



Dear parents and carers,

Assisting families with transition back to school following lockdown

There will be some children who are quite anxious about returning to school and spending time with an unfamiliar teacher in a new classroom. Anxiety and worry is a normal response to an abnormal situation and ensuring the wellbeing of children at this time is vital. Thinking carefully about how best to communicate with children will help you to make their transition back to school smoother.

Provide time for children to reflect on their experiences

This can be done through stories, conversations or completing a COVID-19 time capsule. Exploring news articles aimed at children may help some older children to discuss and understand events that have happened over recent months.

Provide time for children to talk about what has happened

It is important for children to feel comfortable talking about Coronavirus as you will be an important source of information and reassurance for them. Social stories and books can be useful tools for sharing honest and factual information in a developmentally appropriate way. These can be helpful when you are trying to help children understand new rules and changes to routine e.g. social distancing. There are a number of stories on the school website- details are below.

Provide time for children to ask questions

It is natural that children will have questions and worries about Coronavirus. Giving them the space to ask these questions is a good way to alleviate anxiety. When responding to questions, try to be honest in your responses and remember, it is ok to say you don't know.

Adopt a calm and open approach

Uncertainty can make all of us feel anxious or worried. When communicating to children it is important to maintain an open and calm approach. It helps to support a child to develop their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience over time. There are a number of resources aimed at developing resilience on the school website.

Give increased importance to non-verbal communication and gesture in the absence of ability to give reassuring physical contact. Where possible use visual aids to supplement this.

Give clear, practical guidance

The following tips will help you provide clear, practical advice that children can follow:

- Remind children of the most important things they can do to stay safe using clear language.
- Sometimes, a playful approach may help to motivate children to engage in these activities (maybe thinking of a song they want to sing while washing their hands).

- Children with social and communication needs may respond to the guidelines more literally than others.
- Feelings of anxiety and guilt might arise if children have forgotten to follow the guidelines, so it is important to reassure them.
- The use of visual prompts will be useful to remind children of social distancing guidelines, but also of any changes to their routine e.g. adapted visual timetable.

Support from outside agencies

There is a range of advice on our website from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) for parents and carers about behaviour your child may be demonstrating. These include anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, trouble sleeping and trauma. This advice and much more is available in the mental health advice and parental support section of the home learning tab on the website.

Resources

There are a number of resources on the school website home learning section for children and adults who are experiencing anxiety. We have also posted a workbook that can be completed during summer to prepare for a full return to school.

Stories about Coronavirus or social distancing available on our website home learning tab (resources for children section)

These stories may be helpful:

- *Staying Home by Sally Nicholls and Viviane Schwarz*
- *My name is Coronavirus by Manuela Molina*
- *Coronavirus- A book for children by Axel Scheffler*
- *Dave the Dog is worried about Coronavirus by Molly Watts*
- *Hello, my name is Coronavirus by Safer Schools*
- *Winnie and Wilbur Stay at Home by Valerie Thomas & Korky Paul*
- *Everybody Worries by Jon Burgerman*
- *Time to come in, Bear by Kim St. Lawrence (Video on YouTube)*

Stories about returning to school

These stories may be helpful:

- *Serpentine and the Magic Bubbles by Amanda Barrass*
- *The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope by Nottinghamshire EPS*

Thank you for your continued support as we move to the next stage in these unusual and unexpected times.

Mrs Mylett
Assistant Headteacher