



‘Never the Same’

School Leadership Resources for Grief, Bereavement and Loss

based on the Church of England Vision for Education

May 2020



INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

School leaders find themselves in a season of immense personal and professional challenge. The current Covid-19 situation has seen our sector and society face greater strain than perhaps any other period in our lifetimes. Across the country, the prevalence and ‘normality’ of the experience of bereavement, loss and grief will continue to grow - the death of relatives, friends, staff, students, parts of our community - the loss of opportunities and grieving for lost rites of passage. We will mourn together. It will impact on us in many ways and it will change us in how we act and what we do.

This resource forms part of a wider suite of **‘Faith at Home’** resources, including parallel approaches for Church Leaders and Households. It is designed to help School Leaders approach the bereavements we will face using the Church of England’s Vision for Education as a framework. This allows us to refer to thinking with which we have been leading in other aspects of school life, bringing a new dimension to the threads we recognise. In each section, we have provided some reflection based on the area of the vision – drawing out the impact that the Christian narrative can have in shaping our thinking and practice - alongside some practical activities to consider using with school communities, some questions for discussion and a simple prayer to use.

Grief and bereavement does not end – there is no date when everything will go back to normal.

We will always feel the loss and so in offering this support, we hope to equip us all with a practical resource for not just the coming months, but the coming years. The intention is to help us to make our way through this period actively acknowledging and planning for the challenges we will face, seeking to find the hopeful and the enriching wherever we can. In recognising the scale of the current situation and the fact that the ripples of mourning will be felt over years to come, we hope that this resource will help us all to navigate it the best we can – walking in humility together.

Our Vision for Education is centred on the John 10.10 promise of ‘life in all its fullness’ – however, this is not a promise that everything will go our way, or that the path ahead is easy. Life in this season will require deep wisdom, patient hope, generous community and humble dignity as we seek to enable the flourishing of the children and adults in our care.

Our title has many meanings – (when you’ve experienced loss, it will be – **never the same** – without X...; the way that each individual and community experiences grief is unique and thus **never the same** etc.). There is change, instability, question and doubt yet the Christian narrative says “Jesus Christ is the same – yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13.8). It is by this light that we journey on and grow around our bereavement together.

We are extremely grateful to the wide range of Diocesan Directors of Education and their teams who have worked collaboratively together to create this resource, and offer it accompanied by a wide range of recommended further resources from a fantastic range of partner organisations working in this space.

EDUCATING FOR WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

REFLECT:

Stimulus exploration of the Christian narrative with which *to think together*

“There is confidence that the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge and skills is consistent with how God has shaped the world and ourselves...There is hope in God and God’s wisdom, and in the possibilities of reconciliation and transformation. The many ways in which human beings and our communities go wrong is cause for lament, but not for despair.”

(Church of England Vision for Education, 2016)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault...”

(James 1.5)

Through seasons of grief, pain, loss and bereavement, the need for deep wisdom in leadership is urgent and to be sought together in community. Wisdom is a shared conversation not a one-way transaction; it always permits good questions, making careful choices, often more slowly than others may desire. There is wisdom and support through resources provided by a wide variety of organisations to help schools cope with bereavement and loss within their communities (see **Appendix 1** for a range of helpful examples). In addition, the ability to think wisely together using the language of a ‘Deeply Christian’ vision for education enables educational leaders to frame such difficult human experiences within a Christian understanding of the world and our place in it.

Even in our most challenging times, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are a source of wisdom and understanding for what it means to live well. The Christian narrative does not promise easy answers, a straight path, or the removal of suffering. Indeed, Jesus’ own journey shows that he did not avoid pain and suffering but chose to live with it, coming alongside us in our humanity. Christians believe that God’s nature was deeply shown at the point of Jesus’ death. When it looked like God was distant, quiet and absent, he was in fact closer than ever.

However, Jesus’ death was not the final part of the story. There was the resurrection. God raised Jesus to new life - the defining and distinctive Christian belief. The risen Jesus was different, yet somehow he was the same. He showed himself in the ordinary things of life, things that he had commonly shared with his friends; a picnic on the beach, meeting in a garden, in a private room and in the sharing of food. His greeting, ‘*peace be with you*’ was ‘*shalom*’, more than the absence of strife, a deep desire for blessing and fulfilment – even in the most challenging seasons we face.

Christians, just like every human being, have times of great sadness and worry. This is not confined to moments of death, but wider traumatic experiences of loss that our communities experience requiring us to find perspective and re-imagine our futures wisely. Inviting Jesus to walk alongside us as individuals and as communities through this can bring real comfort and courage. Although faith wavers his love remains constant. The Christian narrative invites us to imagine ourselves as passing through a world of darkness

and sorrow in the presence of a God who journeys with us even “when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death.” (Psalm 23:4)

In seeking to be prepared - to have explored the wisdom of God as well as sought out the wisdom of grief and trauma specialists - school leaders attempt to provide guidance and comfort to our communities in difficult times. However, in so doing we must not be afraid to answer “*I don't know*”. We cannot know all and remembering ourselves as vulnerable and imperfect will help others. Wisdom is not having all the answers, but providing the love, patience and humility to host the conversation well together – permitting and embracing lament, and gently choosing to walk alongside one another in the challenge.

