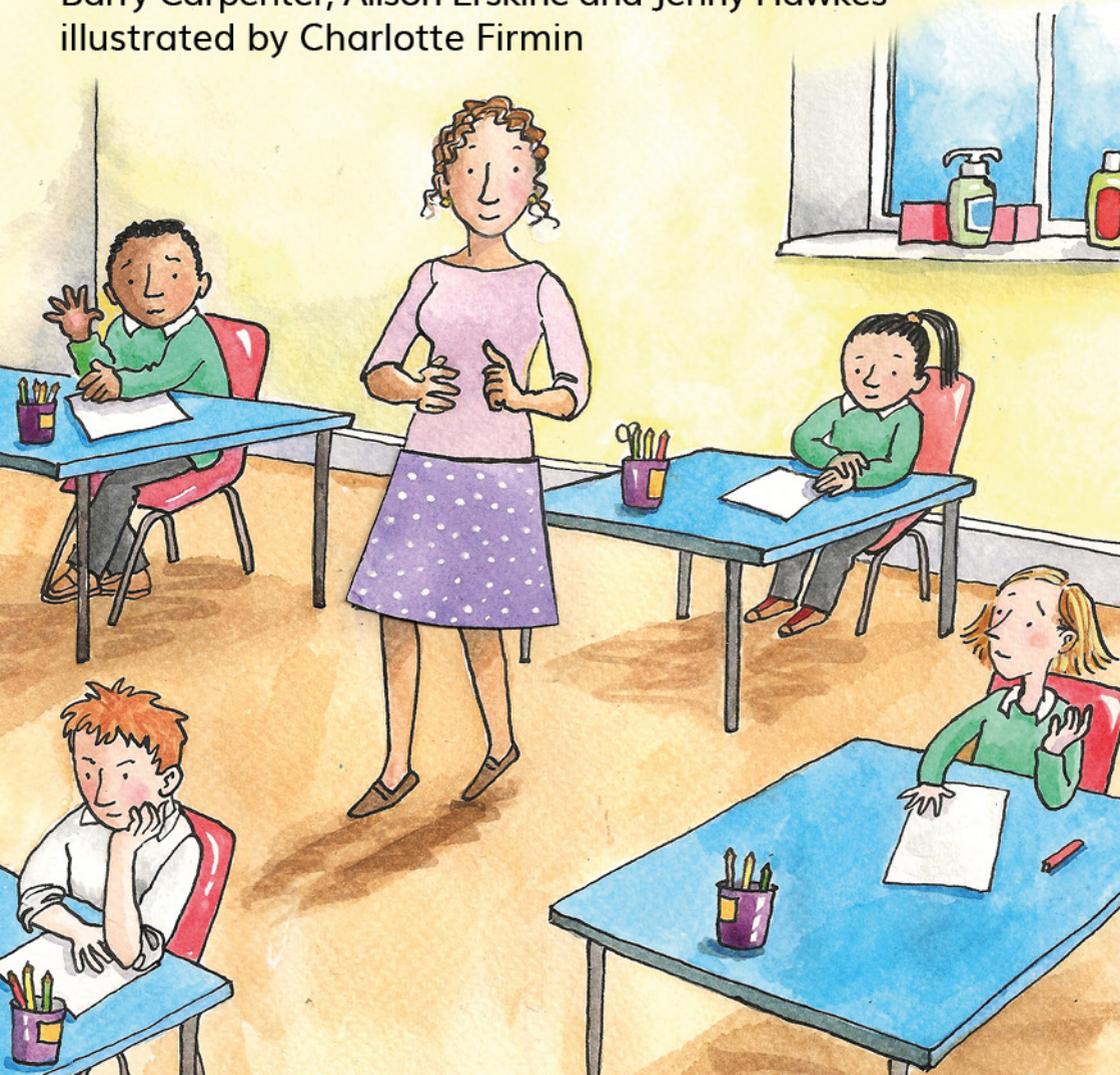




**Beyond Words**  
empowering people through pictures

# Lenny and Lily Return to School

Barry Carpenter, Alison Erskine and Jenny Hawkes  
illustrated by Charlotte Firmin







