

On a table in front of the pupils, should be:

First aid kit, bottle of water, food, a jumper, a book, a piece of jewellery, a pen, a camera, photo of family member.

Forced from home

Good morning. As you all know, our value this month is compassion. In honour of that, our assembly should help you feel compassion for others less fortunate than you. Many others, in fact.

We are going to practise something called visioning.

This will only work if you listen carefully, stay calm, and try to be as sensible as possible.

First, can you all, please, close your eyes? I want you to take deep, steady breaths in and out. Really concentrate on your breathing, everyone.

Imagine that your teachers have just announced that today is in fact a school holiday and that you will all be going home.

In your mind, go back to your classroom and collect your bag. Now imagine that you are heading out of school.

Say goodbye to your classmates and make your usual way home.

You are on your street now, walking towards your home.

You approach the front door. Notice the colour of it. Do you ring the bell, or have you got a key? What does the bell sound like if you do ring it? Who comes to the door?

Greet them, then step inside your home. Notice how it smells different to outside. Is it warmer or cooler than outside?

Go to your favourite room in the house. Think about what makes it special. How do you feel when you are in this room?

What is your favourite object in this room? Go to it and pick it up. Sit down and look round the room.

Is it quiet and peaceful here, or is it noisy and full of life? Think about how you feel here.

Now take five deep breaths [count five breaths] then slowly open your eyes. Look around you. Was it nice to be back at home? Think for a moment about what it is that makes your home so special.

Around the world, many people are leaving home. Some are travelling for holidays or for work. Some are seeking to start a new life somewhere else. Some might be off to explore the world or going to university. And some are forced to leave – running away because their lives are in danger.

Here are some reasons why people might have to leave their homes and become refugees:

War, racism, earthquakes, disease, political problems.

You may have heard of people being called refugees or asylum seekers. These words mean slightly different things but they both mean that those people have been forced to leave their homes because they were scared of what might happen to them if they stayed. They might be running away from war, or they are being treated unfairly because of their race or religion, or they are running for their lives away from a flood or disease.

Let us look closely the items on this table. Think for a moment. If you had to leave your home in an instant, in an emergency, which thing would you take with you? Why? Was it a difficult decision?

Think for a moment. How would you feel if you had to leave your home in an emergency? How would you feel if could never go home again, never see your friends, neighbours, the things you own again?

Home is a very important place. For most people it's a place where we feel safe, where we belong.

Some people move home quite often, some will only move once or twice in their lives.

But generally, in the UK and Ireland, we feel safe in **our** homes, and have a degree of choice over when and where we move. But some people around the world do not have this safety or comfort or choice.

6. Show the slide of Shume

Shume is just five years old. Here he is clinging to the window of his flooded home. He lives in Bangladesh, a country in Asia. Bangladesh suffers from floods and the changing climate means floods now happen more often. Many people are forced to leave their homes because of flooding and become refugees. Shume is holding medicine and fresh water. The water around him is six feet deep. Where will he and his family go?

5. Show the slide of the refugees from Syria

This family has had to leave their home in Syria because of the war there. Because the town they lived in was being bombed, they had to leave to survive. They have taken as much as they can carry and they are hoping to settle in a different country. They are tired and hungry and do not know what will happen next.

But how can we help? What can we in England do to support refugees and make their journeys easier and their lives better? Well, there are many ways in which people can help:

You have helped already! On Friday you all donated items and placed them in your class box. These boxes have been collected and sent to a charity who will pass them on to a refugees and their families. Think about an item that you donated. Well done for making a difference. Why not do it again someday!

Another way to help is to donate money to one of the many charities who help refugees. Just a few pounds (on one week's pocket money) can make a real difference.

And finally, you could make a difference by welcoming refugees when they come to settle in this country. Every year some refugees, after a long journey from their home country, start a new life in the UK. There are refugees this very minute who have just finished that journey and are getting used to a new country and a new home. They may be tired, homesick and in need of friends. They may need your help again!

These Syrian children have just enjoyed their second Christmas in England. They may still miss their old homes in Syria, but they are beginning to enjoy their new life and the different customs and festivals we enjoy here.

We now ask you to close your eyes again. Please do it as sensibly and as calmly as you did it before.

Take yourself back to your favourite room in your house. Look around the room, and think about the things in it that make you feel safe, happy and cared for. Find the things you were given for Christmas, or maybe for your last birthday, or maybe even that you have bought for yourself.

Hopefully now, and maybe even for the first time, you feel very lucky to have this home and this feeling. Hopefully now you will always try to think about others in the world, who have lost their homes and who are searching far and wide for a new one.

Keep your eyes closed, but now put your hands together while we pray. As we think of people who are forced to move away from their homes whatever the circumstances, we pray that they are able to keep safe and we pray that we can help them in some way. Help us to remember refugees in our daily lives, as we enjoy the safety and comfort of our own homes.
Amen.