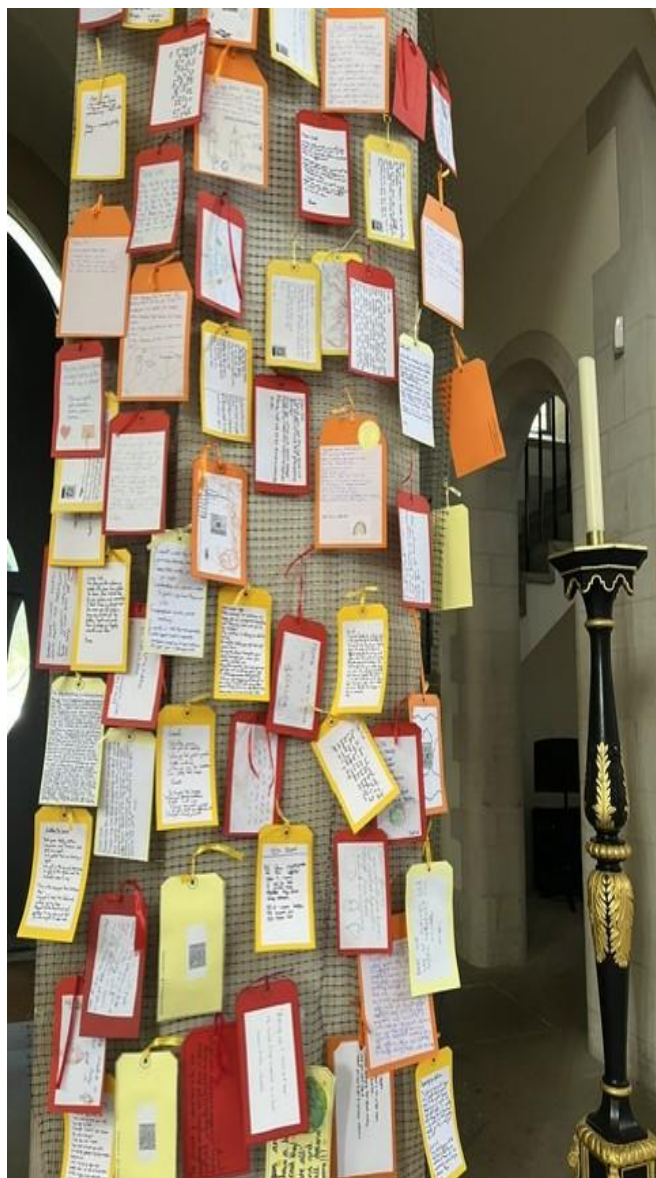


Bags of Hope Project Celebration booklet



Introduction

The information, work and photographs contained in this booklet are the culmination of this year's annual Project for Church of England schools across Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses.

The **Bags of Hope** project saw schools and parishes exploring the challenges faced by "Displaced Persons," including migrants and refugees from diverse backgrounds and countries across the world. Inspired by the book *The Suitcase* by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros, the project highlights the significance of a backpack for those seeking safety and hope amidst loss and displacement.

Through various activities, installations, and collaborations with local and national organizations, our church schools aim to foster compassion, empathy, and understanding among children, students, and adults for people who have been displaced for whatever reason. The Bags of Hope project has encouraged them to engage in meaningful actions, such as donating Paddington Bear backpacks to displaced children. The front cover picture of this booklet shows donated backpacks and soft-toy Paddington bears displayed in Winchester and Portsmouth cathedrals. These will be donated to displaced children in September when the installation at Winchester is taken down..

Together, we believe that we can make a difference by embracing Biblical values of welcoming strangers and standing up for those in need. Schools and parishes have joined us in this journey of hope and advocacy as we work to create a culture of kindness, understanding, and support for displaced individuals.

Children contributed their individual reflections, prayers and learning on thousands of luggage labels displayed for the public to read. Scan the QR code to see our Bags of Hope booklet which contains a wealth of further information and activities you may like to try. Meanwhile, please enjoy the work that our schools have done.....



Paddington takes pride of place at Moordown St John

A Paddington bear now sits on the school worship table at Moordown St John Primary, Bournemouth.

To deepen children's understanding of displaced people and refugees while reading the powerful book 'My Name is not Refugee', the school reflected on the Jewish festival of Passover, thinking about the families who were in exile in Egypt. This helped children's understanding of empathy and welcome.