For Further Reading and Reflection:

Psalm 23.1-6; John 14.1-6; Psalm 121.1-8

DISCUSS:

Questions *to consider together* as a team

- What wisdom, knowledge and skills do we, as school leaders, need to develop together in order to deal with issues of grief, bereavement and loss in our school communities?
- What structures and relationships do we need to set up to enable us to handle grief and bereavement effectively as leaders, whilst providing strong networks of support for our own positive mental health?
- How can school leaders use their knowledge of the way children learn and develop to support children's understanding of death and bereavement?
- What counselling skills would be useful for staff to gain in order to support children and young people who have experienced death and bereavement?
- In what ways did Jesus show his humanity through his responses to death? How could this support our acceptance of our own thoughts/feelings and emotional responses?
- Which biblical stories can be shared with children/young people to offer comfort during times of bereavement?

PRAY:

God of all wisdom,
We can't always understand what is happening around us,
Or see you at work in difficult times,
But we choose to trust in you.
Please grant us understanding.
Through Jesus Christ our teacher and our Lord.
Amen.

EDUCATING FOR HOPE & ASPIRATION

REFLECT:

Stimulus exploration of the Christian narrative with which *to think together*

“In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word.”

(Church of England Vision for Education, 2016)

“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits.”

(Psalm 130.5)

Hope rarely seems reachable in a crisis – when pain surrounds and a sustained sense of loss, detachment and solitude envelopes a school community. Hope is easily reduced to surface level positivity - aspirations for a better day, a happier moment or even the avoidance of the pressure in which we find ourselves. Hope is not just wishful thinking, which feels patronising and confusing in the seasons of grief – neither it is naïve re-assurance that everything will somehow be OK – it is the ability to reach a deeper confidence that in spite of the real, unquestionable challenge that we face together, we are somehow part of a bigger story. Hope is a lens through which we can gradually begin to view our grief together and step-by-step hope can become a resource with which we can re-imagine our futures together, even with their now missing parts.

Hope does not disregard or trample on disappointment, pain or suffering – rather it gives them a gently growing context and shape – permitting those feelings and building communities in which it is perfectly OK for everything not to be OK. In the face of immense personal suffering and regular real experience of grief and loss, Martin Luther King writes – “we must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.” The Christian narrative is built on communities of people experiencing and working through very real challenges, facing very real dangers and experiencing genuine loss and pain. Some of these experiences require us to face death and bereavement – others the trauma and loss that extends far wider – seasons changed, occasions re-shaped, transitions removed. There is no sense in which this Christian understanding brings any less frequency or depth of pain, indeed often speaks of the importance of waiting – seeing hope as patient positivity under pressure.

We can take encouragement from those who have gone before us. Medieval Europe experienced the isolation and devastation of the Black Death in the 14th century. A young woman who we now call Julian of Norwich lived through these testing times. She experienced sickness herself and at one point was so sick that she expected to die. As she lay ill, on the 8th May 1373, she experienced a number of visions showing Christ suffering as he was dying, emphasising God’s great love for her and for us. When she recovered, she wrote about these visions, sharing her message of hope and compassion. Arguably, the most striking quote of all of her writing, is this: “All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well”.

Death, loss, grief and trauma are not the last words. The Christian narrative offers a deeply hopeful vision for a world full of challenge and pain, grief and loss - a hope in the resurrected Jesus Christ. The Bible outlines hope in God’s promise that “we have this hope as an anchor for the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). The promise of an anchor is only really relevant in a storm – there is no expectation of calm waters. Though

our hearts ache when faced with the loss of loved ones, or the sadness of scattered dreams, the Christian story remains one grounded in hope to be sought, found, held on to and remembered together.

For Further Reading and Reflection:

Romans 8.24-28; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-14; Revelation 21.1-4

DISCUSS:

Questions *to consider together* as a team

- Where do we find hope – at home? at school? with friends? in thought? in silence? How do we make space for so many different ways of exploring hope together?
- Can you remember a time when you felt hopeful? What was it that helped you to feel that way? How might that help you now?
- How do we talk/think/act hopefully as a school whilst recognising the deep and long-lasting pain that we are experiencing together?
- What practical steps can we take to give courage to one another to face the next day – to literally ‘encourage’ one another?
- What might be the signs/symbols/activities that we could explore together practically and creatively to begin to re-imagine our future?

