

BOTTISHAM VILLAGE COLLEGE

PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING POLICY

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| THIS POLICY WAS APPROVED: | SUMMER 2020 |
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| MEMBER OF STAFF WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW: | CAMILLA SAUNDERS |

Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing



Bottisham Village College

This policy document is the outcome of a collaboration between Bottisham Village College and the CAMH Learning and Development team, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

It is intended as a template for other secondary schools and will therefore be made available across the county. Recommendations for adaptations for Primary Schools will be made available in due course.

However, it is not meant to be adopted without due process and careful and thorough consideration of the individual school's needs in relation to the emotional wellbeing and mental health of its pupils and staff.

It is important that it embodies and reflects the school's own culture since it will provide a window through which others will understand its ethos and approach in relation to these issues.



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Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing

Bottisham Village College

Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization, 2014)

At our college, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff (See staff wellbeing policy) and student body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

“Mental health problems affect a significant number of children and young people, with the most recent data suggesting that one in ten children and young people has some form of clinically diagnosable mental health disorder. This level of prevalence equates to around 850,000 children and young people with a diagnosable mental health disorder in the UK today. “Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision”: A Green Paper 2017

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664855/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf

By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health. For further advice and recommendations visit:

<https://www.keep-your-head.com/prof/cp-mhs/resources-events-and-training/creating-mentally-healthy-schools>

Scope

As part of our overall safeguarding strategy, this document describes the school’s approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff, volunteers, visitors and governors. This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a student’s mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a student has an identified special educational need.

Other related policies include:
Staff Wellbeing Policy



Anti-bullying policy
PSHE and SRE policy
Safeguarding policy
Behaviour policy
Attendance Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Lone working policy

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all members of the school community to enable everyone to thrive
- Increase the understanding for the need for early intervention through the application of the Thrive model (see Appendix A)
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Jenny Rankine (Principal) and CLT - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- Dom Fullman – safeguarding lead
- Camilla Saunders - Assistant Principal – Inclusion and Wellbeing lead

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should speak to the safeguarding lead/CLT line manager in the first instance. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the designated child protection officer. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary. Safeguarding protocols should be followed.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by members of the College Leadership team. Guidance about referring to CAMHS is provided in Appendix.

Individual Care Plans

It is good practice to draw up an individual care plan, which is regularly reviewed, for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the student, the parents and relevant health professionals with the SENCO/HOL/CLT line manager as required. This can include:

- Details of a student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects

- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play
- Existing role played by other professionals
- Identifying the gap and mitigate accordingly

Teaching about Mental Health

All staff have a responsibility to support social and emotional development, to build resilience and promote wellbeing through the wider curriculum.

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our students to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our PSHE curriculum and wider whole school approaches.

The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

Our PSHE curriculum ensures that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Any concerns raised/comments made by students during PSHE sessions will be referred to the Designated Person following safeguarding protocols (see warning signs and managing disclosures below).



Signposting

We will ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined in Appendix B.

We will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as corridors, offices and toilets. We will also regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum and during assemblies and to parents at information evenings. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- Who to turn to for help
- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns by using safeguarding procedures. Concerns should all be logged on My Concern

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- A change in behaviour
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism
- Difficult or dangerous behaviour

Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' .

All disclosures should be recorded on My Concern and held confidentially. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the designated person who will provide support and advice about next steps, and who will make a referral to CAMH as required. (See Appendix B for guidance about making a referral to CAMHS)

Confidentiality and consent

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we feel there is a risk to self or others, it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on due to safeguarding. We should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. We will work in accordance with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020' and the school's safeguarding and child protection policy.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 principles. The Data Protection Act does not prevent school staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will take advice from the Information Governance Team and together a decision will be made about what information to share. This decision will consider the balance between the potential risk to the child and the principle of working openly and honestly with parents.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with the designated safeguarding lead, this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support.

We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with. A log of concern should be held on My Concern.

Working with All Parents and Carers

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents we will:

- Highlight sources of information, agencies, and how to access support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

Working with Individual Parents and Carers

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face?
- Where should the meeting happen?
- Who should be present? (Consider parents, the student, other agencies, other members of staff).
- What are the aims of the meeting?
- The Designated Person should consider whether the lone working policy be referred to/risk assessment completed?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you are sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Training

All staff will receive training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular safeguarding training in order to enable them to keep students safe. As part of personal development, staff can request training on issues that would enhance their skills and knowledge.

