



Preparing your child to go back to school.

This sheet is for information only and the charity does not encourage nor discourage children's return to school.

As schools are preparing to start welcoming pupils back after the period of closure, it is a good idea to begin to help your child get ready for the transition from home schooling back to being in a classroom environment. We have put together some tips that you might like to use to help your child get ready for when schools reopen.

To start with, if possible, it would be a good idea to drive past or walk past your child's school together and comment on it "Oh look, there is your school". You could do this several times in the next week or so, each time drawing your child's attention to their school in a positive way. We have included several examples below of things you could talk about.

"The playground looks lovely and sunny"

"Look, there is the field. It will be great to play on it again when school reopens"

"I think that is Mrs Haywood's car, she must be getting some fun things ready for you and your class to do"

"You will be able to have Mrs Toppings school lunches again soon, you really enjoy her lasagne don't you"

"What would you like in your lunch box when you go back to school?"

"It will be great to see all your friends again soon"

"Do you remember when you were a frog in the school play and Grandma came to watch too?"

"Your teacher will be so pleased to see you when school opens again" etc. etc.

Make and read a social story with your child about going back to school. A good app to do this on is called Special Stories (£19.99 on the app store). You can also make

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one by taking photographs on your phone or iPad, printing them out and writing sentences underneath or you can also use Power Point to make one. We have included an example of a social story made on Power Point for you with this information sheet (attached). School staff may also be able to support you with this.

Find out off the school your child attends if any routines will be different, for instance if your child will be in a different classroom and what entrance and exit children will be using etc. Talk to your child about these changes before they go back to school. You can include these in your social story too.

Talk about how you are feeling and encourage your child to share their feelings with you too. Give names to different emotions to help your child share how they are feeling. We have included some Makaton emotion signs and symbols to help you (attached).

Talk to your child about things they enjoy doing when they are at school and help them make a list. If possible, your child could type or write a letter, or send a video message to their teacher or TA telling them about all the things they are looking forward to doing when they can come back to school. They could also send or show them a piece of work or art they have done whilst at home or show some photographs of what they have been doing.

If possible, arrange for your child to have a facetime or Zoom call with their TA, Teacher and/or a friend they are looking forward to seeing again.

Involve your child with back to school arrangements. Getting their school bag and uniform ready, any special pens or equipment they may like to take with them and a communication book or photographs that they can take in to help them share what they have been doing whilst at home. Would they like to help get their lunch money ready or buy some nice treats or favourite sandwich filling or yoghurt for their lunch box?

Carry on encouraging regular handwashing at home and make it as stress free and as fun as possible. Is there a nice smelling soap your child can use, can you sing a song while washing hands or count to 10 and back down to zero? Talk to your child in a positive way about handwashing and explain that they will be doing this lots at school too. We have included a Makaton handwashing sequence your child may find helpful.

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Talk about what you will do together when you pick your child up from school. Remind them that you will be coming to pick them up (or who will be coming to pick them up) and that they will be coming home again that afternoon.

Maintain regular contact with your child's teacher and TA via after school meetings, home/school communication book, email or telephone. If routines change again it will be helpful to know beforehand so you can again prepare your child with social stories etc.

Your child may get tired easily to begin with so make allowances for this at home. Have more down time and earlier bedtimes if necessary and use positive behaviour strategies if problems arise. We have included an information sheet on the *interrupt, ignore, redirect and reward* method below as a reminder. If you need any extra support with this or anything else you can contact your Education Advocate for your area.

Cheshire West and Chester

sarah.larkin@cdssgroup.org.uk or

becky.harris@cdssgroup.org.uk

and Cheshire East

yvonne.edwardson@cdssgroup.org.uk

INTERRUPT -IGNORE- REDIRECT- REWARD

Interrupt – Ignore – Redirect- Reward

The first rule is that no harm should come to anyone. Therefore, aggression, self-injury or severe destructive behaviours should not be allowed to continue.

Interruption means

- **Not reprimanding** the person
- No particular attention should be given to the person about the problem behaviour
- Redirect at the earliest opportunity with the goal of providing reward for any approximation to positive/desired behaviour.
- Interrupt in an 'ignoring' manner as much as possible
- Do the minimum to manage the behaviour to stop injury to anyone. This can be achieved by raising forearms to block/protect yourself or quietly 'shadowing' the hands of the person who self-injures.

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How to Ignore

- No consequences are given which relate directly to the behaviour
- Activities continue, do not stop what you are doing
- Do not ignore the person only the behaviour
- Continue as if behaviour has not taken place

Its purpose is to defuse undesirable behaviour and take away its power

How to Redirect

- Redirection is a prompt or cue to engage in a behaviour so that a reward can be given
- To communicate alternative means of interaction
- Your message is “DO THIS INSTEAD”
- Purpose is to encourage participation
- It communicates that behaviour, which previously stopped interactions or gained inappropriate attention, is no longer effective
- It is often better to use physical and gestural prompts with brief verbal cues
- Use non-verbal prompts such as pointing, touching materials, touching the person hand/arms to focus the person’s attention to the task
- Accept any participation by the person and immediately reward this with a positive response (warm verbal comment, physical contact, smiles) and continue assistance towards desired behaviour or task

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