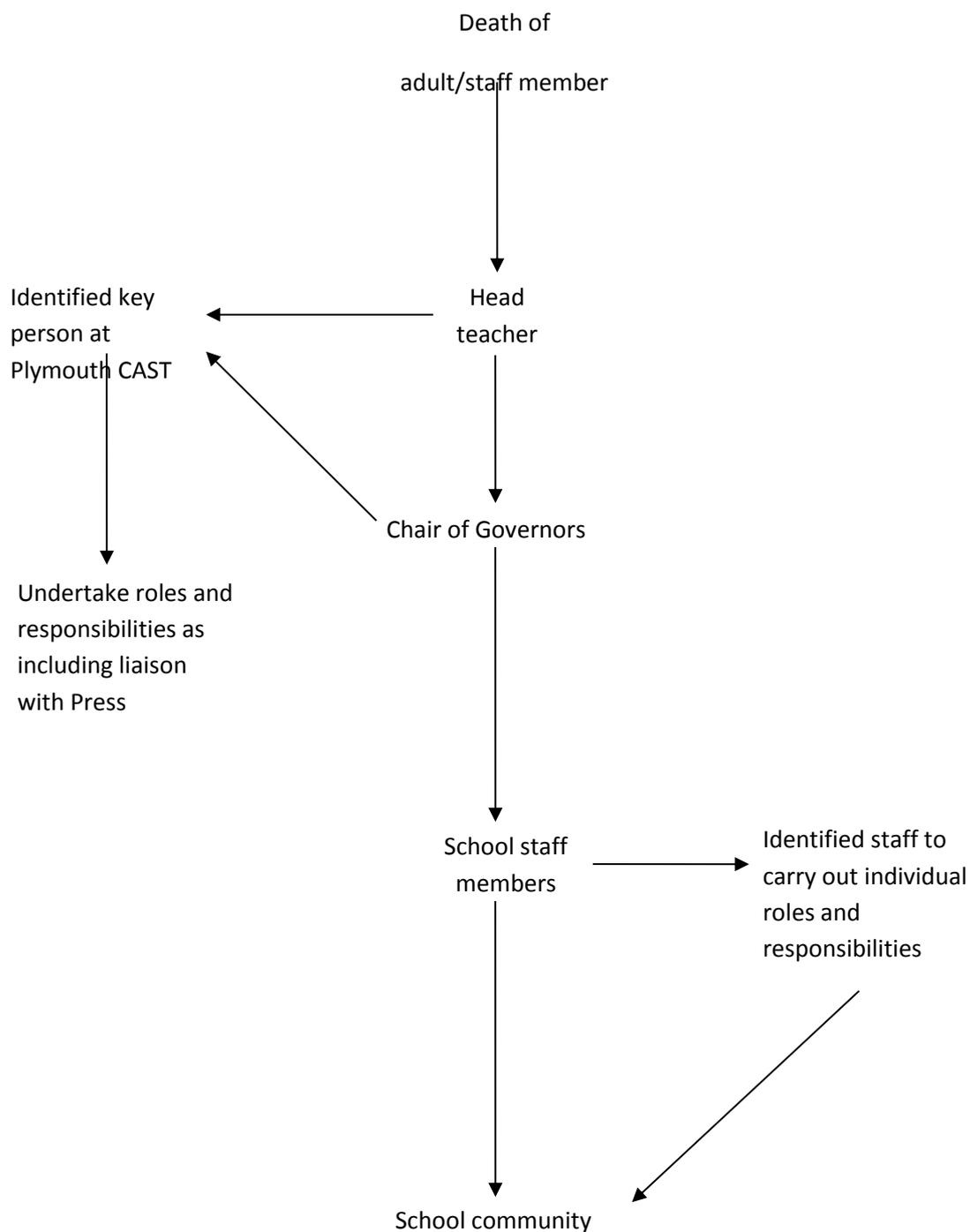
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Appendix 1: Information Sharing Pathways