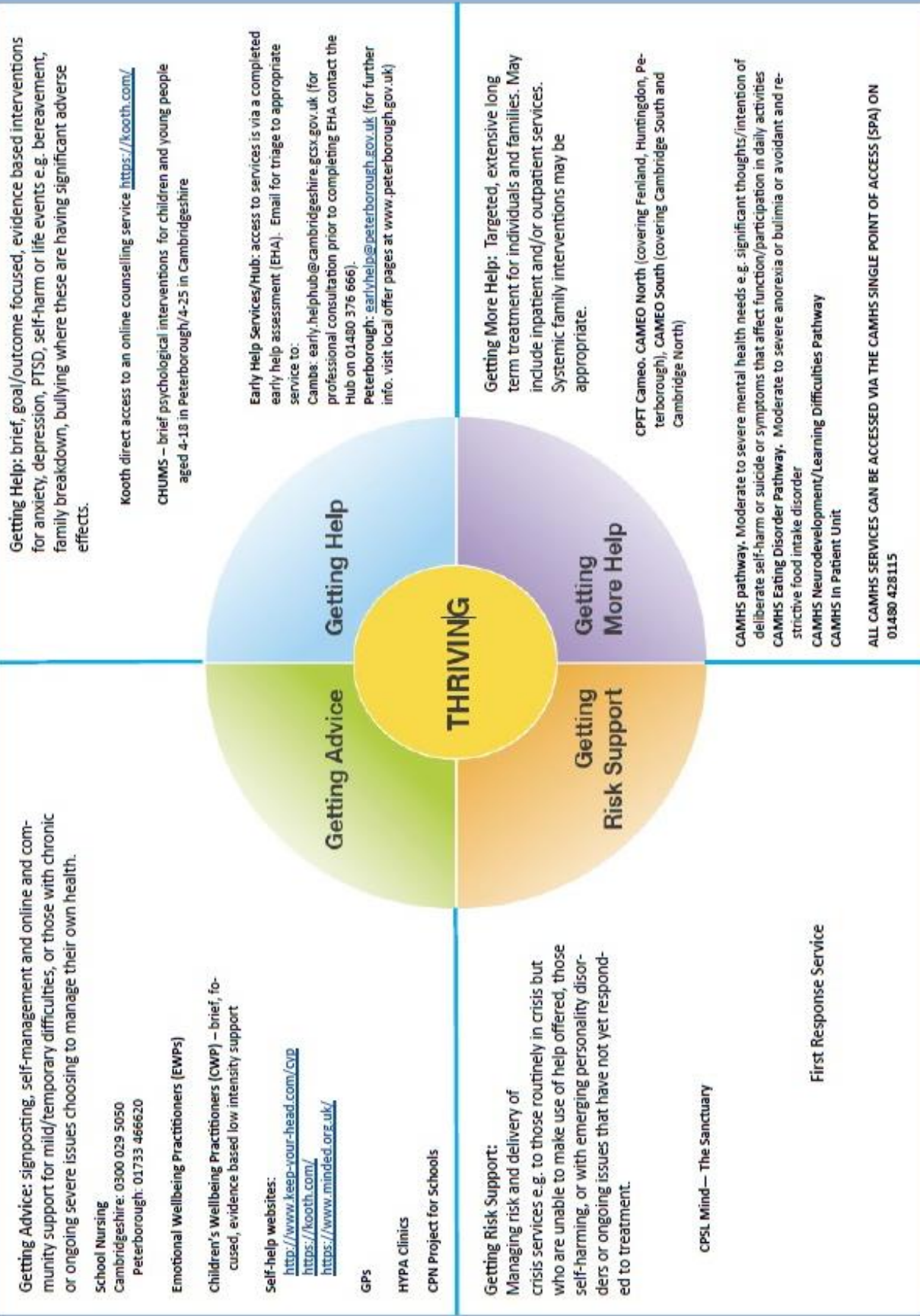
Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually. Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis to reflect change e.g. personnel changes. This policy has been authorised by the Governors, is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers, is available to parents on request and is published on the school website. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required. It applies wherever staff or volunteers are working with pupils even where this is away from the school, for example on an educational visit.

