



Bereavement Policy

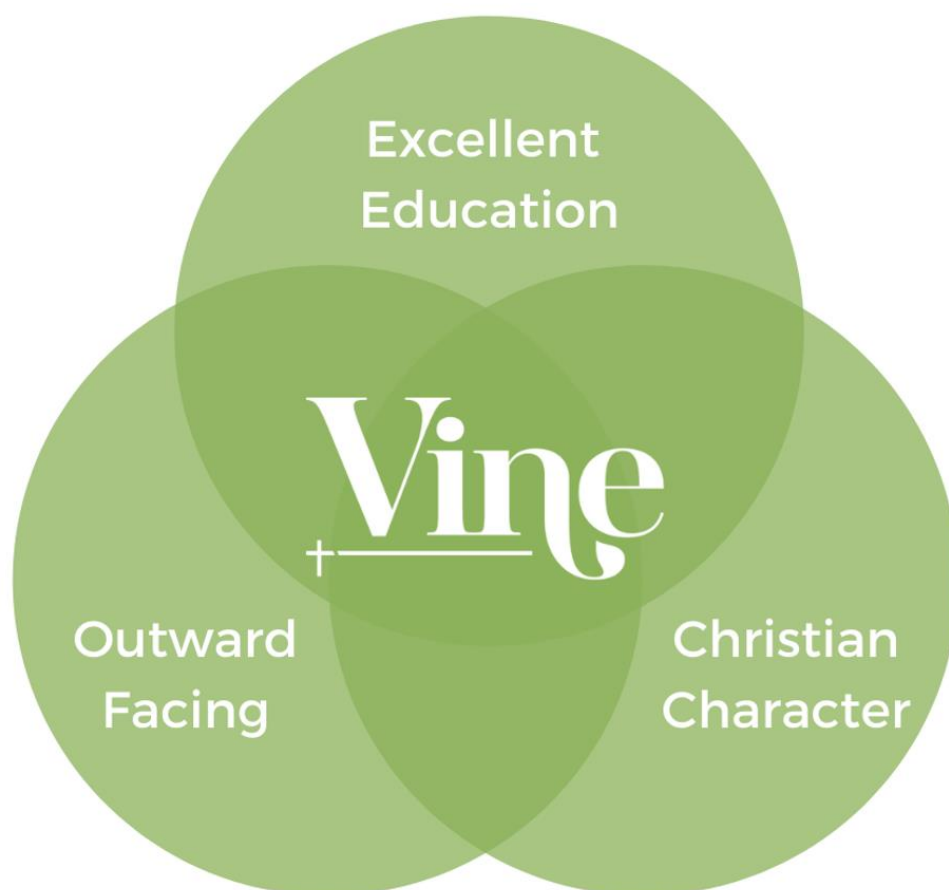
**"I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit"
(John 15:5)**

This is a model policy for all Vine schools that has been reviewed and adapted for XXX school.

Policy Reference:	S014
Approved by Vine Schools Trust on:	Spring 22
Adopted by this school on:	Spring 22
Next review:	Spring 24

Vision & Values

V Valuing every person
I Inspiring great teaching
N Nurturing academic excellence and Christian Character
E Excelling, unlocking great potential



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

Our Vision for xxx Primary School:

In church schools, some policies should be made distinctive – and linked with specific school Vision and theological underpinning, as well as the Vine Vision. This comes up in strand 1 where it says the vision should shape school policies, but more specifically for MATs, it says the following in the grade descriptors: ‘Many MAT policies may be adopted but key policies are adapted to reflect the school’s vision’. This can be dropped in here.

The Vine Schools Trust schools are places where we love one another as God loves us. We want everyone to thrive, irrespective of whatever life faces them with. Therefore, we aim to prepare and support pupils and staff to cope with the stresses of life and respond to needs as they arise enabling pupils and staff to flourish. (See the Church of England’s Vision for Education, Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good).

The Christian vision and values of the Vine Schools Trust and the vision of each individual school shapes all that we do.

Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That’s nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person¹.

¹ Winston’s Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/facts-and-figures/>

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and well-being of our staff and our children and their families. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares children and their families for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all staff, children, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in the school community.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy was based on an exemplar developed by the national charity Winston's Wish. It has included input from our staff and our Local Schools Board/Community Board and the Vine Schools Trust.

1.2 Policy links

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school:

- Safeguarding/Child Protection policy
- PSHE policy
- Anti-bullying/Behaviour policy
- Policies which support mental health and wellbeing
- Health and safety policy
- Leave of absence policy (staff)

1.3 Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to children and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school and the wider community.

2 Our charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#) and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website. *[Adapt in consultation with the school community if you wish to or delete if not required.]*

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

3 Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, children will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of children and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

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

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

We will use our usual school systems **[identify these e.g. CPOMS / SIMS / vulnerability register]** to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

4 Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

4.1 The role of the Local Schools Board (LSB) is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed on a regular schedule or when national or local policy directs a change
- The local schools board is aware that the Diocese of Chelmsford provides training on working with pupils and staff on loss and bereavement issues and can also arrange bespoke training for school staff.