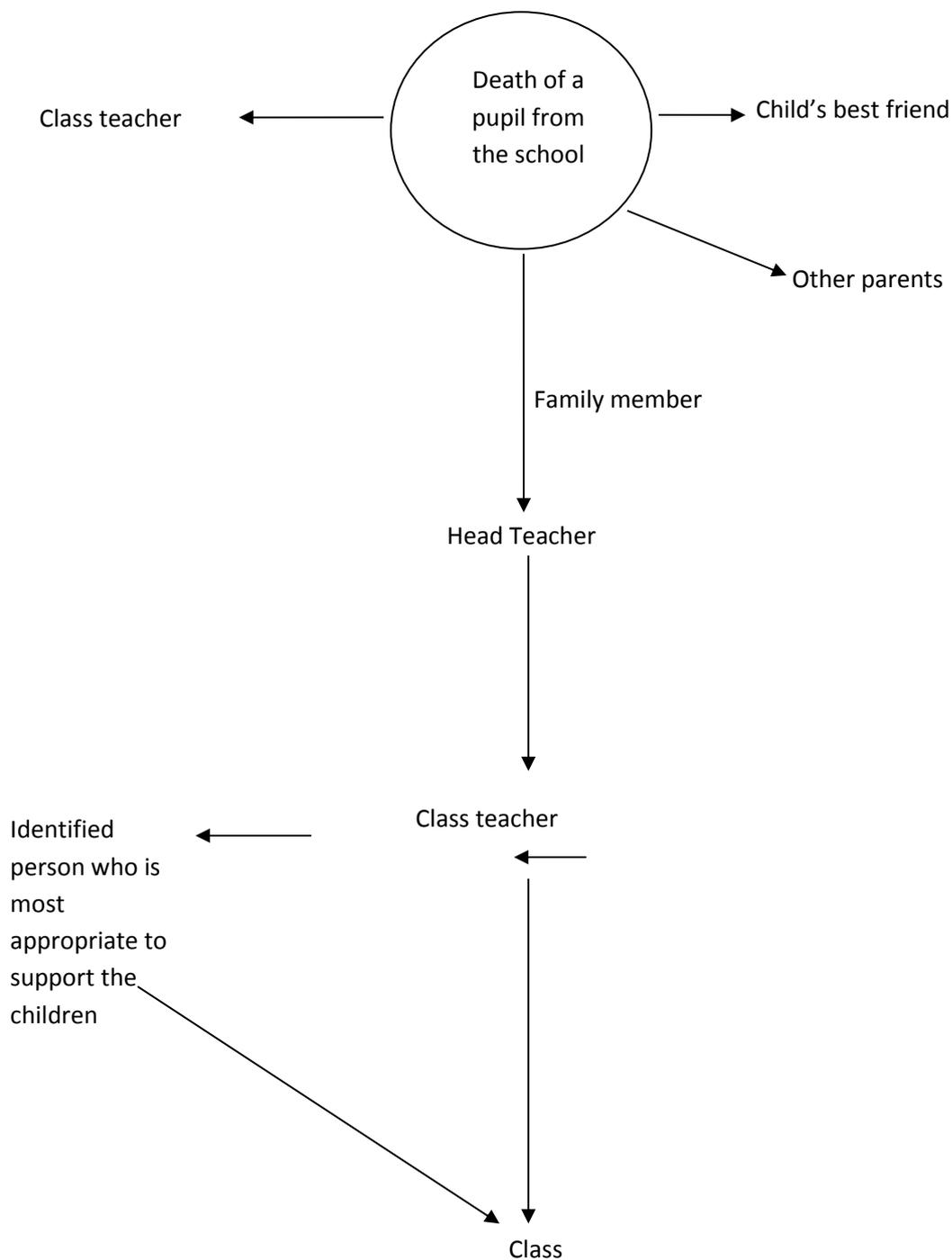
(i) Information Sharing Pathway following death of the Head teacher