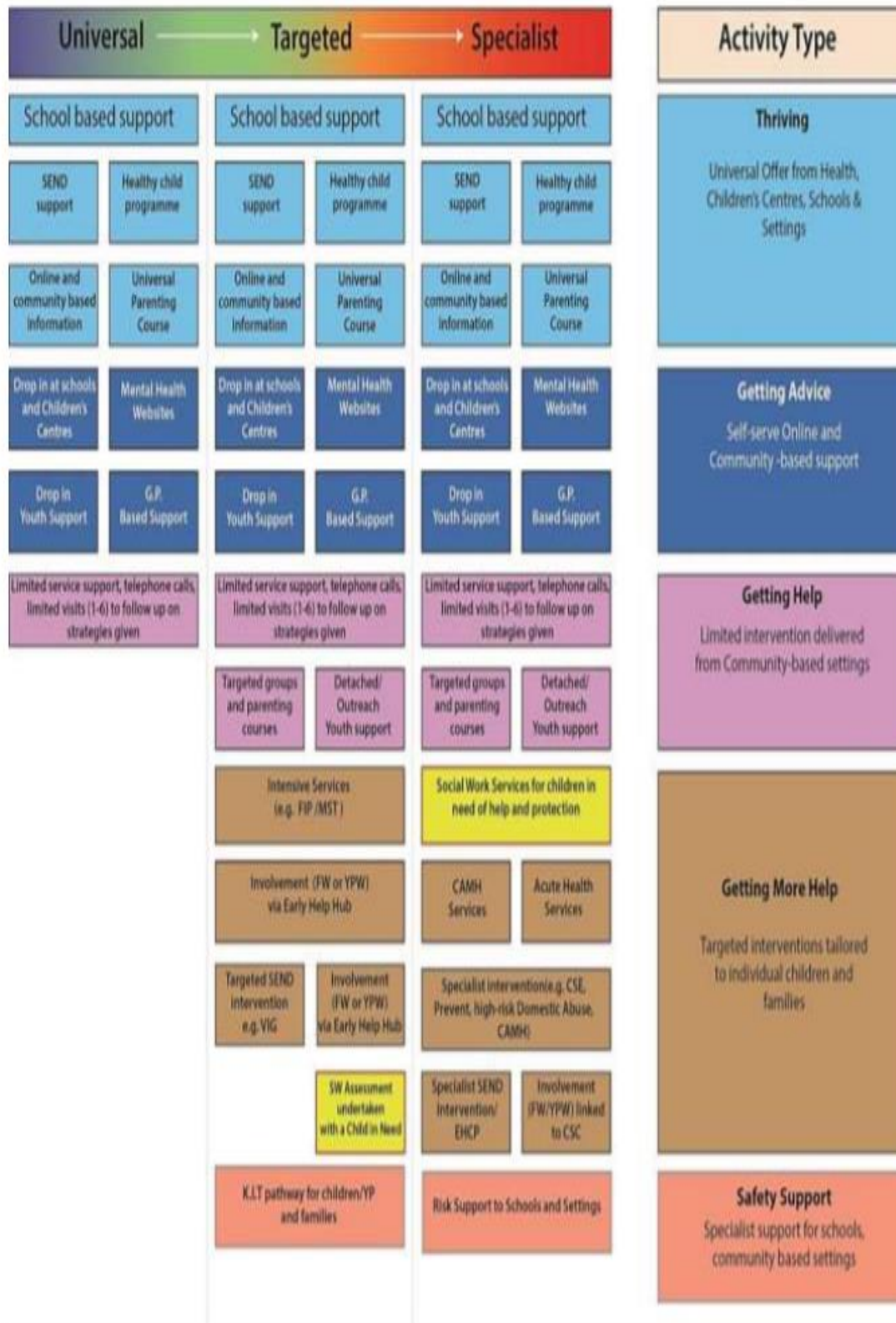
Next review date September 2021

Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services for children, young people and families

The Thrive Model: service groupings are delivered on a continuum to meet individuals' needs - they are not mutually exclusive



***Please note** that in the Getting Advice Service grouping, the CPN project for schools and the HYPA clinics are in Peterborough only



Appendix B: Sources of support in school and in the local community

(See Appendix A for the illustrated Thrive and LSCB threshold documents)

“Getting help”
“Getting more help”
“Risk support”

Getting Help

In School:

- **Safeguarding disclosures:** Any trusted adult
- **Friendship/ worries or problems family/general:** Pastoral support workers/form tutor
- **Young carers:** Identified by HOL, passed onto Young carers’ team
- **Resilience group:** Referrals through Inclusion and Wellbeing lead
- **Social support:** Learning support and Pastoral team offer emotional support to individuals who have Social Emotional and Mental Health needs before school, break and lunchtime
- **Pastoral support team** offers appointments for students on waiting list for YMCA with guidance from school nurse
-
- **Emotional Literacy Support interventions:** Referrals through Inclusion and Wellbeing Lead
-
- **Nurture Provision:** Referrals to the school nurture provision. Needs identified through the Boxall Profile and recommendations from HOL or CLT

In the local community

It is important to keep up to date with changes to services and organisations and we recommend using the Keep Your Head website for current information. <https://www.keep-your-head.com/>

Many organisations accept **self referrals**. Individuals and families can be signposted to those most appropriate for their needs. They include;

- **Kooth** www.kooth.com A confidential and anonymous online service for young people, specifically developed to make it easy and safe for young people to access mental health support as and when they need it. Once signed up, Kooth users have access to BACP trained counsellors available until 10pm, 365 days a year, peer-to-peer support through moderated forums, and a range of self-help materials, co-written by other young people. Any young person aged 11 – 18 (up to 19th birthday) with a Cambridgeshire or Peterborough postcode can access the service for free
- **Centre 33** (help@centre33.org.uk) Supporting young people up to the age of 25 with mental health, caring responsibilities, housing, sexual health and more.
<tel:03334141809>
■
- **CHUMS Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service** - Offers support to children and young people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and low mood, as well as those with significant emotional wellbeing difficulties arising from life events such as bereavement and bullying. Support is offered in a variety of ways including group support, one-to-one interventions, recreational therapeutic programmes (football and music as engagement tools), advice and guided self-help. You can make a referral via the website <http://chums.uk.com/cambs-referral-forms> and one of their triage team will contact you to discuss in more detail. For further information contact Cambridgeshire (0330 0581 659) or Peterborough (0330 0581 657)

Additional sources of advice can be found on the Bottisham Village College Website:

<https://www.bottishamvc.org/mental-health-wellbeing/parents/>

<https://www.bottishamvc.org/mental-health-wellbeing/students/>

Medical Services:

- General practitioner (GP) surgery where the young person is registered
- GP - Out of hours
- Walk in Centres
- NHS 111 – Option 2 if a child is having a mental health crisis

Getting more help

See Thrive Model – Appendix A

This level of support will almost always require a professional referral to access targeted resources to meet significant need (with due regard to guidelines about consent and confidentiality)

If in doubt always consult support agencies such as the Single Point of Access (SPA) and Early Help Hub for advice.

Medical Services:

- General practitioner (GP) surgery where the young person is registered
- GP - Out of hours
- Walk in Centres
- Professionals with increasing concerns regarding a child or young person's mental health should contact the child's GP for an emergency appointment and for further advice. GPs will refer to Community CAMHS for a more urgent assessment.