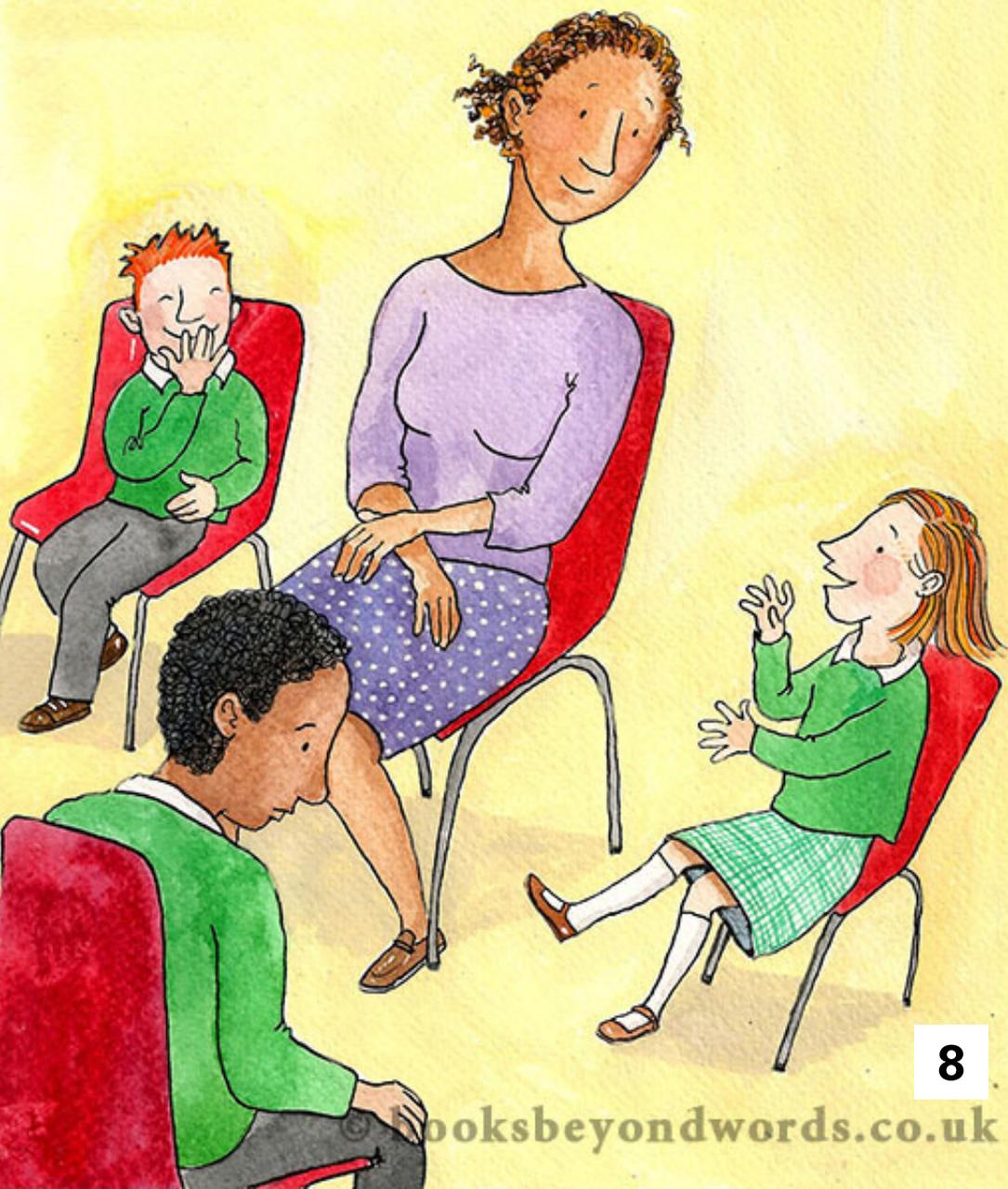






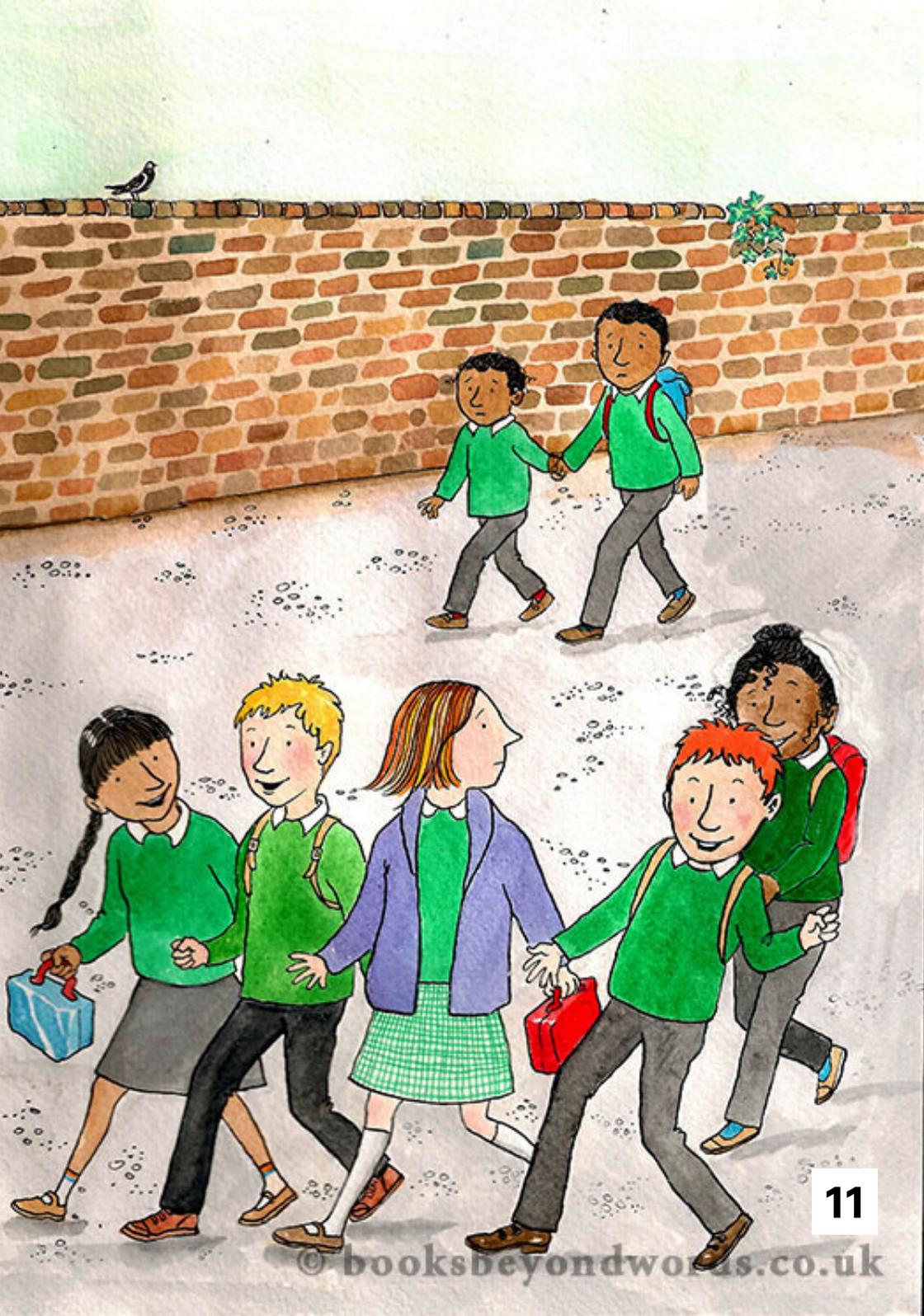










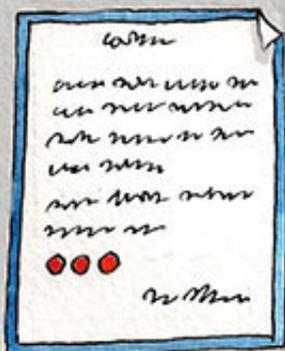








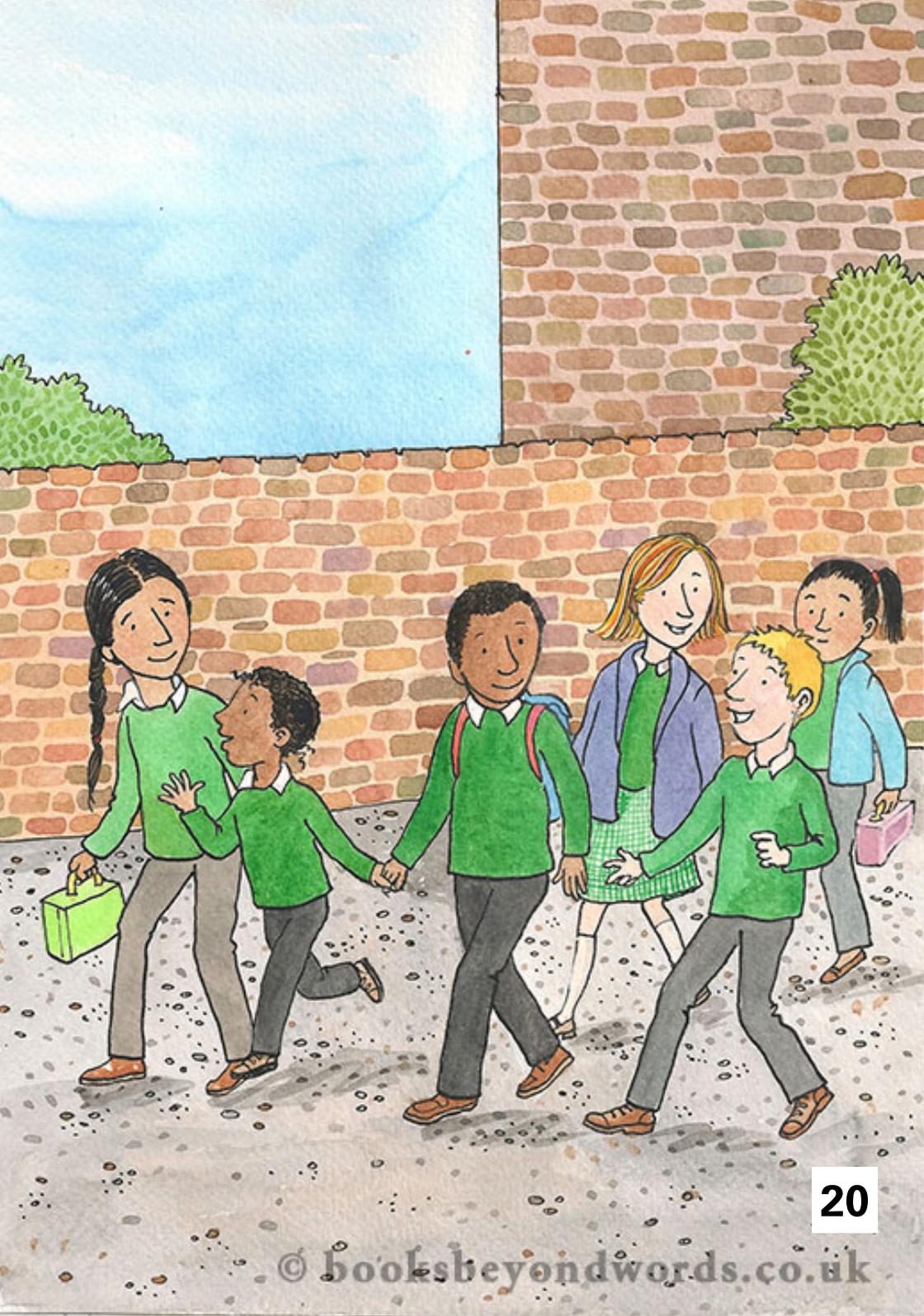
















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## **Lenny and Lily Return to School – a story**

Lenny and Lily live next door to each other. They have had different experiences of the lockdown, but now it's time for them to return to school. Lily is excited to go back and meet up with her friends again, but Lenny has enjoyed being at home with his family and feels more anxious.

When Lenny and Lily go back to school they both face different challenges. Lenny struggles to reconnect with his friends and find his place in the group. Lily has found home learning difficult and struggles to keep up with the pace of lessons in class.

The story explores the range of emotions Lenny and Lily experience as they come back into school and rebuild relationships with their teachers and friends.

# A Recovery Curriculum

During the period of immense disruption caused by coronavirus, all our children have experienced great loss. The losses of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom can trigger reactions of anxiety, trauma and bereavement in any child. The overall impact cannot be underestimated and will cause a rapid erosion of mental health in our children if ignored.