PRAY:

God of all faithfulness,
We don't always find it easy to follow in your ways,
Or learn from what you are teaching us,
But we choose to hope in you.
Please grant us willingness.
Through Jesus Christ our teacher and our Lord.
Amen.

EDUCATING FOR COMMUNITY & LIVING WELL TOGETHER

REFLECT:

Stimulus exploration of the Christian narrative with which *to think together*

“We are only persons with each other: our humanity is ‘co-humanity’, inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions, and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.”

(Church of England Vision for Education, 2016)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

(John 13.34)

In Luke 24.13-35, we read the account of the resurrected Jesus and his interactions with some of his followers. The teacher and healer who they had known intimately, loved deeply and followed devotedly had been killed. The community they knew was torn apart, desolate and broken. The narrative focuses on two grieving friends walking together to Emmaus - the walk must have been a shaky one: disorientated and stumbling, numbed by trauma. Although they don't recognise him, Jesus walks with the two friends, journeying alongside them in their confusion and grief. In Caravaggio's iconic painting of the *Supper at Emmaus*, we catch a glimpse of the impact of Jesus' presence. When those gathered finally realise who is among them, Caravaggio sets a scene where there is a palpable sense of emotion and drama. A moment of realisation, of a community coming together and finding their first steps forward out of the darkness and doubt.

In every age, death has presented humankind with one of its greatest challenges. Indeed, the history books remind us of stories and eras of deep and lasting grief – even in times where mortality was much more real than it is to us in 21st century Britain. Bereavement, grief, trauma and loss catch our communities unawares, de-stablisng anything normal and shaking our relationships, beliefs and vision. Even the most expected of deaths causes a complexity and force of emotion that is impossible to articulate and fathom. For months and years following, and at strange times and places, the grief catches us again. Perhaps we hear a song or see a photograph, hear a particular joke or saying. The complexity and pain return and at times overwhelm us – both emotionally and physically. Even when death does not occur, our communities can be shaken by the loss of key events, occasions, marker points of celebration and transition – the de-stablisng re-shaping of the normal.

Jesus calls people to life – life in all its fulness – flourishing together. This call is not a simplistic response that says that we should never grieve or feel the pain of loss again. 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10.10) is not shorthand for 'just the good bits when the world seems to be going our way.' But rather, it is a life where we bring our loss and pain and choose to walk together with those who grieve and mourn. And when Jesus teaches, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt 8.22), we see that we are called to travel on together, to live out our vocation, love and be loved, connect and create – all the while carrying together (and for each other) our suffering and grief. The Christian narrative shows however our

community is made up, shaken up and re-formed in our grief and loss – that “nothing can separate us from the love of God.” (Romans 8.39)

Grief is intensely private, yet inherently corporate. We experience it together, not just alone. The person lost is missing from us, not just from me. A multi-layered school community grieves in myriad different ways – some demonstrative and visible, others hidden and subtle. Community connection and living well together enables each of us - adults and children - to flourish together – allowing us grace to stagger and stumble, giving us time to dwell in the questions, permitting space for doubt or confusion and embracing together wide-ranging responses in style, tone and content.

For Further Reading and Reflection:

Acts 2.42-47; 1 Corinthians 12. 12-26; Colossians 3.11-17

DISCUSS:

Questions *to consider together* as a team

- What difference, if any, does a church school’s Christian ethos make to leaders’ approach to grief and bereavement? Who might be our necessary companions on this journey?
- What might be the implications for our curriculum design and pastoral care programmes?
- What does living well together actually look like for us when we experience loss? What do we actually do? What do people actually experience as a result of our vision?
- How can we help our community be patient with one another in our grief and bereavement journeys?
- If the flourishing of the teachers goes along with the flourishing of the children – how are we flourishing together and what practical experiences/activities/events could help build this sense of togetherness?

PRAY:

God of all love,
We don't always have the energy to keep giving out to others,
Or the patience to forgive when things go wrong,
But we choose to trust in you together.
Please grant us grace.
Through Jesus Christ our teacher and our Lord.
Amen.

EDUCATING FOR DIGNITY & RESPECT

REFLECT:

Stimulus exploration of the Christian narrative with which *to think together*

“Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding.”

(Church of England Vision for Education, 2016)

“Strength and dignity are her clothing; and she smiles at the future.”

(Proverbs 31.25 NASB)

Treating one another with dignity is foundational to effective approaches to grief, bereavement and the traumatic experiences of loss. Dignity chooses words wisely and permits silence patiently. It seeks to honour the other, giving space and time again and again, and provides safe space for things to fall apart, listening attentively, whilst offering time and gentleness before seeking solutions and action plans. Dignity recognises that there are rarely any easy answers, and yet gradually enables the small building blocks of the next steps to be brought together. In times of crisis, children and adults cleave to the organisations they trust and schools are central to this, providing spaces for support and reconciliation, showing empathy and resilience to the benefit of all they serve.

