

RETURN TO SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER RECOVERY PLANS

Research suggests that many children and young people can find the transition between school and home unsettling and stressful. Following the current Public Health Crisis (Covid19) it is likely that many children and young people will experience similar feelings when they return to school once social isolation ends. This is likely to be apparent for a wide range of children, including those who are vulnerable, have special educational needs, or are moving to a new school/setting. This guidance has been prepared to support us and you in planning for our pupils to be happy, safe and settled on their return.

Why is it important to plan for return to school/setting during the Covid Pandemic?

It is important that we support our children and young people to experience a successful return following the period of lockdown, recognising that this will be a process and not a single event. How this feels for a child can have a powerful and long-lasting effect on academic outcomes, as well as impacting on their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. During a period of transition children and young people can experience:

- A sense of loss of attachment to familiar people, friends, the environment and objects within that environment
- Role and identity uncertainty
- Anxiety within an environment that is initially less predictable
- A perceived loss of control
- An experience of being de-skilled and less capable
- Uncertainty about the future.

Essential to a positive return to school/setting are:

- Advance planning and preparation
- Clear processes for communication
- Attention to relationships

Promoting well-being

It is important to recognise that for some children, coming back to the school will be a welcome return. However, for many children this will be a time of anxiety. It is important to remember that each child will have had their own experience. It will take time for children to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations in school/settings. It will be important to respond to what children have learnt, not what we expect them to have learnt, and what they may have forgotten. Experiences over the recent weeks will have varied, with some children and their families facing challenges, loss and bereavement, whilst for others report the situation has been enjoyable.

The adults in school will be well placed to listen to children's concerns and worried and time must be made available for this process to take place.

We want our children to feel:

Safe - We want them to experience emotional and physical safety, with clear rules and procedures. We will need to communicate with families before school/settings open to reassure that it will be safe

Welcome – We need to show children we are happy they are back and to create a sense of belonging. We need to make families feel welcome and work on strengthening relationships with them.

We need to come together with other agencies to support children.

We need to consider how we support vulnerable children We need to support fragile children, families and staff and create an environment where they can thrive in the long term.

We need to create readiness for learning through nurture and play. School needs to be fun.

For more information about the Recovery Curriculum see:
<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

Planning and Preparation for Return

We have worked to keep the school community as informed as possible over the Covid 19 period. We have been open to our Key Worker families. We formed bubbles in school and have operated using the guidance from the Government.

In September, we welcome back all pupils, having identified pupils who will need a more enhanced and individual approach.

We have been and are ensuring regular and positive communication with parents /carers through emails and phone calls and our social media, sharing work and stories during lockdown.

We have planned time for pupils and staff to develop relationships and to get to know each other again. We will continue to identify pupils who need additional support and put measures in place to support their wellbeing.

These may include those:

1. Transitioning to a new school/setting
2. With additional vulnerabilities including: a) identified SEND (with or without an EHCP) b) in need, looked after, supported through special guardianship, adopted c) in the 'shielded and protected' group d) previous poor attendance e) previous or recent trauma or loss f) living with mental health and well-being vulnerabilities g) living with physical health vulnerabilities h) young carers i) previous risk of exclusion j) with protected characteristics k) risk of exploitation or radicalisation.

Supporting Parents/Carers

The return to school will also be a time of significant change for many parents and carers. For most, you have been at home with your children for an extended period, and you may have worries about the return to the school. It is important that school and professionals appreciate your thoughts and the worries of parents and carers and pro-actively seek to reduce anxieties which may transfer to the individual child. We reassure parents/carers that any feelings of worry are understandable and normal in the current circumstances.