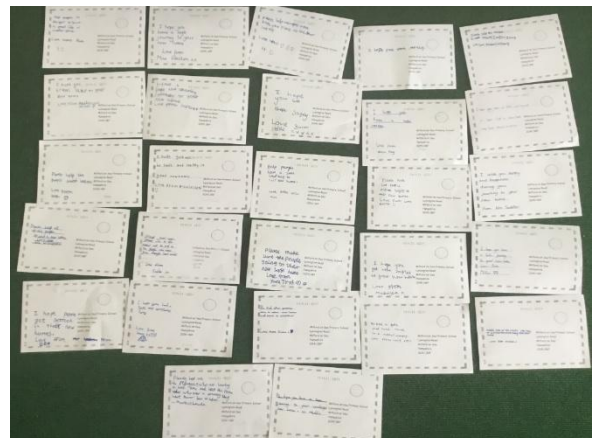
The school's prayers were guided by the Bible verse from Leviticus 19 vs 33: "Do not be unkind to any foreign people who come to live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat your own people and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."



Younger pupils wrote welcome cards while Reverend Renate Tulloh led a worship focussing on the Polish child refugee Sophie Schwarzwald, and how the astronaut Mark Polansky took Sophie's bear to space in 2006 on the 'Discovery' mission.

Kindness in every stitch

At Milford on Sea Church of England Primary School, a kind parent knitted a bear for every class. Each class has named their bear and wrote a short biography, in preparation for the toys to be sent to children in Ukraine through the charity New Forest for Ukraine.



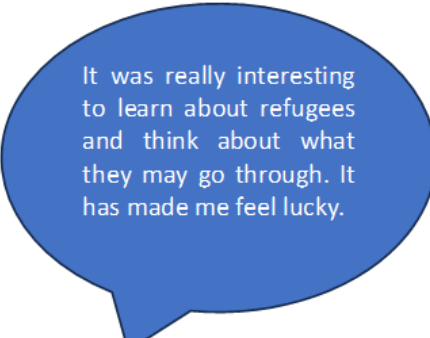
Some classes showed extra creativity by building small homes to keep their toys safe on the journey. Headteacher Kate Crawford said: 'It has been a lovely way for us to think about others and send a little comfort, kindness and friendship to children who need it.'

Children speak at university conference

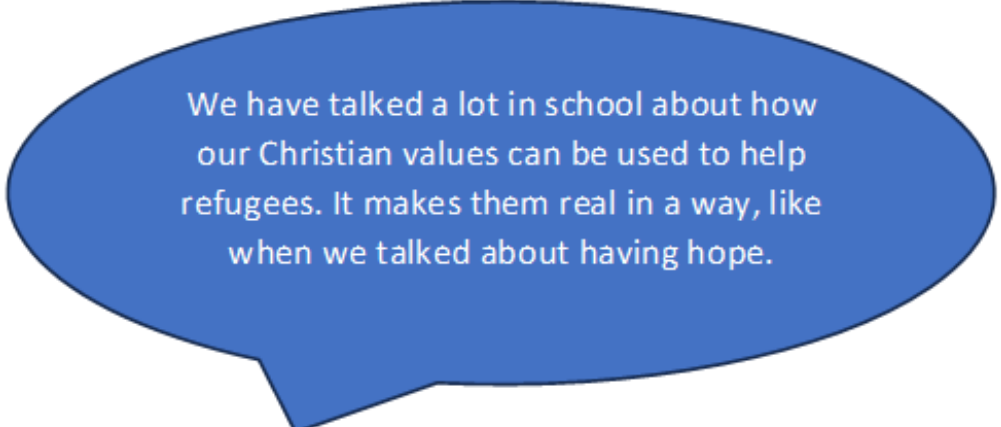
Pupils from St Bede Church of England Primary School and All Saints Church of England Primary School spoke at the Winchester University Refugees Conference.

St Bede children took part in a workshop with the Onjali Rauf, author of 'The Boy at the Back of the Class.' The author talked to the children about being more like the famous story character Tintin who famously asks lots of questions, rather than believing everything that we are told. Children from All Saints presented their Bags of Hope and City of Sanctuary work to conference delegates. They talked about how they had made welcome packs and written postcards to welcome refugees to Winchester. The children have worked with students from Winchester University and with the Winchester City of Sanctuary team. Parents and the school community have all contributed toiletries for the welcome packs, and the children have written postcards 'from a friend' for the displaced people who will receive them.

They received a rousing round of applause and the next speaker who was from UN Refugee Agency said she was 'blown away' by their contribution.



It was really interesting to learn about refugees and think about what they may go through. It has made me feel lucky.



We have talked a lot in school about how our Christian values can be used to help refugees. It makes them real in a way, like when we talked about having hope.

Children walk to purchase Paddington backpacks.

Members of the Diocesan Education Team enjoyed visiting Wickham Church of England Primary School Primary where they watched children involved in a 'Suitcase' activity. The experience helped children try to understand what millions of displaced children are facing in real life – packing their few belongings into a small suitcase or bag.

Pupils responded as they drew and wrote on suitcase templates. Here are some of their thoughts:

'Courage is a full-time job – all the time, no matter what, even if it's difficult.'



'It's good to learn about this because you never know what people have been through and if you just judge them, you can make their lives harder.'

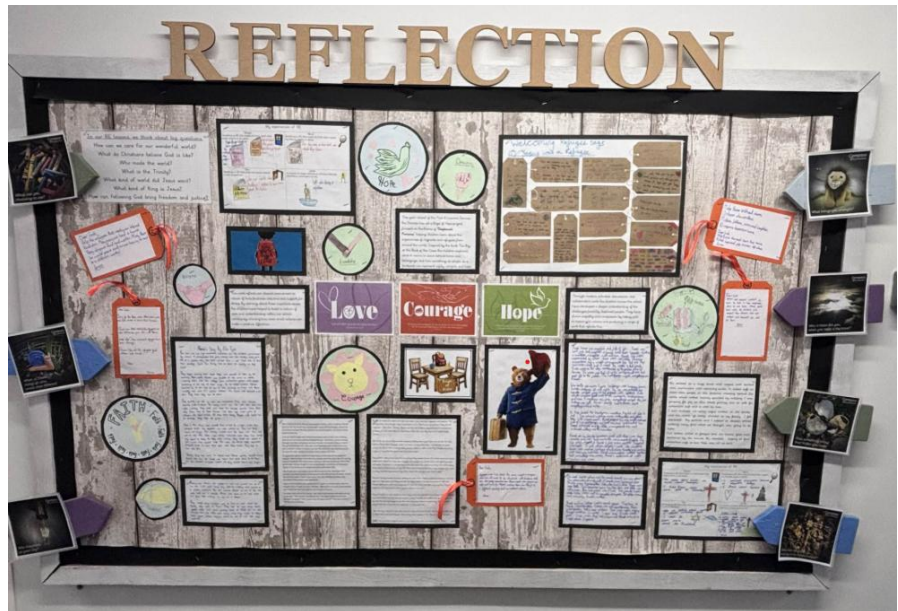
'Just remember, everyone deserves justice and grace, no matter their background.'

'I enjoyed learning about this because it gives you a better understanding of what people have been through or may go through.'

During their residential break, pupils enjoyed a sponsored walk, with the money raised being used to purchase several Paddington backpacks that will be given to refugees and displaced children by the Diocesan Team.

Children as courageous advocates

Pupils at Charles Kingsley Church of England Primary School learned about the experiences of migrants and refugees around the world. Inspired by the book 'The Boy at the Back of the Class', children explored what it means to leave behind home and belongings, and how something as simple as a backpack can represent safely, comfort and hope.



Headteacher Hannah Popplewell said: 'Through creative activities, discussions and collaborative work, children across the school developed a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by displaced people. They have shown empathy and compassion by taking part in meaningful actions and producing a range of work that reflects this. This work reflects our commitment to values of love, kindness, welcome and support for others. By learning about these important issues, the children have helped build a culture of care and understanding within our school community, showing how even small actions can make a positive difference.'

Some reflections from our children

'We've learned that lots of refugees need to leave their countries for different reasons. It doesn't matter if you're the richest person in the world or the poorest person in the world, if you live in a fancy house or a flat, conflict can still happen. Lots of refugees don't get treated with the respect and kindness they deserve. Maisie, 11



'We talked about if we had to only bring a specific number of things, what we would bring. I would say photos of family and friends because they can mean a lot and maybe some teddies as each teddy has a story behind it and that be really sad if you lost those memories. It's been hard to think about that.' Amaiya, 11