In supporting staff, parents and children in these times of challenge, school leaders will seek to ensure they preserve the dignity of each member of their community, valuing each of them as one of God’s children. When Jesus went to the family of Lazarus following his death, John tells us he saw Mary weeping and was moved to tears (John 11:33-35). He wept because he was fully human, he felt the pain of those who loved Lazarus and cried in his compassion for the bereaved. Jesus showed us that from respect for those who have suffered loss, we can mourn alongside them. In reaching out to all in society, Jesus modelled for us the qualities of dignity, respect and love we should seek to show as we lead our school communities.

Experiencing grief and bereavement will change each of us personally in our outlook and attitude, so schools need to provide space to understand each person as an individual, providing dignified spaces, timescales and processes to enable each member of their community to reconnect. The loss of opportunity, occasion or connection (even without the deep challenge of death itself) requires deep resources of dignity in our interactions and processes.

Managing such situations and processes may hit leaders themselves harder than they expect, and therefore particular attention should be paid to providing support mechanisms for those carrying leadership responsibilities for others. While the short-term management of such a crisis will require deep resources and wisdom, handling grief and bereavement is a long-term leadership endeavour. School leaders can develop practices, habits, events and experiences that can enable the community to come together regularly with dignity and respect that lasts for the long term.

Providing space for quiet and reflection can bring us closer to God. There is comfort in the biblical narrative - “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8). Christians believe that God is aware of every single need one has: financial, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional - so taking

time to name and acknowledge these needs may help us to feel heard, giving us the dignity of feeling understood. In seeking to support others, we are reminded "...we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

In coming to terms with personal grief and bereavement, school leaders will encounter the loss of opportunity and of rites of passage now missed. This could include examinations and transition activities, as well as celebrations, trips and events. Giving students (adults) permission to grieve for these lost opportunities in ways that allow them to retain their sense of dignity yet equipping them with the language to do so requires schools to actively plan. To do so well requires time and will include new and different practice for years (rather than weeks or months) to provide safe and reassuring spaces for adults and children as we emerge from the initial phase of loss. Enabling our communities to acknowledge what has happened, to develop the language to name and explore what it means and to then move forward is a deep expression of each individual's ultimate worth and intrinsic dignity.

For Further Reading and Reflection:
Philippians 2.5-11; John 13.1-17; Luke 10.25-37

DISCUSS:

Questions *to consider together* as a team

- What does love require of each of us in the relationships we hold? What could 'flourishing together' look like in this challenging season?
- Who are the most vulnerable members of our community? How can we support them? How do we do this and ensure we are preserving their dignity?
- How can prayer or reflection help me to understand my feelings about what is happening?
- How might some needs be misunderstood by others? How can we mitigate this?
- How can we practically support those grieving who were not permitting to attend the funeral?
- How has God kept me safe? 'What can we learn from what the Bible teaches about the way Jesus comforts people who are sad?

PRAY:

God of the wilderness,
We are not always sure how to endure these testing
times,
Or where to find nourishment for our souls,
But we choose to trust in you.
Please grant us refreshment.

God of all strength,
We don't always have the capacity to keep going,
Or the ability to see a way through,
But we choose to trust in you.
Please grant us perseverance.
Through Jesus Christ our teacher and our Lord.
Amen.

APPENDIX I: EXTERNAL RESOURCES

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 <https://www.ataloss.org>

A Christian based organisation that has a helpful short film to support others who are bereaved
<https://www.ataloss.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/coronavirus-pandemic>

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: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

Child Bereavement UK offer a schools' information pack which is detailed and structured.
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a35f83e5-e4ad-49e1-8b01-7e7d55ffa528>

- 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.
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bc9f3d7d-7b43-421a-8ed4-4335f9c23b35>

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

Church Army <https://churcharmy.org>

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

https://churcharmy.org/Groups/290286/Church_Army/web/What_we_do/Resources/Resources.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0V6RIBOJDGWMH8eIzEWEIz8b2UxKGVeVHXyuLzhEjpuTlaVZAB2P99Fw

Cruse Bereavement Care <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

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 <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus/coronavirus-what-say-when-someone-grieving>

Support helpline: 0808 8081677

Hope Again <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

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 www.griefencounter.org

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.

www.papyrus-uk.org

Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

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 www.whatsyourgrief.com

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 www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Miscarriage Association: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

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

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org.uk

Supporting Bereaved Staff in the Workplace –Top Tips for Managers; www.foryoubyyou.org.uk