The Integrated Front Door (Children and Families Services)

- The Integrated Front Door is the term used to cover the services that work across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to manage the referrals received in respect of children and young people. It includes the MASH, the Emergency Duty Teams (Adults and Children) and the Missing Exploited and Trafficked Hub and the Early Help Hub
- Telephone: [0345 045 5203](tel:0345 045 5203) (office hours) [01733 234 724](tel:01733 234 724) (out of hours)

The Early Help Hub

- Telephone [01480 376666](tel:01480 376666) (office hours) or email early.help@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council's point of contact for families and professionals doing an Early Help Assessment. It coordinates access to targeted early help services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and provides advice and guidance on cases managed by the professionals already involved. The Early Help Hub receives contacts that do not need a statutory service (Social Care) but require multi agency support through Early Help Services to support a family's needs.

Community CAMH service

www.cpft.nhs.uk

The service is accessed through the Single Point of Access (SPA) Tel 01480 428115 Office hours, Mon-Fri 9.00 – 17.00. Email accesscamhs@nhs.net

The Cambridgeshire Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides assessment and treatment for children and young people up to the age of 17 living in

Cambridgeshire who are experiencing emotional and behavioural problems and eating or neurodevelopmental disorders, and support for their families. Professional referrals up to 17th birthday (18th birthday for Learning Disabilities and Eating Disorders).

- Before making a formal referral, it is strongly recommended that you call the **SPA** for a telephone consultation. This service is offered to all professionals considering a referral to Community CAMHS or seeking an opinion regarding a particular child, young person or family with whom they are working. <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/professionals/referrals-to-camhs>
- The **Single Point of Access** staff can advise on: whether Community CAMHS can help; how to make a referral ; what further information the service needs ; the timescale for being seen ; what support might be helpful pending the first appointment.
- If, after discussion, Community CAMHS is not the right service, the team will be able to advise on other sources of help.

Getting Risk Support

(See Diagram 3 below for a flow chart on the process for clarifying the nature of the risk in order to decide how to respond)

