

Returning to school after COVID-19: Advice for parents



The process of welcoming children back into schools after a period of school closure might be a source of concern and challenge for some children and their parents, and this might create a range of different emotions. For children, some emotions might be excitement to see their friends again or worry that things might be different in school. It is important for adults and caregivers to support children to recognise that a variety of feelings such as feeling anxious, worried, scared etc. are completely normal and should be recognised and validated.

TOP TIPS

Help your child to establish a predictable and consistent routine by using a visual calendar on display so that your child can begin counting down the days to the first day back, re-start a clear morning and evening (bedtime) routine, in preparation for getting ready for school again.

Try to show your children that you feel calm about their return to school.

Chat with your child about starting back at school. What do they think it will be like? What are they most looking forward to? Is there anything they're unsure about? By talking about this, you can find out how your child is feeling and they can feel heard and reassured by you.



It is important that you talk with school staff about changes in family circumstances e.g. illness, bereavement, trauma, furloughing/job loss and separation so that they can be supported.

Help your child focus on what will be the same in school to help reduce anxiety: same staff, classroom, furniture, equipment etc.

Children and young people have spent a lot of time with parents/carers during the lockdown period, and they might want to remain with you. Reassure them that lots of other children are likely to be feeling the same way, and remind them that you will be there for them at the end of the school day.

Try and encourage your child to talk about what they are feeling and explain that experiencing a range of emotions is normal. You can also try 'wondering aloud' to try and interpret how your child might be feeling about returning to school, with curiosity and empathy e.g. "I wonder if you are feeling a little worried about going back to school because you are used to being at home. I understand that and it is normal to feel that way. I am feeling a little worried about going back to work, too. Would it help if we had a talk about how we are feeling?"

How do I explain....?

Click the link underlined to visit resource



Social distancing will help to keep us safe



It will feel strange because I cannot hug, high five house

hug



don't touch



Washing our hands will help us safe too
We must wash our hands for 20 seconds using so



? ...that it is time to go back to school?

- ★ [Going back to school social story](#) (Key Stage 1)
- ★ [Back to school superhero story](#) (Key Stage 2)

? ...what social distancing means?

- ★ [Social distancing at school](#)
- ★ [Albert mouse and social distancing story](#)

? ...why adults are wearing masks?

- ★ [Seeing other people wearing masks story](#)

? ...why my child needs to wash their hands?

- ★ [Germs and hand washing](#) (Key Stage 1)
- ★ [Washing hands helps us beat the virus](#) (Key Stage 2)

? ...how to wash their hands?

- ★ [Steps for washing your hands](#) (Key Stage 1)
- ★ [How to wash your hands](#) (Key Stage 2)

Back to School Social Story

To stop people from sharing their germs and getting sick my school was closed.



I had to stay at home and stay safe.

The Government who are in charge say it is safe for me to go back to school.



When I go back to school some things will be the same and some things may be different.

TELEPHONE SUPPORT LINE

Now open to education staff and parents/carers
Weekdays: 9.30am - 12.30pm and 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Educational Psychology are running a confidential telephone support line for education staff and parents, to talk about any concerns they may have about the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

To get in touch, call the number for your local area:

ISLE OF WIGHT.....	02392 441497
NORTH (Basingstoke & North Test Valley).....	01252 814835
SOUTH (Fareham, Gosport & Havant).....	02392 441497
EAST (East Hants, Rushmoor & Hart).....	01252 814729
WEST (Winchester, Eastleigh, New Forest & South Test Valley)....	01962 876239



www.hants.gov.uk/educational-psychology



Resources for children to use themselves:

- ★ <https://www.childline.org.uk/> (0800 1111)
- ★ [Think Ninja app from NHS](#) (ages 10-18)



Helpful resources for parents

- ★ [Anna Freud - Child mental health resources for parents/carers](#)
- ★ [Place2Be - Reassuring your child](#)
- ★ [Mind Ed - Parenting Support](#)
- ★ [Young Minds - Supporting your child during COVID-19](#) (0808 802 5544)
- ★ [Hey Sigmund - Talking to children about world trauma](#)
- ★ [Schools reopening document - advice for parents and carers](#)
- ★ [Department for Education \(DfE\) helpline to answer questions about coronavirus related to education - 0800 046 8687 or \[dfc.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk\]\(mailto:dfc.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk\)](#)



What if we need more specialist support?



If circumstances at home are particularly challenging:

- [NSPCC coronavirus support](#) (0808 800 5000)

If you are concerned that a young person might hurt themselves:

- [Papyrus UK - Worried about someone](#) (0800 068 41 41)

If your child knows someone who is very unwell or has died

- [Winston's Wish - Coronavirus](#) (08088 020 021)
- [Simon Says](#) (02380 647 550)



Checklist

To prepare and reassure your child about any changes at school, you may want to find out the following:

- WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN TAKE TO SCHOOL (E.G. EQUIPMENT, UNIFORM)
- WHAT DAYS AND TIMES WILL THEY BE GOING
- WHERE THEY WILL BE DROPPED OFF AND WHEN
- WHAT SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL BE LIKE
- WHAT HAPPENS AT BREAK AND LUNCH TIMES
- HANDWASHING PROCEDURES AT SCHOOL
- RULES FOR SHARING EQUIPMENT
- POSSIBLE USE OF FACE MASKS

SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS. SCHOOLS WILL HAVE CLEAR GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS REGARDING THE CURRICULUM AND PRACTICALITIES OF A MANAGED RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER COVID-19 AND WILL BE ABLE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.

Research identifies five key principles; these are important to consider when supporting children, young people and staff returning to school:

• **A sense of safety:** Children/young people and the staff at school need to feel safe when they return.



• **A sense of calm:** A range of emotions will be experienced by the child/young person before, during and after their transition to school. These emotions should be validated and normalised to help the child/young person become regulated and calm.

• **A sense of self- and collective- efficacy:** It is important that the child /young person feels a sense of control about what is happening to them. They should feel that their individual actions alongside those done collaboratively with their peers will lead to positive outcomes.



• **Social connectedness:** Children/young people and staff in school should feel they belong to their school community and can be supported in school.

• **Promoting hope:** Creating and encouraging active hope will be important for showing children/young people and the staff in school that things will get better.



It will be the responsibility of schools to consider these principles but as parents, there are actions that can be taken to facilitate the principles being put into place too.