It would be naive to think that children will pick up the Curriculum at exactly the same point at which they left it on the day their school closed. When children return to school there needs to be a Recovery Curriculum in place (for more information, see Useful resources). Each school must fill it with the content they believe is best for the children in their school community and places children's fundamental wellbeing and secure positive development at the centre.

The story in this book focuses on five 'levers' that will help pupils to re-engage with their learning and the school community.

**Lever 1: Relationships** – we can't expect our students to return joyfully, and many of the relationships that were thriving may need to be invested in and restored. We need to plan for this to happen, not assume that it will. Reach out to greet them, use the relationships we build to cushion the discomfort of returning.

**Lever 2: Community** – we must recognise that Curriculum will have been based in the community for a long period of time. We need to listen to what has happened in this time, understand the needs of our community and engage them in the transitioning of learning back into school.

**Lever 3: Transparent Curriculum** – all of our students will feel like they have lost time in learning and we must show

them how we are addressing these gaps, consulting and co-constructing with our students to heal this sense of loss.

**Lever 4: Metacognition** – in different environments, students will have been learning in different ways. It is vital that we make the skills for learning in a school environment explicit to our students to reskill and rebuild their confidence as learners.

**Lever 5: Space** – space to be, to rediscover self, and to find their voice on learning in this issue. It is only natural that we all work at an incredible pace to make sure this group of learners are not disadvantaged against their peers, providing opportunity and exploration alongside the intensity of our expectations.

## How can schools use this story?

Using this story, teachers can work to the evidence-based principles of co-construction, co-creation and co-production to support a child or group of children to recall their experiences of lockdown during the pandemic.

This is a wordless story told using pictures. There is no right or wrong way to tell the story. When you read the book with a child or group of children, you are seeking their emotional response to the pictures.

Initially, children may tell the story based upon their interpretation of each picture and the experiences of the two characters, Lenny and Lily.

However, through interaction and conversation with their peers or an adult, children can also create their own story from the pictures. Children can relate the pictures to their own experiences, make the story about themselves and talk about their own feelings, opening up an opportunity for adults to better understand children's perspectives and provide reassurance.

Some children may need gentle encouragement to make this connection and there are some useful tips for teaching staff and parents on the next page.

Given that some children may have lost loved ones during the pandemic, it is a good idea to be prepared for conversations around death and dying. Beyond Words has published several stories about grief and bereavement that can help support these conversations: [When Somebody Dies](#), [When Dad Died](#) and [When Mum Died](#).

## How to read this book

This story is told using pictures alone. It is not necessary to be able to read any words.

With this book, children are free to express their emotions, and to take how the characters feel in the story and relate this to how they may be feeling. You can use this book to support children of all ages and abilities to talk about their own experiences.

1. Start at the beginning of the book and read the story in each picture. Encourage the child to move on to the next page at their own pace.
2. You can read the book with an individual child or with a group of children. Encourage the children to tell the story in their own words. You will discover what each child thinks is happening, what they already know and how they feel. You may think something different is happening in the pictures yourself, but that doesn't matter. Wait and see if the children change their ideas as the story develops. Watch, wait and wonder.
3. It can help to prompt the child you are supporting to gradually go deeper into the meaning of the book by asking a range of open-ended questions, such as:
  - I wonder who that is?
  - I wonder what is happening?
  - I wonder what he or she is doing?
  - I wonder how he or she is feeling?
  - I wonder if you have ever felt like that?
  - I wonder if that has ever happened to you or your family?

4. You don't have to read the whole book in one sitting. Allow the child enough time to follow the pictures at their own pace.
5. Some children may not be able to follow the story but they may be able to understand some of the pictures. Stay a little longer on the pictures that interest them.
6. Some children may interpret and create this story using signs (Makaton, British Sign Language, Signed English). Others may use voice activated devices or Eye Gaze technology.
7. For pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities, the story may be illuminated by the use of objects of reference or sensory cues (visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory or olfactory). These pupils may need to read the book with a very familiar adult who will be able to pick up the smallest of responses. For some children it may be helpful to interpret the story with some movement (e.g. a kinaesthetic input).

## A possible storyline

The following words are provided for readers and supporters who want some ideas about one possible story. Most readers use their own words to make their own story from the pictures.