4.2 The role of the head teacher and senior leadership team is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the VST in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide as well as key professionals that would be expected to be involved – e.g. link Educational Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker, alongside relevant colleagues and managers
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- keep the LSB appropriately informed
- deal with media enquiries with support from the VST

4.3 The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral team **[adapt as relevant to your setting]**
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

5 Procedures

5.1 Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness. In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the head teacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

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

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify a key point of contact [name contact for your school] in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the child
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations or a local hospice
- explore what support for the children affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the child
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the child's peers
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

5.2 Following a bereavement

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

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (head teacher)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- allocate member(s) of staff to be the key point(s) of support for the affected child / young person or children / young people and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- will prepare a press statement, with support from the council's communications team if required and with due regard to the family affected (head teacher)
- inform staff of the death before children and the wider community are informed, recognising that some children may already be aware, through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information.
- inform children who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family.
- make appropriate changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and children may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities of issues such as risk assessment, staff cover and transport. In some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to close the school, in consultation with the Vine Schools Trust
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and children
- be sensitive to religious and cultural needs of the family.

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and children and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- signpost families to bereavement support which may include that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

5.3 Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide

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

As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death within two school days

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

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide. <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/> and Local Authority guidance

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

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope

- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

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

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide
- takes care with the language used – for example using phrases such as ‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended his / her life’ rather than ‘committed suicide’ or ‘successful suicide’, and saying ‘attempted to end his / her life’ rather than ‘unsuccessful suicide’ or ‘failed attempt at suicide’.

5.4 Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide

It is estimated that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

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

Bereavement organisations recommend taking an honest and consistent age appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston’s Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

6 Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

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

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

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

7 Young asylum seekers and refugees

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

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

8 Supporting staff

8.1 Support for bereaved staff

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

This could include: support from the incumbent, their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice **add any further examples as appropriate.**

We will work within our leave of absence policy and if necessary, with Trust's occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement. Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

8.2 Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy.

e.g. Winston's Wish offers [training courses](#) and also a [free online training course for school staff](#).

9 Curriculum

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles, as well as through other curriculum areas such as art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day or other commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

We deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

10 Additional support and links

10.1 National support services and support resources

As part of PSHE and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for pupils and adults in the school community.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved children, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools> A range of guidance and support for schools.

10.3 Local support services

[Add as relevant local support services including hospices and local bereavement services.]

Appendices

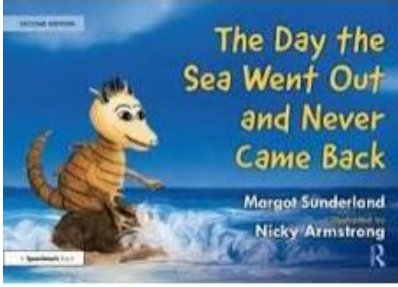
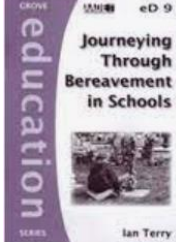
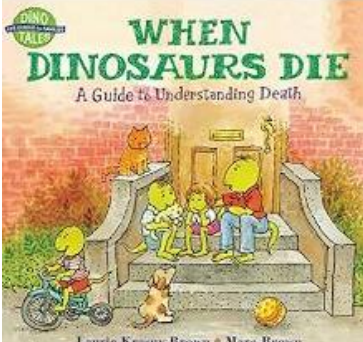
[Add relevant appendices - for extra tools, such as example letters, please visit the Winston's Wish website: www.winstonswish.org/schools - could include-

APPENDIX A

Bereavement and Loss Resources

	<p>Badger's Parting Gifts - Sue Varley The tale of a dependable, reliable and helpful badger who realises that his old age will soon lead to death. His friends learn to come to terms with his death in an enchanting tale.</p>
	<p>Children and Bereavement - Wendy Duffy The lives of thousands of children are affected by bereavement every year. This sensitive guide examines the needs of bereaved children of different ages, their reactions to death, and the stages of their grief. Written in non-jargon language, it provides clear, accessible information and stories of real situations. It also includes a section on dealing with tragic events.</p>
	<p>Daddy's Going Away - Christopher MacGregor & Emma Yarlett Written by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher MacGregor and based on his own experiences of going away from home, this comforting, wise book helps to explain why parents sometimes have to go away and shows ways to help children cope.</p>
	<p>Dinosaurs Divorce - Laurie Krasny Brown & Marc Brown A colourful, informative book to help children understand divorce. This comforting book explains: what divorce words mean; why parents divorce; how to live with one parent and visit the other; how to have two homes, how to tell you friends; how to accept new stepsisters and stepbrothers; and many more issues and topics that arise in divorce situations.</p>
	<p>Granpa - John Burningham Granpa nurses his granddaughter's dolls, mistakes her strawberry-flavoured pretend ice-cream for chocolate, takes her tobogganing in the snow, and falls in with her imaginary plans to captain a ship to Africa, like all good Granpa's should. It is a friendship that children who read this book will long remember.</p>