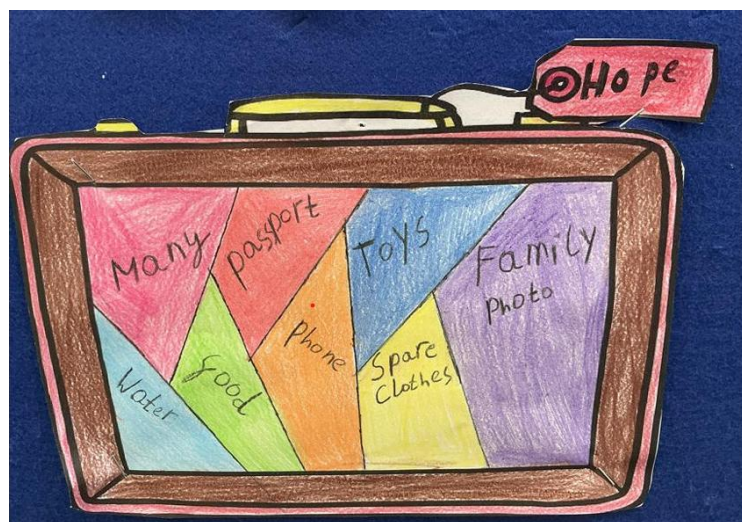
'We've learned that refugees aren't understood enough and they need more people to understand them because you don't know someone until you walk a mile in their shoes, which is a saying in one of our books that we've read about refugees. You can't judge someone before you know them because you don't know what they've been through and what they've had to do for safety.' Bea, 10

'I have been researching Jackie Chan whose parents were refugees. He said, 'Life will knock you down, but you can choose whether or not to stand back up. When he had to leave, it was probably hard for him, but he chose to get back up. It's a very inspiring choice'. Jacob, 11

'It is quite a privilege to have the life most of us in England have; just being safe in our own homes, to be able to come to school, learn, to have food and water to eat and drink.' Jotham, 11

"If you think about what it must be like for them to be forced into a new life and you think about how difficult it is to go through the process of this and then suddenly, they're in your school and you don't know them but it's more nerve wracking for them. You already know everyone there and you've got friends and they don't know anyone." Lottie, 11

Sometimes I don't understand when people talk about this sort of thing in worship at school or on the news but doing this project I get it now. It makes you think about other people and how what we can do to welcome them.



I had not really thought about it before but now I understand that we need to welcome everyone who comes to our country. Everyone deserves respect, that is what we learn from the stories in the Bible.

It has been good using the story of Paddington because it means the younger children in the school could also understand it.