1. It's the summer holidays. Lenny and Lily are in Lenny's garden. They keep lots of space between them.
2. Lily and her mum go to the supermarket. Lily is excited to choose her school uniform for the new term.
3. Lenny doesn't want to look at the uniform that his mum has bought for him. He doesn't like thinking about going back to school.
4. Lenny and Lily walk to school together. Lily is excited but Lenny feels anxious.
5. In the playground, Lenny gives his brother a hug goodbye.
6. All the children line up. Lenny sees their teacher from last year. She has a new class now.
7. Lenny and Lily have a new teacher. They wish they were sitting together!
8. It's circle time. Lily has lots of ideas to tell the teacher, but Lenny is very quiet.
9. At playtime, Lily has fun with her friends but Lenny sits on his own. He's not sure how to join in.
10. After breaktime, Lenny concentrates hard on his work. Lily tries but it's difficult and she needs some help.

11. Lenny and Lily walk home after school. Lily walks with a group of friends. Lenny walks behind them with his brother. Lily wishes Lenny would join the group.
12. In the evening, Lenny helps his mum in the garden. He tells her about his first day back at school.
13. Lily eats dinner with her mum and sister. She tells them how much fun she had at school with her friends.
14. Lenny gets on with his homework. Lily tries to do hers but she finds it quite hard. She keeps getting stuck.
15. At school, Lenny and Lily do some work in a small group. Lily likes working like this. Lenny still finds it hard to fit in.
16. Lenny talks to an adult about how he's feeling. They look at this story together. Talking helps Lenny feel better.
17. Lenny and Lily's class do some outdoor activities. Lily calls Lenny over so he doesn't feel left out. Lenny decides to join in with the group.
18. It's circle time again. Lenny feels a bit nervous about talking, but Lily sits next to him. She helps him feel more confident.
19. Lenny and Lily are both happy. It's good to be back at school!
20. After school, Lenny and Lily walk home together with all their friends.
21. They sit in Lenny's garden and do their homework together.
22. Time to have some fun! Lenny and Lily ride their bikes in the park. They wave at their friends.

## Useful resources

### **A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic**

A think piece written by Prof. Barry Carpenter CBE and Matthew Carpenter about the necessity for a Curriculum that is responsive to the needs of children, enabling schools to consider the processes they will need to put in place to successfully transition children back to school.

[www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/](http://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/)

### **Evidence for Learning LearningShared podcast**

The aim of the LearningShared podcast is to shine a light on creative, inspiring ideas and effective practice that supports the holistic development of children, young people and adults – especially those with special educational needs and disabilities or any form of additional learning needs.

*Episode 12* of the podcast focuses on a case study from Chadsgrove School in Bromsgrove looking at how they have used Books Beyond Words to support their students' social, emotional and mental health.

[www.evidenceforlearning.net/learningshared/](http://www.evidenceforlearning.net/learningshared/)

## Related titles from Beyond Words

[Lenny and Lily in Lockdown](#) (2020) by Barry Carpenter, Alison Erskine and Jenny Hawkes, illustrated by Charlotte Firmin. Lenny and Lily are neighbours and go to school together. One day their teacher explains there is a pandemic and their school will be closing for some weeks. The story explores Lenny and Lily's experiences of loss and change, how they maintain their friendship, the challenges of learning at home and the range of emotions they each experience.

[Feeling Cross and Sorting It Out](#) (2014) by Sheila Hollins and Nick Barratt, illustrated by Beth Webb. Ben doesn't like being rushed and when Paul won't make time for a chat, Ben gets cross and upset. When Paul understands what is important for Ben and what has been worrying him, they can choose a new activity to do together.

[Making Friends](#) and [Hug Me, Touch Me](#) (both 2015, 2nd edition) by Sheila Hollins and Terry Roth, illustrated by Beth Webb. These books tell the stories of Neil and Janet who want to get to know new people but go about it in the wrong way. The stories tell how they learn when you can and can't touch other people.

[Belonging](#) (2018) Sheila Hollins, Valerie Sinason and Access All Areas artists, illustrated by Lucy Bergonzi. Kali is lonely. She has no real friends and no reason to leave the house to socialise; community activities seem remote and pointless to her. Outside her home, Kali defends herself with a mask of hostility, hiding her true feelings. But when things go wrong, Kali finds herself in a position to help Stefan, another vulnerable and lonely person. In the aftermath, they forge a friendship and begin to find themselves in the centre of a community where they feel they belong.