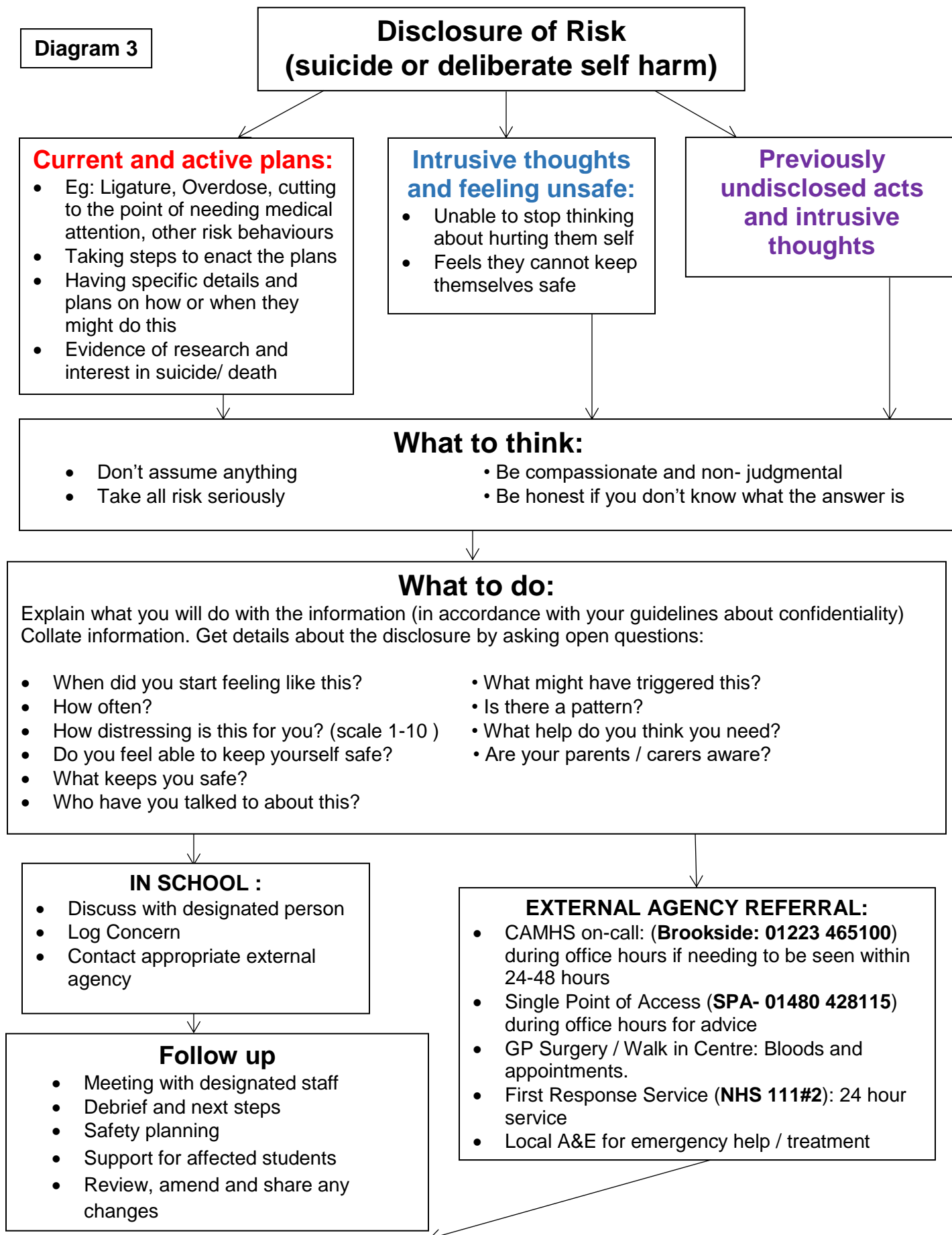
Immediate Concerns

- **999 or A and E** for emergency medical attention following serious self injury
- **First Response Service** *Call 111 and press option 2* A 24-hour service for people in a *mental health* crisis. This service is for anyone, of any age, living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak to you and discuss with you your mental health care needs
- **Community CAMHS** on call: Brookside: 01223 465100 (office hours: Mon – Fri (9:00 – 17:00))
- This is to discuss young people who you feel need a mental health assessment within the next 24 – 48 hours due to risk. The on call practitioner will make arrangements to offer an mental health assessment
- (If the child or young person is already a patient of Cambridgeshire Community CAMHS, their CAMHS clinician can be contacted directly, or a discussion with the on call worker)
- **Single Point of Access (SPA) (CAMHS)** Tel: **01480 428115** Office hours: Mon – Fri (9:00 – 17:00) It is better to phone for a discussion than email if this needs to be dealt with urgently. Email: accesscamhs@nhs.net
SPA will advise on next steps that may include:
 - Advice over the telephone on the management of the current concern
 - Advice on making a referral to CAMHS

- Advice on other, more appropriate, services.
- **Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (FCAMHS)**
 - A community mental health service that aims to help young people who are displaying concerning behaviours that may be putting others at risk. A majority of their work is to support professionals who are already working with young people however they do also provide all levels of support including intervention when required
 - FCAMHS is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
T 0300 3009300
E cpm-tr.FCAMHS@nhs.net

Process for clarifying the nature of the Suicide Risk to determine response

Diagram 3



Appendix C: Guidance and advice documents

It is important to keep up to date with new guidance and policy changes and we recommend using the following websites for current information.

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/guidance-frameworks-and-key-websites/>

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

<https://www.keep-your-head.com/prof/cp-mhs/resources-events-and-training/creating-mentally-healthy-school>



Appendix D: Bereavement Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

- Rationale
- A child's reaction to bereavement
- Talking about death
- Support for Staff

Section 2 - Supporting a bereaved pupil

- Returning to school after a bereavement
- Longer term support
- The Curriculum

Section 3 - The death of a pupil

- Roles and responsibilities
- Procedures
- Remembering

Section 4 - The death of a member of staff

Annex A: Template letters to parents/carers after a death in the school community

Annex B: Addendum to Bereavement Policy: Covid-19 Pandemic

Section 1 - Introduction

Rationale

Anglian Learning Trust is committed to supporting the well-being and emotional health of all its staff and pupils. The ethos and culture of all Anglian Learning Trust schools means that they are committed to supporting individuals and whole school communities when experiencing bereavement.

Bereavement can be experienced by any member of our school community at any time, whether that be as a result of the death of a parent/carer, a relative or indeed a member of staff or pupil of the school. In addition, bereavement can occur as the result of any separation within a family such as divorce.

This policy is to provide a framework for all staff to give guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with the bereavement.

- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after bereavement.
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.
- To identify key staff within school, AL Trust, the governing body and the Local Authority where necessary.
- To have clear expectations about the way school will respond to a death, and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.

The policy has been written based on guidance from various sources such as, Child Bereavement UK, Winston's Wish, Bereavement Advice and Child Bereavement Network.

A child's reaction to bereavement

Children's reactions to bereavement are affected by many factors which may include; age and 'maturity'; who has died, how they died, what their relationship was with the person who has died, how the rest of family respond, what other stresses are in their lives at the same time.

Children can move through many emotions and reactions very quickly such as:

- anxiety
- insecurity and worry about other family members
- vivid memories
- sleep difficulties
- sadness and longing
- anger and acting-out behaviour
- guilt, self-reproach and blame
- school difficulties

- physical health complaints

These emotions and reactions do not necessarily happen in any given order and not all will be experienced by all children. Whereas many adults may 'stay' with their grief much longer children tend to '*Puddle-jump*' through their emotions and is a method of coping. Teenagers may show their emotions in many ways including periods of self-isolation both physically and emotionally.

Whatever way a child responds, it is important to help them understand what is happening to them and to talk about what is going on. It can therefore be helpful to meet with the pupil and their family/carers to establish what has happened and to discuss their return to school. This could be a familiar trusted adult: Year Lead, Pastoral/student support staff, SENCO.

The purpose of this meeting should be to:

- Acknowledge the death.
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need 'time-out'.
- Consider whether to provide 'time-out' activities – journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc.
- Set guidelines for communication – with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school.
- Consider providing support for peers when they have a bereaved friend.

Talking about death

Talking to a child about death can be difficult as adults will worry about upsetting the child even more or maybe frightening them by saying the wrong thing. However, talking to a child about death and answering their questions as honestly as possible is important. Often what children may imagine may possibly be much worse than reality. Experience tells us that children and young people often want us to talk about it, but adults feel awkward and cautious and so avoid it.

Quite often the news of a death will be given by a parent/carers, but it is also important for school staff to be aware of some of the basic guidance on informing a child of a death. Simplicity and honesty are vital.

- Use simple but accurate language; such as 'death' and 'died' and avoid euphemisms such 'passed away'
- Staff may need to explain to a very young child exactly what death means
 - Staff should not be afraid to show feelings. It's ok to feel sad.
 - Explain that death is normal
 - Allow the child to express their grief
 - Grief can be delayed

- Recognise each relationship is different and therefore reactions can be different

Additional guidance on how to inform a child of a death and other resources can be found at [Child Bereavement UK](#) and [Winston's Wish](#), which support children through bereavement

Support for staff

When staff work alongside bereaved children it can also have an effect on them. Therefore, school leaders must ensure that 'front-line' staff who deal with safeguarding issues are supported. 'Supervision' mechanisms are important as well as staff training. It is useful for each school to ensure at least one or two key pastoral/SEND staff have experienced relevant training on bereavement so that they can not only support pupils but also be better to cope with the feeling they may themselves experience.

Section 2 - Supporting a bereaved pupil

Returning to school after a bereavement

Longer term support

It is vital that a full and accurate record is taken and logged on MyConcern at the time of the bereavement, around the child's well-being as well as any relevant plan or support that was given. It may be several months, or even years before a child begins dealing with the bereavement so it is important to have accurate records.

It is important to recognise significant dates or anniversaries, e.g. birthdays, Mother's / Father's Day etc. as these may impact on the child's state of mind and behaviour. Contact with home is especially important at this time.

Staff should be mindful that progress, behaviour and school work may be affected at various times, especially initially and on key dates. It is important at this time to keep other staff informed and to be extra vigilant looking out for the child.

It is important too that those children who may have already been vulnerable for a range of reasons are supported, as change and upset can have a serious impact on their well-being, therefore key pastoral/student support SENCO should ensure good communication with other staff and parents.

The Curriculum

It is important that death, grief, separation and bereavement are taught so that pupils can better understand emotions that at some stage they are likely to experience.

Various aspects of any school curriculum will have connections to life events with content connected to death, separation and bereavement. Topics in Religious Education, English texts and History for example can cover topics which may be sensitive to a child going through bereavement. Therefore, it is important to be aware of their curriculum and bereaved pupils notified in advance and given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.

Section 3 – The death of a pupil

Roles and responsibilities

It is vital that the facts are established from the outset by the individuals schools Principals or senior representative. This information should then be shared with the AL Trust Leadership Team and Chair of Governors.

It is important that a plan is put in place as early as possible and that there is a nominated senior lead member of staff appointed to oversee the process and support offered.

In the case of a traumatic or sudden death of a pupil, the school may be involved as part of a multi-agency review and therefore a nominated representative, usually the Principal and/or DSL will be involved in the process. Other responsibilities will have to be decided in order to address each of the suggested procedures listed under the next heading.

When bereavement is more complex, for example following the sudden death of a member of staff or a pupil, specialist support should be sought.

The school procedures and processes for announcing a death of a pupil should be shared and where possible done in consultation with the family.

Whenever the news of a pupil's death is confirmed it will be important to convene a senior leader's meeting as soon as possible. This should also include other key personnel such as pastoral leads, relevant form tutor etc. The news of the death of a child may have broken in the community outside school hours and convening a meeting well before the start of the next day may be necessary to plan procedures. This could be done via Google Meet if necessary.

To an extent, the nature of the death will dictate what the response and plan is, e.g. a child who may have been terminally ill for a period of time is of course difficult for the school community but perhaps the most challenging circumstances is the sudden death of a child unexpectedly, in a traumatic manner, e.g. suicide, car accident, or even a very exceptional event such as death from contracting COVID-19.

The following aspects are suggestions for AL Trust schools to consider when dealing with the death of a child. It is by no means a comprehensive list but may guide schools towards a better support and response plan:

The family of the child –

- Contacting the family as early as possible to offer condolences and support.
- If the child comes from a vulnerable setting, liaison with external services may also be appropriate to ensure the family gains the support they need.
- The offer of a visit should happen in the initial stages, the purpose being to offer support in person and discuss any relevant arrangements such as the funeral service, or any aspect with which the school may be able to help with. (It is important to note that a family may not wish for any contact or visits)

During exceptional circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic consideration should be given as to how key staff will support the grieving remotely:

- Encourage pupils to make drawings or write letters and submit them to you so you can deliver them to the bereaved family
- With the family's permission, set up a memorial page online and encourage pupils to submit drawings, letters or pictures (make sure this is only accessible to your individual school community – you could perhaps create a password-protected page on your school website, or set up a 'Google Site' page with appropriate viewing permissions)
- Encourage pupils to create a playlist of music that makes them think of the deceased or makes them feel better
- Consider having older pupils or pupil Senate set up an online fundraiser in memory of the deceased (with the family's permission)

It may be appropriate to invite the family in at some point, perhaps after school, to visit any area where the school has set out for others to pay their respect, for example where staff and pupils have signed a book of condolence.

