



## Returning to school and anxiety

In this document are some simple tips for reducing anxiety and worries when it comes to returning to school. I have also included some helpful links and there are some special messages from teachers too.

### **Step 1**

Talk. Talk with your child and listen to what they have to say. Ask how they are feeling about going back to school and if they have any worries. If your child doesn't want to talk about what may be worrying them, then you could make a worry box or worry monster where they can write down their worries. The important thing is that you work through these worries together with your child and address them. Let your child know there is always someone to listen if they want it.

### **Step 2**

Validate. Take what your child says seriously, what may seem like a silly fear to an adult can be an overwhelming fear for a child. Again listen

carefully and consider ways of how to help your child work through their emotions.

### Step 3

Focus. Focus on the positives! Get your child to reminisce about fun times they have had at school in the past or to focus on what they love about going to school. This will help to change an anxious child's mindset to a more positive outlook.

### Step 4

Reconnect. Reconnecting with friends virtually just before returning to school can help with fears of lost friendships and also seeing familiar faces again will bring joy to your child.

### Step 5

Understand. Make sure your child understands that some things may be a little different when returning to school. For example desks might have been moved and teachers will be wearing PPE. Explain the changes are to keep everyone safe and they are new changes to all the children and the staff.

### Step 6

Prepared. Be prepared, once you have found out your child's fears regarding returning to school (that's if they have any) put strategies in place to help reduce your child's anxiety.

### **Step 7**

**Routine.** Establish a routine before returning to school. For example bedtime routines or plan your morning routine with your child that has small simple steps that are easy for them to follow, ready for when they return to school. A fun idea, you could also get your child dressed in their uniform and play school with them. Just putting their uniform on is getting them one step closer to returning to school.

### **Step 8**

**Separation.** Separation anxiety is a fear a child experiences when separated from their main caregiver. Do not worry if your child experiences this as it is usually a sign of how well you have bonded with them. Reassure your child that they will be ok and when you'll be with them again. By leaving your child at school you will not damage them, you are helping them to grow their independence. Talking with your child about what you are going to do later when you pick them up and making saying goodbye a positive time will have a big impact on how quickly your child will settle.

### **Step 9**

**Communication.** Don't hesitate to contact your child's school, staff will be able to offer advice and support and if they know your child is anxious about returning to school they can also put strategies in place for morning drop offs or while your child is at school.

## Messages from Downs View staff

"WE HAVE MISSED YOU ALL SO MUCH! WE ARE GOING TO HAVE SO MUCH FUN WHEN YOU ALL COME BACK TO SCHOOL. WE REALLY LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING ALL YOUR SMILING FACES"

"HELLO, I AM SO LOOKING FORWARD TO HAVING YOU BACK IN SCHOOL. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH WE HAVE MISSED YOU. YOU MIGHT BE FEELING A LITTLE BIT NERVOUS ABOUT COMING BACK AND WORRIED THAT YOU WILL MISS HOME. I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT IT'S OK TO FEEL LIKE THAT AND TELL YOU A SECRET... WHENEVER I FEEL A LITTLE BIT WORRIED, I ALWAYS REMEMBER A QUOTE FROM WINNIE THE POOH; **YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK.** I HAVE A BIG SMILE READY FOR YOU WHEN YOU COME BACK!"

**WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL. WHERE THE MAGIC STARTS AND THE ADVENTURE NEVER ENDS. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING ALL YOUR SMILEY FACES AGAIN IN SCHOOL.**

## **Useful links**

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/childrens-mental-health/back-to-school-coronavirus-covid-19/#>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/06/top-nhs-doctor-issues-advice-for-children-going-back-to-school/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ\\_gpNvcrnk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ_gpNvcrnk)

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-anxiety-and-refusal/>