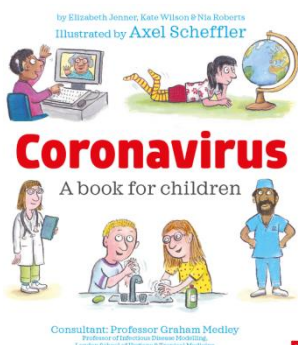
The Compassionate Friends; www.tcf.org.uk

WAY Widowed and Young; www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Other Resources

A free online book, **Coronavirus - a Guide for Children**

<https://axelscheffler.com/books-for-older-children/coronavirus>



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; <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/child-bereavement-webinar-tickets-102261133804?aff=eand>

Grief and Bereavement Webinars – Charity for Civil servants, led in conjunction with Cruse www.foryoubyyou

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 <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/school-effectiveness/wellbeing-pastoral-support>

Resources include

- 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 <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/Schools-Covid-19/>

Resources including:

- Collective Worship at home
- Candle Mindfulness Time

Chelmsford Diocese <https://www.cdbe.org.uk/resources-and-downloads-covid-19>

Resources including:

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

St Albans Diocese www.stalbans.anglican.org

Resources for schools including:

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

APPENDIX 2: PRACTICAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENTATION

'Any child old enough to love is old enough to grieve' (Wolfelt, 1996)

Working with children and young people who are experiencing loss and grief is an enormous privilege and a responsibility. Whilst it is important that we take that responsibility seriously, we must also hold it lightly, accepting that it is not our job to 'cure' the child or the situation, and that there are no hard and fast rules. What is key is that we allow ourselves to be guided by the child or young person who is grieving, the only expert in how they are feeling.

Wolfelt uses the helpful metaphor of gardening – where a natural process of growth and change is protected and nurtured by those that care. He suggests that 'grief gardeners' know that grief is organic, complex but perfectly natural and necessary. As gardeners we are called to watch and learn as well as to create conditions that allow our companion to mourn. The process of accompanying a child or young person in their grief journey involves patience, courage and flexibility as they flit nimbly between moments of deep pain, times of fun and laughter, and philosophical depth and pragmatic realism as they explore their assumptions about life and its meaning and purpose.

Grief, Bereavement and Loss

The death of a sibling can be particularly traumatic for children not only because they are watching their parents grieve, but also because sibling relationships are often complex with very strong feelings of both love and ambivalence. Children often express confusion caused by feelings of fear, guilt and relief. The death of a parent can also result in numerous other losses like changes in financial status, house and school moves. These create a cumulative effect that can overwhelm a child or young person

The process of grief will be affected by many factors including:

1. 'Who' is it that the bereaved person has lost? These may include: family member, friend, influential adult, a teacher.
2. 'How' a life ends influences the grief of those bereaved through the death. These may include: anticipated through illness/genes/genetic disorder etc, sudden events, accident, suicide, through ill-intent (murder), unfortunate circumstances – lightning / storm / building collapse etc.
3. The personal history of the bereaved person will influence how they grieve. These may include: past and current mental and emotional health, past bereavements, physical health, additional educational needs, past relationships with the person who has died.
4. Help and support available at the time of death and following it. This may include: availability and access to wider family, access and availability of support groups – church / charities / school / university etc.
5. 'What' is it that the bereaved person has lost? This may include: Future plans – marriage / house move etc, 'Complicated' – eg losing status / home / main source of support .

Assumptions to avoid:

- **'Bereavement is what happens to you; grief is what you feel; mourning is what you do.'** Sometimes the words grief and mourning are used interchangeably but there is an essential difference. Grief is the internal experience of thoughts and feelings caused by the loss of someone or something. Mourning is the external expression of that grieving. For children and young people mourning is more often expressed through actions than words, and can look very different from the mourning of adults.

- **Grief can be resolved** – we are forever changed by the loss we have experienced. This doesn't mean that we have to remain stunted and damaged by the experience, but attempts to return things to the way they were will only end in frustration and failure to recognize the growth brought about by the process of mourning and lament.
- **You must be strong** – sometimes well-meaning adults seeking to give children and young people purpose in the new order, say things like 'you must be strong for your mother' or 'it's your job to look after your siblings now'.
- **You have a right not to hurt** – Because of the wonders of modern medicine children in the Western world are rarely exposed to the denigrating, grinding reality of sickness and disease. Our society has come to believe that we have a right to eternal youth lived with no pain, so when pain strikes we do everything we can to avoid it. The Bible is full of lament, helping us to recognize that pain and death are part of life, not separate from it.
- **You can get over grief** – no one ever totally completes the mourning process. It is perhaps more helpful to think of grief as a journey with no end point. Quite often another 'cycle' is experienced at key points throughout the child's growth into adulthood, particularly celebratory events and 'firsts'.
- **They are playing so they don't care** – play is the work of the child and the space where they are able to process their thoughts and feelings. If the loss or death is sudden, then quite often a child may take some time to react as they initially protect themselves from the painful reality.