Friendship groups –

- Important to identify the closest friends of the child who has died.
- They may already be aware of the news, so it is important that they understand that they will be supported by the school.
- If the school needs to break the news to the children, it is important to ensure that their respective families are also involved.
- Closest friends must be given a key member of staff they can go to.
- Key staff will support in agreeing a 'script' to help answer questions that will inevitably be asked by peers

Informing the school community – If the news has broken overnight, there may be some of the community who are not aware and need to be notified.

- AL Trust leads to be informed as soon as possible
- Senior leaders should convene a short staff meeting asap before school and inform staff.
- If there is a particular member of staff who may have been close to the child, it would be worth informing them prior to a whole staff meeting in addition speaking to his/her friends to ensure they have support at this initial time.
- Communicating to staff the need to support each other but to also be extra vigilant with pupils in recognising issues.
- Staff should be given a link member(s) of staff to communicate with regarding particular issues.

If the death of the child is sudden and unexpected, it may well be worth holding assemblies as soon as possible with relevant year groups, or indeed the whole school.

Depending on the nature of the school and or the circumstances of the death, it may be more appropriate to deliver the news in small groups.

If it is a death of a child that may have been expected, it may be worth seeing their particular year

group

School staff should be prepared for a variety of reactions when news is delivered.

To deliver the message it is worth noting the following points:

- Have a script prepared.
- The message should be one which is simple and factual
 - With the family's permission and dependent on the circumstances, a brief account should be given of where, when the death occurred, and how, if appropriate. If these facts are not all known, pupils should be informed that they will be told these details as soon as school can.
 - Quash any rumours that may have been already communicated to school that are false.
- Staff delivering the message should not be afraid to show emotion.
- Remind pupils of their responsibilities and possible impact when posting on social media.
- Speak briefly and positively about the child who has died but don't eulogise.
- Mention any arrangements in place including for those who may need support and which staff they may see.
- Acknowledge that it's also ok not to feel sad, especially if the pupil was not known to other pupils.
- Clearly stating the expected behaviour and a level of respect now needed from pupils is important. They should be encouraged to support each other at this time and be more vigilant of their friends and peers.
- Before dismissing the pupils off to class, it is good to give them a few minutes to allow them to process the information that has been given to them and take a little 'time-out'.

The death may be of interest to the media, inform pupils that they should not be discussing the matter with any journalist or any other person who may approach them near school. This may be difficult to police as parents may respond to any media.

In consultation with the family it may well be appropriate to inform the wider community. Template letters are included in Annex A but this is likely to require specific editing.

A place to grieve –

It may be appropriate to have a nominated quiet and safe place in school where friends may gather over the coming days:

- it is very important to 'manage' this facility as a place specifically for closest friends.
- It should be 'promoted' as a place for a short visit.
- Any child who is grieving and unable to function at some 'normal' level at school may need to go home or be supported elsewhere.
- A book of condolence can give pupils a purpose in such a place.
- Ensure it is communicated to all when this place will no longer be available.
-

Media – In most cases the media would not be a relevant factor, but in any high profile incident

the media will take an interest. The Principal should ensure they liaise with the AL Trust central team for direction.

There are some aspects that are useful to have prepared:

- Prepare a very basic script with minimum details to be given out to relevant media outlets when appropriate to do so.
- Have a script for school administrative staff who may receive a call from the media, simply saying there is 'no comment at this sad time'.
- Details of the caller should be passed on to the Principal to respond in consultation with AL Trust leadership if deemed relevant. The less is said the better, especially at initial stages.
- Ensure staff are on duty in numbers before and after school to discourage media from possibly congregating around the school perimeter. If deemed necessary, request local police support at these times.

School Timetable –

The death of a child may result in the need for some short term reorganisation of the school day. It is best to keep the school day as 'normal' as possible and to give all pupils a set routine for their day, however, some adjustments for some pupils may be appropriate.

The funeral –

This will be dependent on the wishes of the family as to whether there is school involvement or not and may partly in some way be determined by a particular faith or culture. If the school community is to be present, school leaders will have to decide how that occurs. It can range from school being closed for the day or part of the day, or the school being represented by a small number of staff and pupils.

If the school is to be closed, prior to the day, leaders should communicate to all pupils that only pupils 'connected' with the family should attend. This is out of respect and sensitivity for the family.

It may be the family do not wish for floral tributes but rather a donation to be made to a chosen charity and school should liaise where possible with the family about this.

For a funeral service where some staff and pupils are attending, leaders will have to be sensitive around which staff may be able to attend. There should be a school leader present, if the Principal is not able to, and relevant school staff. Colleagues in school may be asked to cover for those attending the service.

Remembering

Ongoing support is important for the whole community and part of this is how the child may be remembered. It is important to take opinion from others, not only from senior leaders and staff, but also friends and family of the child so that a respectful and appropriate memorial is decided on. It may be that a permanent memorial is decided, for example, a tree, bench on school grounds, piece of artwork etc. Or it may simply be a service in school.

Whilst it may be important to mark the first anniversary of a death, school needs to be conscious about how long this may go on for and what is appropriate year after year.

Section 4 – The death of a member of staff

The principles and procedures outlined above in the section on the death of a child are useful to apply, some more than others in regards to communication to staff, communication to pupils and the wider community. The principles are similar in terms of liaison with the family, offering support to the family, discussing funeral arrangements and deciding on how the school may remember their colleague.

Again the nature of the death and family wishes may dictate the procedures which are needed.