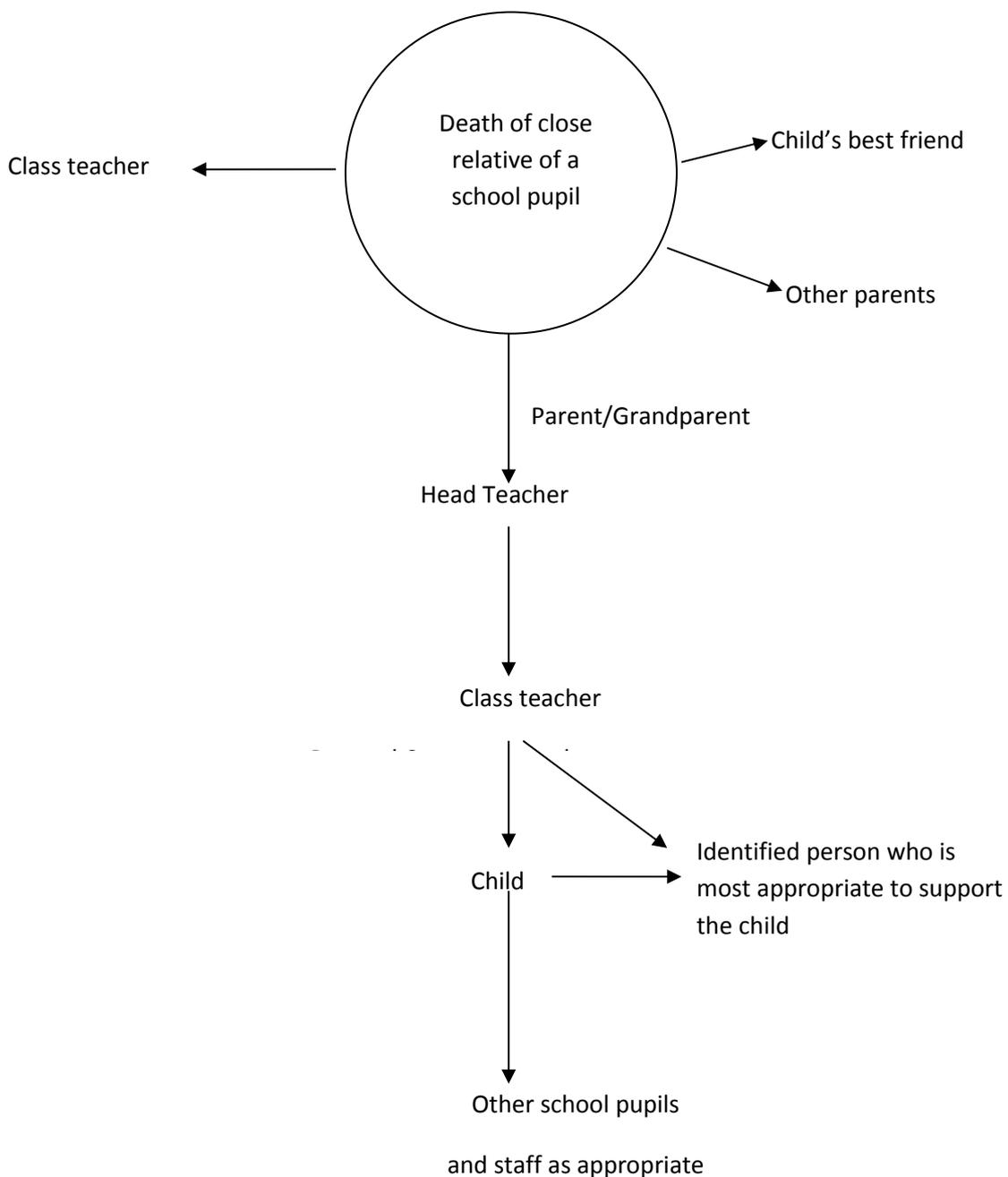
(ii) **Information Sharing Pathway following the death of a staff member**