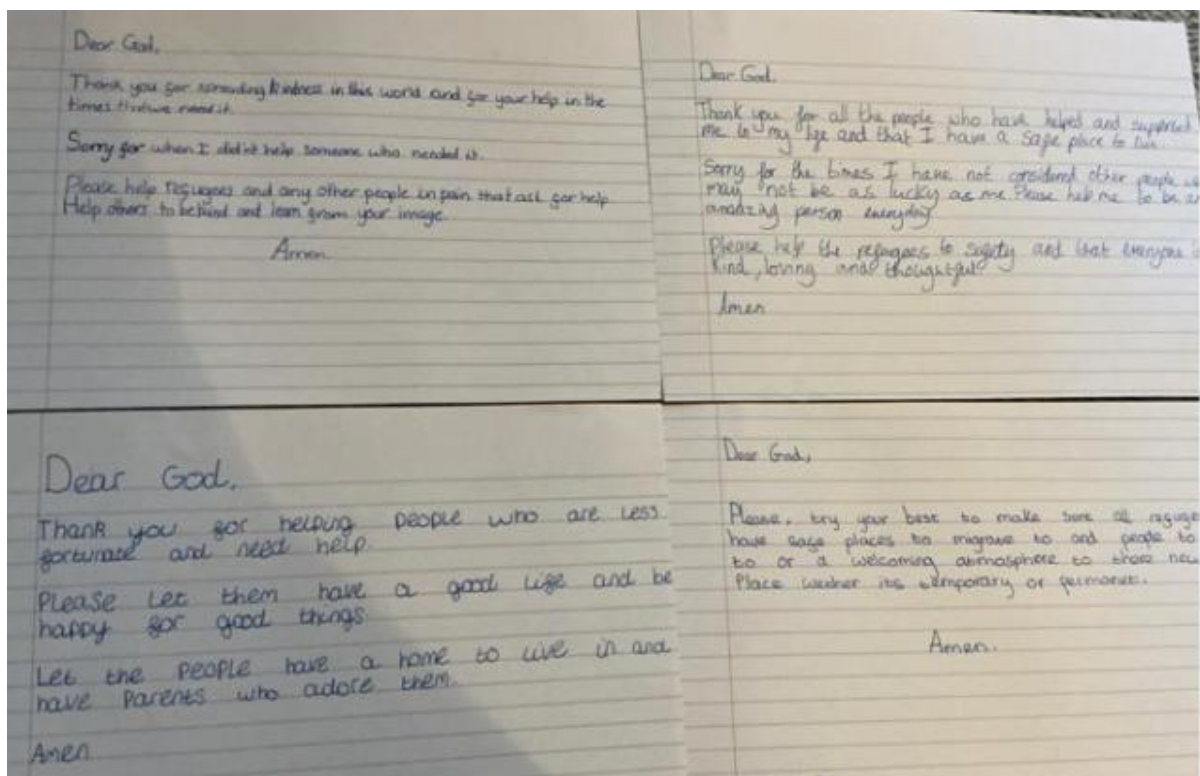


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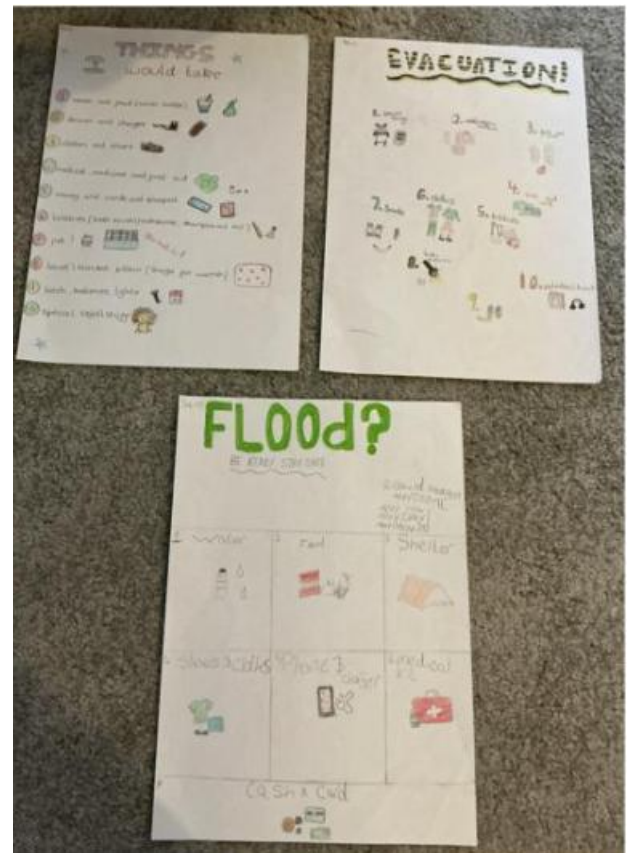


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Some of the thoughtful work created at
Burton Church of England Primary School.



I hope that the refugees are safe,
and don't get treated with any hate,
I hope that they are loved and cared for,
and are able to open a bedroom door,
I hope that they find a place to stay
And don't want to throw their lives away.
Peace to the world.



Paddington helps children with the concept of displacement

After learning about Paddington Bear and the way that the Bags of Hope project highlights his experience as a refugee, children at St James Church of England Primary School, West End, Southampton, created their own origami Paddington bears. They imagined the journey Paddington might have taken before being found by the Brown family and compared this to the real journeys undertaken by refugees today.



The children explored the idea of postcards as symbols of travel and storytelling, and each child designed a postcard, writing either to a refugee or in the voice of someone making a journey.



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Belonging Lane
West End
Southampton
Hampshire
England-UK
Europe



I have never
thought till now
about **MIGRATION**.
Being on my own
travelling for a
place to call
home, but I
would look to the
stars and say I will make it



EVERYBODY
has
a
place

Lovegrove Lane

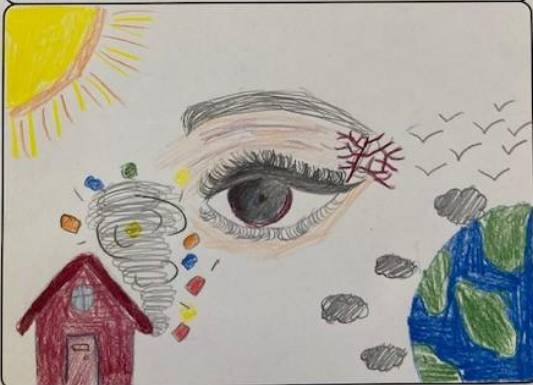
Dear Diary,

No matter where the seas take
me, I'll always remember
a place I can call home.
No matter how far I climb,
nobody can take my love and
hope. I have hope and it will
stay with me.



