

## Supporting your child to confidently return to school

The guidance about whether your child should attend school has been changeable throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to recognise that whilst the situation is continually changing according to emerging evidence, these changes are necessary to protect the safety, health and happiness of your child. In such challenging times it is important to remain as flexible as possible to the necessary and inevitable changes. Our school is here to provide supportive relationships with you and your child, together with a quality education.

Whatever your situation, we recognise that the experience of Covid-19 can create anxiety, particularly around returning to school. **There are many things you can do to help your child as they return to school.**

1. **Prepare:** Share age-appropriate information with your child. This will help them know what to expect, providing a sense of control so they feel less anxious.
2. **Reassure.** Remember, it is normal to feel concerned when everything is very different. Tell your child that they are not alone as lots of children are feeling the same as them. Schools offer a much-needed sense of familiarity and routine for children. Most children, including those that are anxious about returning, settle well once they are back in school. Encourage your child to share their concerns and try to problem solve what you can together.
3. **Check-in.** Sit down and talk with your child about their day. Ask them what the best bit of their day was and discuss anything that they are finding difficult. Encourage them to talk about their feelings and identify strategies to help them manage these, such as breathing or visualisation. It might be helpful to re-visit any concerns, highlighting where everything turned out fine. This 'evidence' can be helpful in addressing future worries.

### **My child has got used to being with me and at home. How can I help them to cope with the separation?**

*Recognise that this is an adjustment. Remind your child of the friendships they are missing and how returning to school is a chance to see other children and teachers. Transitional objects, such as something small that can be kept in their bag, drawing a smiley face on a piece of kitchen roll in their lunch bag or even on their hand can be helpful in feeling psychologically connected with you.*

### **My child is worried about returning to school. What can I do to help them?**

*Preparing your child will help to alleviate their anxiety. This may include sharing communications as they are received from the school, discussing revised routines, practicing the walk to school for new drop off or pick-up times. When your child is due to return to school, helping to lay-out uniform, pack-up lunch and school bags or polishing shoes together can help to develop a sense of preparedness.*

## **How can I tell if my child is struggling with returning to school?**

Children display worries and anxieties in different ways. These can include under or overeating, under or oversleeping, being 'clingy', withdrawn or 'misbehaving'. Some children may also become regressive in their behaviours. Remember, it is 'normal' for children to behave differently when their experience of the world is so different. These behaviours should pass as they become more confident at school again. It is important to get some help if they do not.

### **I need more help!**

Speak with your school. They will be keen to work with you to support your child to return to school as confidently as possible.

Visit Just One Norfolk for advice about a range of issues, including the return to school: [Return To School \(justonenorfolk.nhs.uk\)](https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk)

### **Resources you may find helpful in supporting your child to return to school:**

Tackle Learning: Adult Learning Norfolk County Council has teamed up with Norwich City Community Sports Foundation to provide an online education programme, offering guidance and advice to parents of primary school children. The first unit on Returning to School can be completed [here](#). You will discover tips and activities to help support your child(ren) with their return to primary school.

Public Health England has launched a [free training course](#) which aims to equip parents, with the knowledge to identify children in distress and to also have the practical skills to provide them with the necessary support. The learn at your own pace, three-week course, will explore psychological first aid, tailored to support during Covid-19.

[Managing My Moments](#) provides a pick and mix menu of practical activities to support children and young people with strategies to manage their emotional health and wellbeing related behaviours.

[Parent information events](#): Many of us are facing increased stress or maybe things are cropping up that you don't know how to deal with. Join these weekly online events to find out what support is available to you.