

Dear Parent,

We understand that there are a lot of worries and concerns in the community about Coronavirus, where we can go, who we can mix with, who is vulnerable etc. However, the government have made it clear to Local Authorities, schools and the public, that **all schools will re-open to a full population in September and parents will be expected to send their children to school or they could face legal consequences.**

To help you to prepare your children to return to school we are sending out this letter to give you as parents some tips on things you might do to help them start back with confidence.

We know that schools post lockdown will not look like they did when they closed to most children in March. We need to help our children to understand what they might expect so that they are not worried about going back. Here are some things that might change.

- Social distancing
- More hand hygiene
- Areas out of bounds
- Being taught by a different teacher

All of these can be worries for children of any age, so we have shared some useful ideas to help your children feel ready to go back to school.

### **1. Explain that there will be new routines and rules to keep them safe**

It's important our children don't go into school thinking everything will be normal - only to get a huge shock when they get there.

Explain things will look different - but tell them not to worry, because the teachers have been busy thinking about how to make the school safe and will help them settle back.

Look on line! Most schools have put photos of classrooms on their web-sites, look at them together so they know what the layout will look like. But make sure you tell them that some things that haven't changed. For example:

- Their friends will still be there
- They'll be dropped off on the same playground
- They'll see the same teachers and helpers around school
- They'll be wearing the same uniform
- It will be the same food at lunchtime

Remember to tell them who will drop them off and who will pick them up. This seems obvious to us as adults, but it gives reassurance and a sense of security to our children.

### **2. Talk about worries or fears**

Primary Parent Tips

As September comes closer, make time for chats about how they're feeling about going back to school. Be positive, if your child does have worries, acknowledge their concerns first before offering reassurance. For example:

- It's normal to feel worried about the virus, but here's what you can do to stay safe in school....
- Lots of children will feel a bit worried about having a new teacher. But the teachers want you to be happy and will help you to settle back in

Don't be surprised if your child wants to talk about the same issue several times. Children often repeatedly revisit an idea with an adult to get reassurance nothing has changed.

### **3. Be calm**

It's natural for parents to have some anxiety about returning their child to school. But however, you feel on the inside, it's important to convey calm to your child because children quickly pick up on little clues about how their parents are feeling, and they use this information to inform how they should be feeling. If we look worried, they pick up on this and start worrying too! So, if you do have concerns, it's time to be an actor. No matter how you feel on the inside, try to be calm on the outside. Some tips to think about:

- Think about what you say (and what they overhear)
- Think about your tone of voice
- Think about your body language

### **4. Sleep routines**

In most families during lockdown, sleep routines have become more... flexible! Bedtimes have become later... and as a result, children are getting up later in the morning.

We need to start to change things so that early bedtimes don't come a shock! So, start moving your child's bedtime back towards normal during the summer break. Do this gradually, before they get back to school.

Don't leave it to the last minute, or they won't be able to get to sleep at the earlier time. They will need a good night's sleep, we don't want them to be exhausted on their first day back!

### **5. Be kind to yourself**

We have all been through an emotional rollercoaster over the last few months and if you're feeling worried about sending your child back to school, that's okay, you are probably not alone. It's entirely normal. So be kind to yourself and make sure you find time to de-stress, get some exercise (even a short walk!) and talk to friends or family. You need to make sure you're OK, so you can support your child with their emotions too.

### **Remember!**

Lockdown was a massive change for all of us. And now your children are going back to school, we need to help them get ready for another change. So:

- Talk through what school will be like - and what will happen during the day - so your child knows what to expect
- Make time to talk about any worries they may have

- Let them see you looking calm and in control (even if you feel differently on the inside)
- Ease them back towards normal bedtimes (so they're not exhausted on their first day back)
- Take care of yourself (so you can take care of your child)

Yours sincerely

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