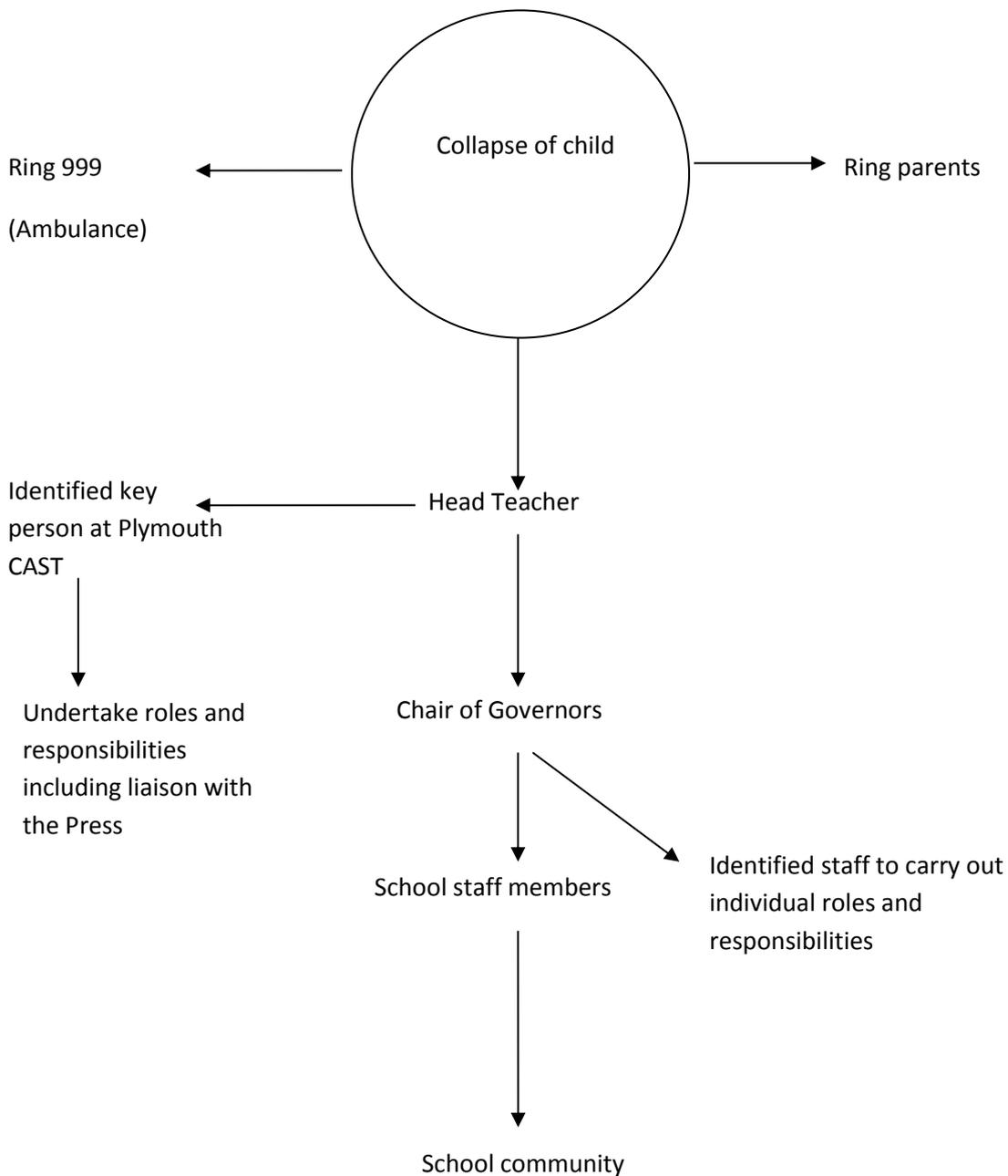
(iii) Information Sharing Pathway following the death of a pupil



(iv) **Information Sharing Pathway following death of close family member of a school pupil**



(v) Information Sharing Pathway following the death of child in school



Appendix 2

i. Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Your child's class teacher 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 ring the school office and we will be more than happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

ii. 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.

Dear Parents/ Carers,

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 an illness called ...

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

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

Appendix 3
Guidelines for breaking news about a death to staff and governors

- 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, and 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 an appropriate member of staff who will take 'phone calls and/or direct them as appropriate. Try to establish a "protected" telephone line to ensure free flow of accurate information (telephone line providers may provide an additional line if the situation requires one).
- 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 on-going issues.
- Ensure that staff that 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 (see Rainbows toolkit).

Appendix 4
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 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.
- Refer to the Rainbows bereavement toolkit for further guidance.

Appendix 5

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 that 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, cleaners etc. in advance.