[\*\*Speaking Up for Myself\*\*](#) (reissued 2017) by Sheila Hollins, Jackie Downer, Linnett Farquarson and Oyepeju Raji, illustrated by Lisa Kopper. Having a learning disability and being from an ethnic minority group can make it hard to get good services. Natalie learns to fix problems by being assertive and getting help from someone she trusts.

[\*\*When Dad Hurts Mum\*\*](#) (2014) by Sheila Hollins, Patricia Scotland and Noëlle Blackman, illustrated by Anne-Marie Perks. After her dad is violent towards her mum, Katie's teacher supports the family to get the help of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate and the police.

[\*\*When Mum Died\*\*](#) and [\*\*When Dad Died\*\*](#) (both 2014, 4th edition) by Sheila Hollins and Lester Sireling, illustrated by Beth Webb. Both books take an honest and straightforward approach to death and grief in the family.

### **Free downloadable resources on coronavirus**

- 'Good Days and Bad Days During Lockdown'
- 'When someone dies of coronavirus: a guide for carers and family'
- 'Let's talk about...when someone is ill or dies from coronavirus: online support for people with learning disabilities'
- 'When it's not safe to stay at home: guide to supporting people at risk of abuse at home during coronavirus'

[www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/coping-with-coronavirus](http://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/coping-with-coronavirus)

## About Books Beyond Words

Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins is the founder, lead editor and Executive Chair of Beyond Words, and a family carer.

There are more than 60 wordless (and therefore non-language dependent) stories published in the Books Beyond Words series, all co-created with people with learning disabilities and people with autism. All the stories are available as paperbacks and eBooks via the Beyond Words website: [www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk](http://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk)

The stories have also been broken down into 400 shorter, searchable snippets in the [BW Story App](#), designed for smartphones and tablets. You can download a free version (with a few sample short stories) from the App Store (Apple/iOS devices) or from Google Play Store (Android devices).

If you are new to Books Beyond Words, you can learn how to get the best out of the stories in our hour-long introductory **e-learning** module. Find out more about e-learning and how to subscribe via our website: [www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/elearning/foundation-module](http://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/elearning/foundation-module).

## Authors and artist

**Professor Barry Carpenter, CBE, OBE**, has a career spanning over 40 years. His appointments include Professor of Mental Health in Education to Oxford Brookes University, education-orientated directorships, and Honorary Professorships at universities in Ireland, Germany and Australia, as well as Head Teacher and Principal. He has been a Fellow of the University of Oxford, and speaks and publishes internationally on special needs issues, including Autism and girls, and engaging learners with complex needs.

**Alison Erskine** has taught in both mainstream schools and in special schools for children with complex needs. She has taught in every key stage from Nursery to Post-16. Eight years ago, she joined Whitfield Aspen, a unique fully inclusive primary school for 500 pupils. She is currently Head of School for KS1.

**Jenny Hawkes** is currently working as Assistant Head at Whitfield Aspen school, a unique school which is a combined mainstream school and specialist resource provision. Previously, she has worked in a range of both mainstream and special schools, with both Primary and Secondary aged pupils. She has run a Post-16 unit for pupils with profound and complex needs and has worked as a SENCO.

**Charlotte Firmin** is an author and artist based near Faversham. She has illustrated more than 30 books and regularly leads creative story-making workshops for children in schools and libraries. Charlotte has worked on a wide range of community projects with schools, parents, food bank users, people with dementia, fathers in prison, minority groups, refugees, excluded children and homeless people. Charlotte's website is [www.charlottefirmin.co.uk](http://www.charlottefirmin.co.uk).

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to all of the children who helped us develop this story: the children and staff at Whitfield Aspen School; the children of Chaddesley Corbett Endowed Primary School, with the support of Jayne Edwards and Polly McMeeking; Benedict, Barney and Beatrice Carpenter; pupils and staff at Laithes Primary School, including Tawny Owls, Eagle Owls and Feelings Group; Dorabella Hollins and Rebecca Witchalls.

We would like to thank Montreux Capital Management for their generous funding of this book.



First published in the UK 2020 by Books Beyond Words, charity number 1183942 (England and Wales).

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Further information about the Books Beyond Words series can be obtained from our website: [www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk](http://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk).