

Contextual Background *(as at May 2020)*

The Church of England's Vision for Education embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people, offering a vision of human flourishing for all. To support that flourishing we need to equip school leaders so that they can respond with **wisdom** effectively to the current situation. If there has been a bereavement in the school family, they will be faced with the challenge that each bereavement is different and each member of the school community is different and therefore their need for support will vary.

School leaders need to have someone to talk things through with (to think out loud). They need to be proactive rather than reactive when responding to the challenges; this way they can support their staff, pupils and families better. The leaders may be thinking "... what if I miss something?..." "...am I doing this right?" Therefore, having a named person / point of contact through a local church, or Diocese would be helpful to arrange.

Through the guidance in the resource Valuing All God's Children leaders will find that school staff can facilitate the living of the element of '**dignity**' ensuring that every child is shown that they can flourish at this difficult time. All children being human beings fully formed in the image of God and loved by God (Genesis 1:27). They need to be listened to, respected and given time to talk and express their feelings. They need to know that there is someone there for them to talk to about anything they need to talk about linked to the death of their special person. They may have experienced the adults in their family trying to shield them from the reality of the situation, so having time to express their concerns / worries and thoughts is of great importance to help them make sense of what has happened. They need to learn that people act in different ways and there's no 'right way' to grieve.

So, if the pupil/s is/are attending school this support could easily be put in place, but if they are not currently in school, the school can make the family aware of what the school have in place to support the child e.g. someone to speak to over the phone or virtually, on-line book of remembrance, a class or school Book of Memories etc. Also making them aware of other ideas which are available on the Church of England website, such as lighting a virtual candle, a prayer card, a sympathy card, there is also a 'Simple Reflection at Home' for the day of a funeral they can't attend.

The healing process is usually a long-term and the memory of a bereavement will last a lifetime. It is important to remember this at any transitional time in the pupil's school career. As there currently can't be normal funeral services, wakes or gatherings after the funeral at the moment, it's even more important that the children are encouraged to be part of whatever it is the family are doing to remember their special person. Perhaps they could be involved in designing a gathering that can be organised at a later date to remember their special person when more people can be present.

However, at this time, when **'community'** is the people living in your home, a broader understanding of community will be rather challenging to address until the day when we can once again be together in our school and church communities. It could be helpful therefore for school staff to start to plan an act of worship to cover the months since the school has been semi-closed as many of the pupils / students and staff may know someone who has been affected by the Coronavirus. This could be publicised in the school's newsletter and on their website, so if pupils would like to add their thoughts and ideas to the formation of this act of worship they have the opportunity.

Some schools may also find it appropriate to identify an area in the school which could become a safe space for pupils to go to. They could involve the pupils (virtually) with this too. They might also find it appropriate to hold a collection when the pupils all return to school and from that they could plant a tree or add a feature to the outside space so that their special person or people can still be part of school life and conversations.

Organisations and Resources for Schools and Families

Organisations

At a Loss

A Christian based organisation that has [a helpful short film to support others who are bereaved](#)

Child Bereavement Network

CBN supports professionals working with bereaved children and young people. The website includes lots of helpful information including resources which can be used to support children.

Tel: 020 7843 6309. [Website](#)

Child Bereavement UK

Child Bereavement UK offer a [schools' information pack](#) which is detailed and structured.

- It walks through many scenarios and includes scripts for what to say in assemblies, etc.
- It outlines what children's understanding of death is likely to be at different ages.
- There is an example policy for primary and secondary schools which can be adapted with the coronavirus pandemic in mind.
- There are also example letters to send out which could be adapted for email during the lockdown.
- They offer [guidance on supporting children during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

National Helpline 0800 028840 (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) support@childbereavementuk.org.

Church Army

For those who work with young people, Church Army has produced a [resource to help young people who have been bereaved by Covid-19:](#)

[Death, Grief and Hope.](#)

Cruse Bereavement Care

Cruse has dedicated set of resources for schools:

- It has specific section for schools and resources, for young people, for parents, for those supporting the bereaved and for understanding bereavement.
- It has a [helpful 'page'](#) on what to say.