I had no choice
but to leave. They
were taking everything
I had to travel
alone. My family
and everyone I
knew was taken

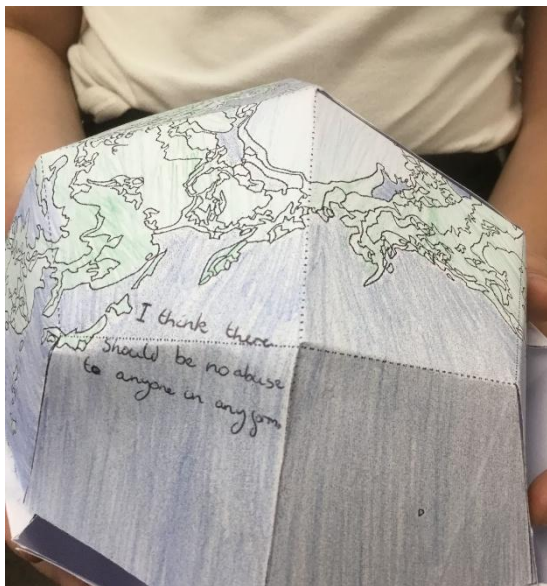
47 crossing
Paths LC7 2MF
United Kingdom



Inspiring work

Every year group at Whitchurch Church of England Primary School completed work linked to the theme of 'Displaced Persons', encouraging children to develop compassion, empathy, understanding, and awareness of the realities many people face when forced to leave their homes because of war, persecution, poverty, or danger to life. Through discussion, creative activities, and reflection, pupils have considered what it means to lose a home, leave behind familiar surroundings, and begin again in an unfamiliar place.

Here is a selection of work that the children hope will inspire reflection, understanding, and kindness towards displaced people around the world.





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The Home She had Left Behind

The suitcase lay there, empty and still, as she wondered what to pack, what would make her heart fill. With joy or anguish, excitement or fear, it didn't really matter, as long as they were here. But she knew it couldn't happen, she had to leave alone. Alone and afraid, but equipped with memories from home. The laughter, the tears, the sadness, the hope, pack it all up with love and care, until nothing she truly loved would be there. Her childhood friends, her photos of them, her rock from the beach, her birthday card, from the day she turned ten. Dad's hugs, dad's tickles, dad's smelly perfume, dad's smiles, and dad's voice, echoed around the room. Mum's hugs, mum's tickles, mum's food, mum's wise words, mum's maniacal laughter, mum's amazing hors d'oeuvres. She packed it in her heart, she held them close and dear, she cherished these memories, for departure was near. She was shy with leaving as long as she knew she'd packed her most prized possession. Not the rock from the beach, nor her childhood friends, or her photos of them, not the birthday card from the day she turned ten. Her prized possession weren't any of these. Her prized possession were the memories of

The home she'd left behind.



Words of compassion from
children at Liphook Church of
England Junior School

Just to see you again By Alex
Duff
Boarding the train,
Left everything behind,
The horizon near to sight,
A new beginning coming to a start,

Just to see you again

Heading into the unknown,
Photos memories all left behind,
Awake all night,
With screams in my ears,

Just to see you again

Every second a moment lost,
Once cherished calls made to echoes,
First goodbyes calling back to me,
Not knowing what's to come,

Just to see you again.

Personal experience make displacement real for students

A member of support staff at The Bay Church of England School on the Isle of Wight knitted a special Paddington which was used to introduce the project to students. The bear was gifted to a displaced person, along with all the other donated backpacks and bears delivered to the cathedrals in the Year 6 leavers services (see below).

RE lead at the school's Secondary site Beth Feltham said: 'The response was amazing and one member of staff came forward, she was a displaced child who came to the UK in the 1990s. She has offered to talk to students about her own experience.

Students made bunting to highlight the plight of refugees that was hung in the school. A large Paddington Bear was also created to stand in the school foyer. Each tutor group was given materials to create their own suitcase when thinking about what they would take if forced to leave their homes.



Leavers Services

As in previous years, special leavers services were held at Winchester Cathedral, Portsmouth Cathedral, Christchurch Prior and Romsey Abbey to celebrate the work of the children as they move on to their next school. Twelve services were held across two weeks – led by five bishops and senior clergy.

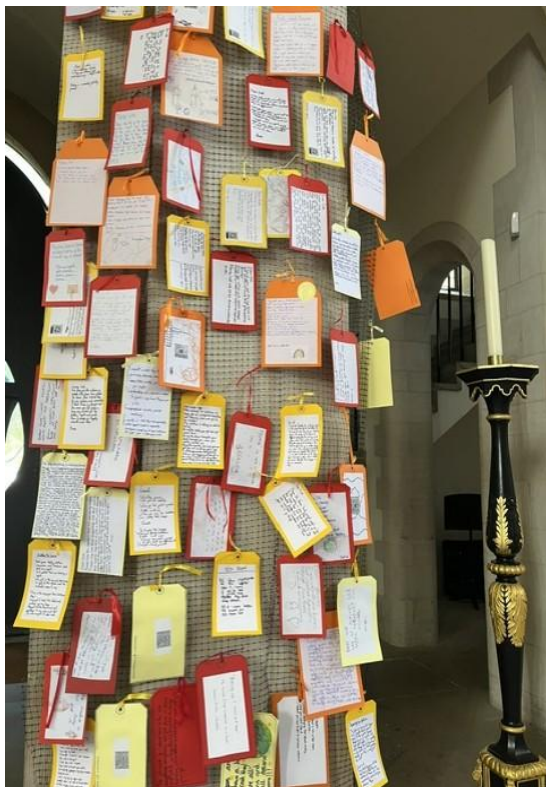
A very special Paddington bear appeared at the services. The huge bear was created by a parent at Epiphany Church of England School in Bournemouth many years ago. Each year the school has a Paddington tea party, complete with marmalade sandwiches. Children make marmalade to take home for their families.



Before the services, children enjoyed a vast array of workshops including, dance, painting, calligraphy, archaeology, singing, and craft – as well as enjoying tours of the cathedrals.



Children's work and contributions were displays from huge height at Portsmouth and Winchester Cathedrals.





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Donated backpacks and bears at Christchurch Priory

