



Preparing your child for returning to school

With plans being made to reopen schools, as a parent or teacher you may feel concerned about your child returning to school, especially if they find change difficult to handle.

Here are some things that you can do to help prepare your child and to gain a sense of control over the uncertainties.

- 1 Think about your child's individual needs:** each young person has their own personality, strengths and requirements so will need different preparation and support.
- 2 Find out your child's worries:** are they worried about catching the virus or family members getting sick? Once you know their concerns, you can provide them with information and reassurance to help them feel safe at school.
- 3 Share with teachers and support staff your family's lockdown experience,** as this will affect how your child will feel about returning to school. For some families, just getting through each day has been the priority, while others will have lost someone close to them. This will help school staff to provide the support your child needs.
- 4 Work together** with your child's teacher and other professionals to agree an individual 'return to school' plan. It will help to think about what time your child will start and finish school, who will meet them and where they'll spend breaktime. You can add more details as they become known.
- 5 Use your child's preferred communication method.** Your child could help write their own 'return to school' plan. Other children may find symbols, photos or videos more helpful. [Social stories](#) which use short descriptions of a situation or activity can help children understand and cope with changes.
- 6 Think about what will be the same** when your child returns to school, such as their teachers and uniform. Focusing on this first will be reassuring and help reduce their anxiety.
- 7 Find out how the school environment will be different,** such as the position of desks in classrooms. School staff may be able to provide photos or videos so your child can see what school will look like. Remember, certain changes may benefit your child, for example fewer children in the playground may reduce the risk of sensory overload.
- 8 Consider how changes to school routines and activities will affect your child:** for example, there could be new rules about entering and moving around school. Some activities that your child enjoys may not be allowed, such as swimming. Help your child to understand those changes to their school day and why they are happening.
- 9 Think about what you learned about your child during lockdown.** Did certain activities calm your child down? Did regular movement breaks improve their focus? Share this with their teacher. It could also help to continue some of the activities you started in lockdown once schools reopen.

Website links

Social stories: autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips

