

they need pictures or play to help them to understand). It might be helpful to talk whilst your child is doing an activity or whilst you are practicing the journey to school as this may help your child feel safe, calm, and ready to talk. You might also not have the answer and it is okay to use non-definite language.

- ◆ **Connecting without touch:** Some children require lots of touch to help them feel safe and connected with their adults and peers in school. However, this will be discouraged due to Covid-19. Can your child use a rhyme, a song, a new 'no touch' fun greeting to help them connect with adults and peers? Does your child need a Balloon Squeeze or teddy to meet their need, or do they need movement activities in their day?



- ◆ **Transitional object:** This can be a toy, object, or photograph etc. that your child takes from home into school. Ask your child to look after it whilst you are not together and, if they miss you or feel sad, they can hold it or look at it.
- ◆ **Visual timetable or visual reminders:** Your child can look at the visual timetable or calendar to

help them know if they are going to school or not. As plans change, you can look and change the timetable together and talk about why things have changed and how this may make them feel. This will reassure your child, provide a structure and help them to feel safe.

- ◆ **Communication book/information sharing:** It may be helpful to have a communication book or information sharing strategy with the school to help to share how the day has gone for your child? Can you work with your child's school to share procedures, plans, changes and strategies?

5. Planning your child's return to school

We have created a sheet that you might like to fill in to help you and others think about your child's strengths and needs and to link these to strategies that may support them to transition back to school. If you do this with your child, it might be helpful to do an activity afterwards to help your child to process the emotions that are brought up. It might be helpful to share this with your school and other professionals.

We are in an unprecedented situation and strategies and resources previously used may not be available to schools during this time. We are currently planning in the moment and managing continued uncertainty, therefore working closely with schools to support your child throughout this time is the best that you can do.

Transition Support for Parents Preparing their Child to Return to School

Educational Psychology One Education



Introduction

What we currently know is that our children will soon start back at school but in a school environment that may look and feel quite different to how school was before Covid-19. They may be in smaller classes without their friends, have different timings to the school day, the layout might look different and they will be encouraged to wash their hands more. There could even be future localised or national school closures. Your school(s) will start to communicate the plan for the next few weeks with you soon.

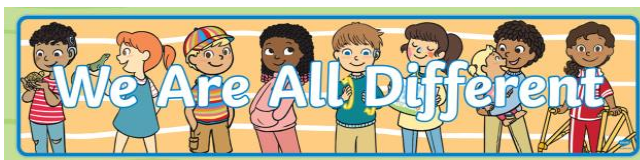
As parents it will be important to take time to assess your own thoughts and feelings about your child's return to school. Before any discussion with your child's school you may need to work out whether this is something you want for your child at the point that his/her class/school are returning.

Although these are unprecedented times, there are several principles around transitions that are helpful to come back to. This leaflet will provide some thoughts, ideas and strategies to support you to prepare your child to transition back to school when it feels right for you and your child.

1. Acknowledging our emotions and thoughts

You and your child may have mixed feelings about returning to school. You may be relieved or anxious. You may have found lockdown difficult

and overwhelming or you may have found it enjoyable to have had this precious time together. You may feel that the adaptations to school due to Covid-19 will suit your child's education. All these feelings are okay because we all experience situations differently, our circumstances are individual to us and each of us have different ways to support ourselves and our families.



2. Preparing for the transition to school

We know that some children can find transitions, changes or moves difficult. However, knowing this can help us to prepare our children and help us to work with our schools and other professionals. When you feel that it's right for your child to return to school, you can have a key role in helping your child get their needs met and to have a positive transition back into school.

3. Knowing your child's individual strengths, interests and needs

Your knowledge of your child's strengths, interests and needs are really helpful when managing transitions. Can you think about what these are? You, your family and educational settings will have used strategies that have worked in the past and/or

are currently working to help your child manage change. Can you think about what has helped previously at home, at school, in the community? When have transitions gone well and not gone well? Can we learn from these experiences?

4. What strategies might help

It may be useful to use strategies that have worked in the past – they will have worked for a good reason! However, this is an unusual situation and may require a different approach. Below are some strategies that might help. Some strategies will help and some won't – it's okay to have a go and to stop if the strategy isn't helping.

- ◆ **Traveling to school practice:** Now that we can complete more exercise or activities outside, you could practice the journey to school.
- ◆ **Manage your own feelings** Many people are feeling worried or overwhelmed during this time. Before you talk with your children about future schooling, think about how you feel and take some time to contain your own emotions, so that you can be as calm as possible when you talk to your children.
- ◆ **Talking about worries, excitement and thoughts:** Your child will need lots of opportunity to talk about how they are feeling about going back to school. They may even revisit the same conversation again and again. It's helpful to think about their developmental stage and how they understand best (maybe