Support helpline: 0808 8081677

Hope Again

Hope Again is a sister company to Cruse. It is the youth website of Cruse and supports young people whose parent has died. It is a safe place where young people can learn from other young people, how to cope with grief, and feel less alone.

Resources include:

- Information about their services, a listening ear from other young people and advice for any young person dealing with the loss of a loved one.
- Personal stories/films and comments in a 'youth helpful' way

Grief Encounters

Coronavirus: Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People

Helpline: 0808 802 011 (Monday – Friday 9am -9pm)

Education Support offer a free, confidential helpline for staff: 08000 562 561

PAPYRUS

PAPYRUS has developed a guide to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention in schools and colleges. It aims to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support schoolchildren who may be having suicidal thoughts with **Save The Class** resources. It runs **HOPELINEUK** where advisers can talk with children or young people under 35 or others who are worried about them. The **Bedtime Stories** resources highlight the impact of online bullying.

Winston's Wish

Winston's Wish is a charity which has many resources to help us specifically through this challenging time. Winston's Wish supports bereaved children, young people, their families, and the professionals who support them and this now has a Coronavirus (COVID-19) update.

Resources include:

- Saying Goodbye when a funeral isn't possible.
- How schools can support children.
- Talking to children about Coronavirus.
- Telling a child someone is seriously ill.
- Telling a child someone has died from coronavirus
- Ways to manage your anxiety about coronavirus.
- Death through serious illness.

National Helpline: 08088 020021 (Monday – Friday 9am -5pm) for therapeutic advice on supporting a grieving child or young person after the death of a loved one or email support on ask@winstonswish.org

What's Your Grief

This website has some helpful ideas:

- 10 Ideas for funerals and memorials when you can't be together
- When you can't be with a dying family member

- How to live-Stream a funeral or Memorial Service

Other websites that may be useful:

Care for the Family: A Christian based charity that seeks to support families in a range of areas including bereavement.

Miscarriage Association

Mothers' Union: Useful support materials available especially when supporting bereaved children mu@mothersunion.org

Samaritans


Supporting Bereaved Staff in the Workplace –Top Tips for Managers.

The Compassionate Friends

WAY Widowed and Young

Other Resources

A free online book, Coronavirus - a Guide for Children

This is a free digital information book for primary school age children to help explain the coronavirus and the measures taken to control it. It answers lots of questions in a child-friendly way, and aims to both inform and reassure. Published by Nosy Crow and  illustrated by Axel Scheffler, the text had expert input from Professor Graham Medley of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and also two headteachers and a child psychologist.

Grove Books: Education Series

Journeying Through Bereavement in Schools by Ian Terry ISBN: 978 1 85174 809 9

Childrens' Books

There are many books available for children to engage with bereavement, either non fiction or fiction. Both **Child Bereavement UK** and **Cruse** have book list available.

One such book is '**Waterbugs and dragonflies**', by **Doris Stickney**

-this a short story explaining death through the fable of the transformation of the dragonfly with a Christian perspective.

Webinars

Some charities advertise webinars (see charity websites for details) Also:

[Diocese of St Albans training for clergy and lay people.](#)

Grief and Bereavement Webinars – [Charity for Civil servants, led in conjunction with Cruse.](#)

Diocesan Websites

Many of the Dioceses across the country offer a wide range of resources for schools including excellent book lists. These include for example:

Bath and Wells Diocese

Resources including:

- A range of leaflets on a variety of themes including: schools responding to a bereavement; children's understanding and reactions to death; theories of grief; supporting bereaved children;
- Training offer and direct support to schools led by a Cruse trained diocesan education adviser.

Bristol Diocese

Resources including:

- Collective Worship at home
- Candle Mindfulness Time.

Chelmsford Diocese

Resources including:

- Model Policy
- Books and resources list
- Flowcharts to aid school leaders to share information.

St Albans Diocese

Resources for schools including:

- Guidelines for coping with bereavement in the classroom – including what different faiths believe about death.