	<p>Helping Children Cope with Change and Loss - Rosemary Wells</p> <p>Advice for parents struggling to help their children cope with the changes they are facing in their lives. This book discusses different sorts of change and suggests ways in which parents can help children cope with it successfully, whether it is moving house, gaining a step parent, going to 'big school', or even winning the lottery.</p>
	<p>Helping Children Think about Bereavement - Heather Butler</p> <p>Helping Children Think about Bereavement provides a four-part differentiated story and activities to help normalise death and allow children to develop emotional literacy to talk about it. This book also offers support for teachers and parents outlining how children's understanding of death develops and what can be helpful in supporting bereaved children</p>
	<p>It's OK to Be Sad - Margaret Collins</p> <p>Using stories about life events, Margaret Collins focuses on the needs of 4-9 year olds, and the ways in which they can express concerns, anxieties and grief. She also provides helpful advice for children and adults about how to help others when they are experiencing such difficulties</p>
	<p>Rudi's Pond - Eve Bunting</p> <p>A gently told story of friendship, loss, and hope. A little girl reminisces after the death of her best friend and classmate . . . This simple book shows the comfort to be found in the support of family and friends as well as in remembering</p>
	<p>Sad Book - Michael Rosen</p> <p>A heartbreakingly honest account of a father's grief for his son. It chronicles Michael's grief at the death of his son Eddie from meningitis at the age of 19. A moving combination of sincerity and simplicity, it acknowledges that sadness is not always avoidable or reasonable and perfects the art of making complicated feelings plain.</p>
	<p>The Goodbye Boat - Mary Joslin & Claire St Louis Little</p> <p>Saying goodbye to someone you love is always hard. Saying goodbye when someone you love dies is perhaps the hardest thing of all. Joslin's simple, thoughtful text and Little's evocative illustrations explore the pain and grief of saying goodbye and open the door to discussion for readers of any age. The Goodbye Boat provides a message of hope that sadness will ease and comforts with the reassurance that death is not the end.</p>
	<p>Up In Heaven - Emma Chichester Clark</p> <p>Elderly Daisy can't keep up with Arthur any more, and then one day she wakes up to find herself in heaven! How marvellous - now she no longer feels tired or ill, and she can run as fast as she used to! But she worries about Arthur because he is so miserable, and so she sends him dreams to show him where she is, and how happy she is now. One of the questions children regularly ask is: 'Do dogs go to heaven?' This unusual book provides the dog's answer, with lightness of touch and deft storytelling.</p>
	<p>Water Bugs and Dragonflies - Doris Stickney</p> <p>"Water Bugs and Dragonflies" tells the story of a small colony of water bugs living happily below the surface of a quiet pond. Every so often one of them climbs up a lily stalk and disappears from sight, never to return. Those left behind are faced with the mystery of figuring out what has become of them. Revealing the "miracle that makes shiny dragonflies out of ugly bugs", this graceful story reminds us that God has given us the means of transforming our metaphorical selves into dragonflies capable of winging off contentedly into a new world.</p>

	<p>The Day the Sea Went Out -Margot Sunderland</p> <p>Eric is a sand dragon who loves the sea very much. Each day, he watches it going out and coming back. But one day, the sea goes out and does not come back. Eric waits and waits, but it does not come back. So he falls on the sand in terrible pain. It feels to him as if he has lost everything. After many bleak days, Eric sees a little wild flower. Eric knows he must save it. He finds water. More and more flowers appear and so Eric starts to make a beautiful rock pool garden. And as he does, he finds the courage to feel the full pain of his loss, instead of closing his heart</p>
	<p>Journeying Through Bereavement in Schools - Ian Terry (Grove Book)</p> <p>What to do when a pupil, parent, teacher or grandparent dies? Does everyone react in the same way to a death? What prayers could we use? What books could we refer to? What might the bereavement journey feel like? This study explores these questions and much more. There is a wealth of resources contained here for helping schools provide appropriate support for those who are grieving.</p>
	<p>When Dinosaurs Die - Laurie R. King & Marc Brown</p> <p>No one can really understand death but to children, the passing away of a loved one can be especially perplexing and troublesome. This is true whether the loss is a classmate, friend, family member or pet. Here to offer advice and reassurance from some very wise dinosaurs. This succinct and thorough guide helps dispel the mystery and negative connotations associated with death, providing answers to some of the most often asked questions and also explores the feelings we may have regarding the death of a loved one and the ways to remember someone after he or she has died.</p>
<p>Other resources -</p>	<p>Child Bereavement UK Rebuilding Lives Together Booklists for Early Years, KS1, KS2, KS3/4 and beyond, SEN</p> <p>Coping with Bereavement - A Resource Pack for Schools -Diocese of St Albans</p> <p>Help When You Need It Most - Samaritans</p> <p>When a Child Grieves - Child Bereavement Charity</p> <p>When your Partner Dies: Supporting Your Children - Child Bereavement Charity</p> <p>When Somebody Dies ... Rainbows Bereavement Support</p> <p>When Someone Special Dies for Children Under 7 - Child Bereavement UK</p> <p>When Someone Special Dies for Children 7 – 11 - Child Bereavement UK</p>