The support of other staff, some of whom may have been very close to the member of staff who has died, needs to be a great priority and the support of other staff at this time for each other is vital.

It is important to note that at the core of this will be the Principal who may well be dealing with the implications of such a sad event as a death of a pupil or colleague, yet still needs to lead staff and the whole school community. The Trust leadership team will be on hand to support senior colleagues throughout this process.

You'll also need to consider when to communicate with pupils and parents if there has been a death from COVID-19:.

You need to plan ahead for how to communicate remotely while:

- Remaining sensitive to the needs of your staff
 - Prepare a statement and method of sharing the news with the rest of the school community.
 - Protecting the privacy of the affected staff member/pupil and their family
 - Controlling the potential spread of rumours
 - External support in the form of counsellors etc. may be beneficial to pupils and staff.
1. You won't share news of a staff member's or a pupil's serious illness with anyone outside of staff. This is to prevent undue anxiety and to maintain confidentiality. Exceptions to this would be if:
 - Your local health protection team has instructed you to contact pupils/parents for public health reasons
 - News has already spread through social media (see the section below on what to do if social media is ahead of you)
 2. You will share news of a staff member's or pupil's death with the school community as soon as possible in order to facilitate healthy grieving.

Keep in mind that there's no perfect way to do this, and much of the detail will depend on the culture of your school.

Take care of yourself- Supporting one another builds community, which in turn builds resilience

Supporting staff through bereavement can take a toll on key staff supporting others emotionally. Teams should have regular debriefs to help them talk through what they're experiencing and monitor their mental health.

If you don't take the time to consciously slow things down and process what's happened, you're not going to get the time later. The greatest responsibility you have as a leader is to stay well.

- Set limits – now, more than ever, set working hours and stick to them. Let staff and parents know that you won't be available outside of certain hours.
- Model what self-care looks like
- Delegate – don't look at delegation as fobbing off your own work on someone else. Use this time to give a staff member the opportunity to show they can step up
- Ask for help – don't suffer in silence. Talk to friends, call a helpline, or talk regularly with your chair of governors
- Encourage your staff to check in with each other -

Annex A: Template letters to parents/carers after a death in the school community

a) Letter to family following the death of their child.

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of <name's> death. The staff and pupils of the school, as well as the Trust CEO /Trust Leaders (as applicable/appropriate)wish to offer our condolences to you and your family at this sad time.

There are no words to express our deep sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through. As a school community, we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends, classmates and staff. <Name> was a <valued / loved / popular / well-regarded / friendly> member of our school family and <he/she> will be sorely missed.

We would greatly appreciate being informed of any funeral arrangements for <name> and if you need any assistance as you plan, please don't hesitate to ask us.

If there is anything we can do for you at this time, then please let us know.

We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.

With sympathy

Headteacher

b) Letter to parents/carers following the death of a pupil.

Dear Parents/Carer,

We have had the sad task of informing our school community of the death of <name>, a pupil in <Year X>.

<Name> died suddenly / in hospital / after an illness / in a car accident / last week / during half term etc.>

<He/she> was a <valued / loved / popular / well-regarded / friendly> member of our school community and will be sorely missed by all who knew <him/her>.

Dealing with the death of a peer and friend can be difficult for young people and we will be of course supporting all of our people at school especially those closest to <name>. Some pupils may feel shock, others sadness, while others may be confused, angry or feel 'numb'. These reactions are all normal and our staff are here to support all.

We have tried to answer all questions at school but it may be your child has more when they are at home. If you need support in helping your child please do not hesitate to get in touch and/or by all means use one of the many online resources available, e.g. [Child Bereavement](#), [Childhood](#)

Bereavement Network.

Our thoughts are with <name's> family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <name's> life.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher/Principal

c) Letter to parents/carers following the death of a member of staff.

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing with some sad news that you may have already heard from your son/daughter. A member of our school staff, <name>, died <suddenly at home / in hospital / after illness / car accident etc.>. This has been sad news for our staff at losing a dear friend and work colleague. We have been in contact with <his/her> family to pass on our condolences on behalf of our community.

<Name> has worked at <school name> since <year> in the role of <English teacher / school office etc.>. <Name> was a <valued member of staff / thoughtful / dedicated / supportive etc.> member of staff who will be sorely missed by all at school.

When someone dies, young people can react in a number of ways. Some pupils may feel shock, others sadness, while others may be confused, angry or feel 'numb'. These reactions are all normal and our staff are here to support all.

We have tried to answer all questions at school but it may be your child has more when they are at home. If you need support in helping your child please do not hesitate to get in touch and/or by all means use one of the many online resources available, e.g. [Child Bereavement](#), [Childhood Bereavement Network](#).

Our thoughts are with <name's> family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember <name's> life.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Glossary of terms

PSHE Personal, social, health and economic education

SRE Sex and relationship education

SENCo Special Educational needs co-ordinator

HOL Head of learning

CLT College leadership team

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. (NB this term can be used both to refer to “comprehensive CAMHS” i.e. all organisations which work with children and therefore have a responsibility for their emotional wellbeing and also Community CAMHS, the specialist service.)

SPA Single Point of Access

EHH Early Help Hub

MASH Multi-agency safe-guarding hub

LSCB Local safeguarding children board

SEND Special educational needs and disability

CPFT Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