Regardless of a child's cognitive ability or emotional and social intelligence, all children still are able to love and experience grief. For many their reaction to minor losses brought about by change is evidence of how deeply they feel. Many children and young people with additional needs develop very strong emotional attachments to significant people in their lives, it is therefore essential to keep them as informed as possible even if this requires a lot of repetition and patience as they process the feelings and emotions in their own way.

Basic Principles to practice

- The child is the expert but might not know it. Be patient. Too many questions might actually stop the child expressing what is really going on for them.
- Watch for non-verbal clues (facial expressions, body language, repeated themes in play or conversation) to what the child is experiencing and invitations to engage with that.
- Take time to understand the relationship the child had with the person who has died – don't assume that kinship determine the size of the grief. Consider what level of attachment there was, and what function the relationship serves for the child, as well as whether there is evidence of ambivalence. The age of the person who died is also going to have an impact on how the child perceives the 'natural order' of the loss
- Keep the child informed of the progress towards loss or death. Whilst we might think we are protecting them from pain, a sudden loss or death can be harder for the child to cope with, and the knowledge that other people knew and didn't tell them can lead to feelings of betrayal.

How schools can help in supporting bereaved children

Schools, just by carrying on with their usual day to day activities, can do a huge amount to support a grieving child. Schools can offer:

Normality

For a child, or young person, whose life has been turned upside down, the routines of school life can give a sense of normality. Everything else may have fallen apart but school and the people within it are still there, offering a sense of security and continuity.

Relief from grief

For young children and adolescents, school can give relief from an emotionally charged atmosphere at home. They may feel overwhelmed by a grieving family. There may be a constant stream of visitors expressing their own grief. Children and young people can find this difficult to deal with.

An outlet for grief

When a parent or sibling has died, children and young people can try to spare their surviving parent by hiding their own grief and appearing to be OK. School is often seen as somewhere safe to express this grief.

A listening ear

Children can be overlooked by family members struggling to deal with their own grief. For a child who wishes to, school staff can provide an opportunity to talk about what has happened with a familiar and trusted adult in relative peace and calm.

The opportunity to be a child

Even when deeply sad, children still need to be children. Loss and grief are very grown up experiences. School offers the chance to play, laugh, sing and generally just be a child without feeling guilty.

General Support

By keeping in contact with home, schools can discuss concerns but equally important, successes. The family or carers will find this reassuring. Grieving children and young people can display altered behaviours in different situations. Good communication with home will help school be aware of this and provide a more realistic picture of how the child is coping.

Resources

Having in school a selection of resources on the subject can be helpful. Stories are a wonderful way to gently introduce young children to the concept of death. Novels and poems offer young people a chance to learn through reading, listening and discussion.

Children's understanding and response to death

0-2 Years

Understanding of death

- May become aware of the person not being there in the normal routines of life

Some possible grief reactions to death

- Show signs of anxiety or distress
- Searching behaviour for the missing person

Possible Ways of helping a child

- Maintain daily routines
- Parent/carer maintain warm loving relationship with child

3-6 Years (Early Years and Key Stage 1)

Understanding of death

- Young children may be beginning to understand the concept of death, but do not appreciate its finality.
- Some may expect the dead person to reappear –“shall we dig granny up now?”
- They think in literal and concrete terms and so will be confused by euphemisms for death such as “gone away” or “gone to sleep”.
- Repeated explanations of what has happened may be required.

Some possible grief reactions to death

- Responses are varied.
- Outward signs are not always evident, but this doesn't mean that the child isn't grieving.
- May have difficulty in expressing feelings in words.
- They may yearn for the dead person, demonstrating anger and protest when they don't return.
- They may feel that it was partly their fault.
- Their behaviour may regress – becoming clingy and demanding more attention.
- Child might become frightened of going to sleep alone or in the dark.
- Babyish language, temper tantrums and bed-wetting may also increase.
- They are prone to fantasize at this age and if not told what is happening may dream up something scarier than reality.
- When first told, they may not understand and may ask inappropriate questions

Possible Ways of helping a child

- Gently repeat the fact that the dead person will not return
- Maintain daily routines
- Maintain boundaries
- Be patient with 'accidents'

- Answer his/her questions honestly
- Do not protect him/her 'because he/she doesn't understand'

7-10 Years (Key Stage 2)

Understanding of death

- Most children realise that dead people are different from those that are alive, that they do not feel, they cannot hear, see, smell or speak and they do not need to eat or drink.
- By seven years of age the majority of children accept that death is permanent and that it can happen to anyone.
- They are aware that death is permanent and that the dead person won't return.
- They know that death can come about through illness or an accident.
- They are more able to express their thoughts and feelings but may conceal them and outwardly appear unaffected.
- They need to be given an opportunity to ask questions and to be given as much information as possible to allow them to adjust.
- They may at times use 'magical' thinking (the dead person watching or talking to them) to create stories around the bereavement.
- They are likely to be very interested in the rituals surrounding death.
- They begin to be aware of the feelings of others and to show empathy to those also affected by the loss.