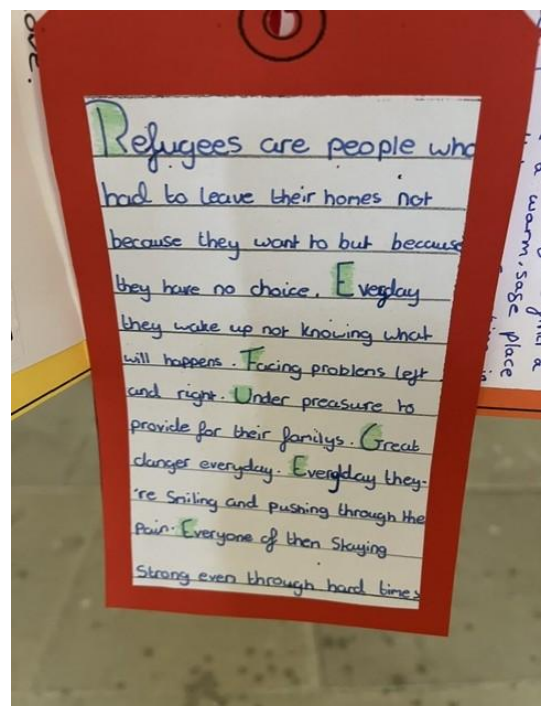
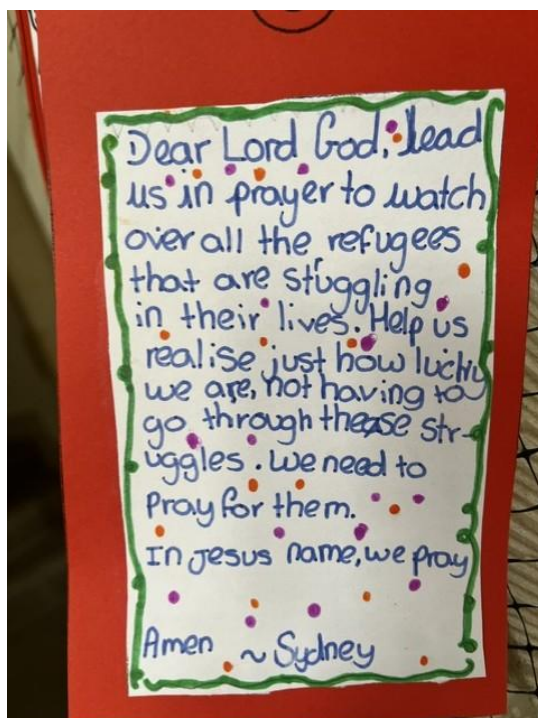
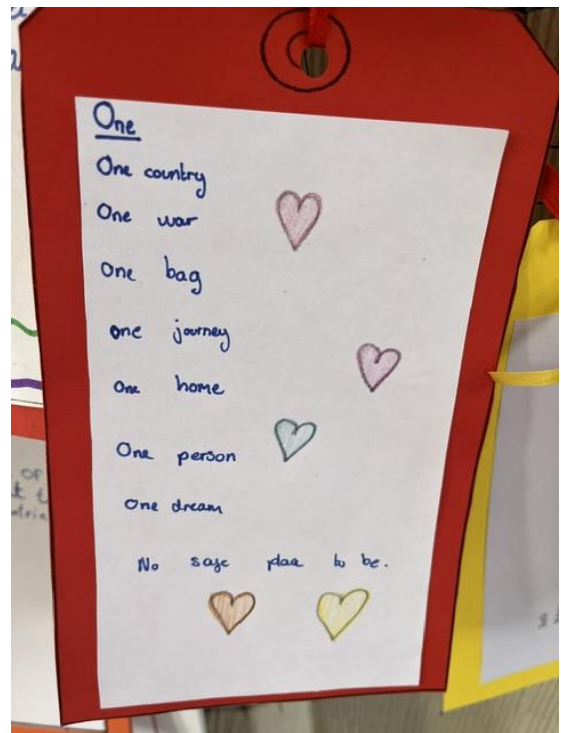
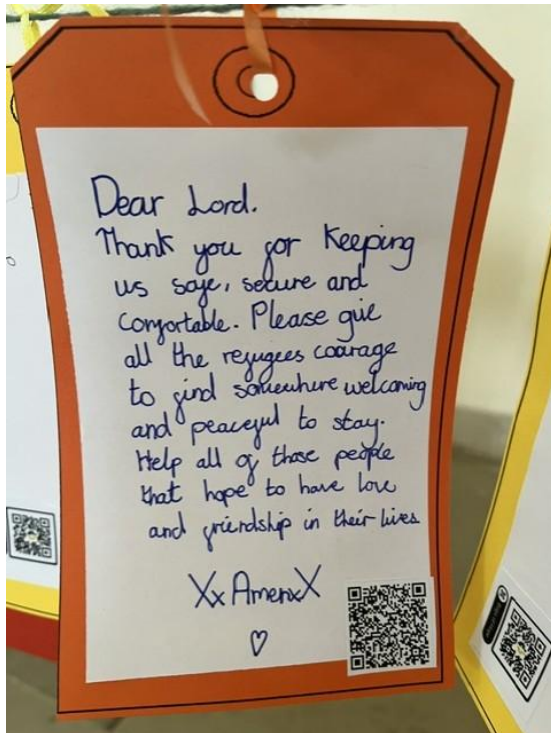


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It was however the children's thoughts, prayers and poems written on thousands of luggage labels left at the cathedrals that ultimately displayed the depth of empathy, compassion and understanding that will be the legacy of the Bags of Hope Project. Here is a selection:



Romsey Abbey hosts Infant School Pupils

Children at our church infant schools who are not moving on to a Church of England junior school enjoyed their own special end of year service at Romsey Abbey. Always a popular event with the younger children, the service was based around belonging – to a family, a school, a community and to God's world. Below is a selection of the children's

work:





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The children's work will be on display at Winchester Cathedral until 28th August 2026. Here are some initial comments made by people who have already visited:

Our son has enjoyed taking part in the project. It is nice for his younger brother to see what he has done, knowing he will be doing a project in two years time.

My daughter has talked about this when she comes home from school, but it has been nice to actually see it for myself, it's fantastic.

I am from America and it has been amazing to see this today. You have given children a wonderful opportunity to look at these things, I am so pleased that schools in England do this.

I have never seen anything like this in a cathedral before. What a way to learn from the youngest people. Some of these cards make me cry.

Photos!

You can view lots of photographs of the Year 6 Leavers' Services at Winchester Cathedral [here](#). and Portsmouth Cathedral [here](#). They can also be found on our websites.



Booklets containing ideas for all our diocesan projects are available here:
[Project Booklets and Resources - Diocese of Winchester](#)