Some possible grief reactions to death

- They can show many of the grief reactions of younger children; crying, bed wetting, eating and sleeping problems.
- They may become very irritable or aggressive towards other children and adults, or may become clingy.
- They may become fearful that the same thing might happen to them or others close to them and this could result in them not wanting to leave home or be apart from remaining family members.
- They may develop psychosomatic illnesses; headaches, feeling sick.
- School attendance may be disrupted.
- Self-esteem and self-confidence may be affected.
- Social peer pressures may limit their ability to express their feelings.
- They may appear as though everything is fine – brave and in control.
- May become preoccupied with death.

Possible Ways of helping a child

- Give matter of fact information about manner of death and demonstrate the child was in no way responsible.
- Provide opportunities for the child to talk with parents or other adults and give permission for the expression of feelings through variety of means.
- Maintain daily routines.
- Maintain boundaries.
- Make sure school knows as much as possible. Try to find out how the issue is being handled.

11+ (Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 & 4)

Understanding of death

- At this age children's understanding of death almost matches that of an adult, although they find it difficult to grasp abstract concepts.
- The need to know details continues and may seek answers to very specific questions.
- The struggle for independence at this age may cause bereaved teenagers to challenge the beliefs and expectations of others as to how they should be feeling or behaving.
- Death increases anxieties about the future, They may question the meaning of life and experience depression.
- Teenagers may find it easier to discuss their feelings with a sympathetic friend or adult than close family member.
- They may be having difficulty coming to terms with their own mortality and that of those close to them and cope by refusing to contemplate the possibility of death by experimenting with risk taking behaviour.

Some possible grief reactions to death

- Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression.
- Anger and rejection.
- Joking, sarcasm.
- Dependence or regressing to younger age.
- Insecurity, low self-esteem.
- Bullying or being bullied
- Self-harm, eating disorders
- Ways of helping your child

Possible Ways of helping a child

- Maintain daily routines
- Ensure boundaries
- Beware of loading adult responsibilities on an adolescent
- Support outside the family can be important

Breaking sad news to the whole school community

Breaking sad news about the death of someone from the school community is not easy. The following guidelines are given so that you can begin to decide on your personal way of letting others know.

On being told of a death or anticipated death of a pupil, pupil's parent or member of staff

- Identify the most appropriate person to liaise between home and school and within school
- Establish the facts and plan to inform key people (see below)
 - Consider keeping a journal/notebook to log key information over the weeks that follow
- Communicate with parent/s siblings if possible
 - Consider the family's wishes. What information they want to be conveyed and when?
- Agree what and when information is to be given to the rest of the school community – pupils, parents (liaise with other school/s that might be affected)

Key people to contact may include:

- Staff, Chair of Governors, MAT CEO, Clergy, School Chaplain.
 - Ideally at a meeting. In school holidays contact key staff on a need-to-know basis. Don't forget absent staff, non-teaching staff, governors as appropriate
- Pupils
 - Small groups, tutor sessions, assemblies, consider special attention for SEN pupils, those who have a close relationship with the deceased – give children a break time following the announcement (have extra staff outside if possible)
 - Consider carefully the message, age-appropriateness & language used: be as factual and honest as possible – give opportunity for questions to be asked
- Parents/Carers
 - Consider a letter home, liaising with family
- Media
 - Head - possibly together with Chair of Governors - to provide a statement **if necessary**, Seek advice from HR provider including MAT CEO as appropriate

Ideas for Collective Worship and Memorial

One of the difficult outcomes of the measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus is the restrictions around funerals. It is really important that family members (and in particular children and young people) who are unable to attend, are given the opportunity to mark the loss and bereavement with a ritual. Below are some ideas that could be used when the school community is gathered or at home to help children and young people acknowledge the death or loss they and mourn

Possible Liturgical structure for memorial gatherings

GATHER

We gather here today to think about (name(s)). To celebrate their life (lives) and acknowledge how sad it is that they are no longer with us.

We thank God (We give thanks for) for the gift of (name(s)) and for his love for us (the love that surrounds us) as we share together in our grief and sorrow.

ENGAGE

Lamentations 3:12-25

Psalm 139: 7-16

Psalm 23

A Dreadful Day or Goodbye at Last from the Lion Storyteller Bible

RESPOND

Prayer

Heavenly father, thank you for (name(s)) and all that they meant to us.

(If appropriate encourage people to share short sentences of what they are thankful for, (e.g. her big smile, his football skills, etc.)

The Bible says you love all that you have made, and whilst we might not ever understand why bad things happen, we ask that we will know your comfort and peace in the midst of our sadness.

Amen

SEND

Choose one of the activities below

Memorial Activities

Bottles of Tears

The King and Poet David understood from his own experience that life can sometimes be really hard and it can feel like we are all alone. In the poems he wrote, collected in the book of Psalms, he often has a good old moan before remembering what he believes about who God is and how he looks after him. In Psalm 56

he demonstrates his belief that God is right by his side when he is sad and upset by saying that God has collected all his tears in a bottle.

It is ok to cry, tears are our body's natural reaction to both sadness and joy, but it is comforting to think that God remembers all the times that they fall.

Create a symbol of this comforting image by slowly filling a bottle with water. If you are doing this at home as a family you could use a pipette or turkey baster. If you are doing this in school then use small cups and a larger bottle with a wide neck. Give everyone an opportunity to put a drop or cup of water into the bottle, and as they do so to think of something special about the person you are remembering. You can add glitter and sequins to the water if you wish, and then when the bottle is sealed shaking the bottle can remind people of the collection of memories of that person and the joy and sadness they bring

Timeline

Create a timeline covering the key events of the lifetime of the person they are grieving (e.g. for an adult - birth, school, wedding, children, job, first car, etc. For a child – birth, first steps, first tooth, nursery, school, etc). Augment the timeline with photos, pictures and other memorabilia.

Depending on the space available, the location and the purpose, the timeline could be a couple of sheets of A4 , or be mounted along a wall, or laid out on the floor with enough space for people to walk around it and reflect. You could give mourners coloured post-it notes so that they can write comments and responses or indicate whether the event was a time of joy or sadness

The Scripture Union Bible Timeline shows God's story, the Bible from before time began to after time ends. If appropriate, talk about how God is always present in the times of joy and sadness that the people in the Bible faced

Trees

Trees appear a number of times in the Bible (e.g. Garden of Eden, Moses and the Burning Bush, Zaccheus) and can be a helpful metaphor about how we grow and change as we get older. Jesus described himself as a vine, whilst not strictly a tree, his illustration helps us to think about how we are connected and where we draw our strength from.

Plant a tree in the school grounds to commemorate the person/people that has/have died. If there is no space why not talk to the local authority about the possibility of planting a tree in a nearby park.

Give everyone some red card luggage labels and some green ones. On the red cards they can write or draw the things they felt they 'lost' during the Coronavirus crisis (e.g. exams, time with friends, feelings of safety) and on the green cards the things that they feel they gained during the Coronavirus (e.g. more time with Mum, high score/next level on favourite game, taught grandparents to facetime). N.b. This might be really hard for vulnerable children or ones who have been bereaved. Be sensitive and whilst not dismissing the huge loss, help them to think creatively about one thing that was good during the period. Tie the labels to branches of a tree or bush (this can be done outside on a living tree - using environmentally friendly materials - or on dead branches brought inside). As you do this you can acknowledge together the loss and celebrate the gain.

Cairns

In the Old Testament, people often used a pile of stones as a marker of a significant event. Sometimes today you might see them as markers on country paths. You could use little pebbles or large rocks to

create a cairn as a marker of either a bereavement or a significant event like the Coronavirus lockdown. Hand size pebbles can be decorated with paints or felt tips and varnished before the creation of the cairn. Large rocks might need to be moved by adults, but children could be responsible for planting in the gaps as symbols of growth and hope.

Social Media resources

<https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/what-to-do-when-someone-dies/dealing-with-social-media-accounts-after-death>

Extra Resources

Walking in their Shadow – Lex Bradley – extra resources

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0148/6107/4532/files/Walking_in_their_Shadow_Extra_Resources.pdf?8728

Additional ideas for parents and children

1. Keep a memory box to keep photographs, bits of information
2. Write your memories of the person in a special book. You could include:
 - a. Things they liked to do
 - b. Things they liked to say
 - c. Their expressions or mannerisms
 - d. Their interests
 - e. Times friends and families spent with them – earliest memories
 - f. Something they enjoyed doing – an interest / a place they loved to visit
 - g. Special events in the person's life
3. Select a few special photographs to display in your home
4. Talk aloud as though they are listening, tell them what you would have liked to say to them
5. Write a prayer and read it aloud whilst someone blows soap bubbles into the air
6. Write a letter to the person
7. Keep a diary or journal
8. Create and dedicate a piece of art to their memory
9. Create and dedicate a piece of music to their memory
10. Create and dedicate a poem to their memory
11. Create and dedicate a piece of writing – a story or recollection of a special time you spent with them
12. Make a special birthday/Christmas/Easter/Father's Day – Mother's day card for them at the appropriate time – these could be kept in your memory box

CRUSE Bereavement Care has helpful information to support those who are grieving alone. You will find it by following the link www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/grieving-and-isolation