

## **COVID-19: Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of children returning to school – A brief guide for parents and carers of primary school children**

Due to the most recent lockdown, primary and secondary schools in England have only been open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. All other children have been learning remotely. With support from the Local Authority, schools have planned how all pupils will return to education in March in a measured way that prioritises the safety of everyone.

Some children and young people will be happy to go back to school. However, others may feel worried or uncertain. Parents and carers might also have mixed emotions about the proposed return to school; these feelings are understandable and normal in the current circumstances.

This document will help you prepare your child/children and yourself for their return to school. All the links and resources this document contains can be found on [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk).

### **How can I help to prepare my child for returning to school?**

#### **What can you do?**

- Talk to your child about school and what it might be like.
- Think what the routine will be that your child needs to follow before they return, a bit like when you return to school after the school holidays.
- Some (but not all) children may be worried about leaving their families. If this is the case, reassure them that you will be safe while they're at school, that school know how to contact parents and carers, just like before, and explain your drop off and collection arrangements.
- Be patient and prepared to explain more than once what the drop off and collection arrangements are, and what will be happening at school. This may be helpful for younger or vulnerable children.
- Explain that the school staff will understand that it might take time for children to settle in and remember how things work when they return to school. Reassure them that it's the same for other children and the staff – things are different for them too.
- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries, or concerns that you want to share with their teacher, let your school know.

## Where can you find out more?

- Your school should send you and your child information about what to expect and any changes.
- All schools will have risk assessments, policies and procedures and will let you know how they will work to keep you child physically and emotionally safe while they are in school.
- Find out who you and your child can get information, advice and support from at school to support emotional health and wellbeing e.g. teacher, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.
- If you haven't heard from your school yet, check their website for any updates or contact them in the usual way while your child has been away from school.
- Emotional health and wellbeing information and advice to support you and your child can be found on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk).
- **Emotional health and wellbeing support for coronavirus** section on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus).
- Information about school transition support can also be found on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/school-transition-support](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/school-transition-support).
- **Anna Freud Centre** parent carers section [www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/support-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/support-for-parents-and-carers).
- **Open Minds (CAMHS)** – COVID-19 arrangements [www.calderdaleccq.nhs.uk/cyp-ehwd-c19](http://www.calderdaleccq.nhs.uk/cyp-ehwd-c19).
- **Time Out Listening Line for children and young people** offers the opportunity to get some simple advice and guidance about how to keep busy and reduce anxiety. The website offers a platform to have your say and get involved in the Time Out project. Age range: 10-19 years. Contact details: **07418311736**. [www.healthymindscalderdale.co.uk/time-out.html](http://www.healthymindscalderdale.co.uk/time-out.html)
- **Kooth** is an online mental wellbeing community for young people aged 10-25. Open until 10pm every day, 365 days a year. [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com).
- **Healthy Futures Calderdale ChatHealth** is a messaging service for parents of children aged 5-19, the number is 07507 332157. Nurses pick up messages between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday and will reply within one working day. When a text has been received an immediate bounce-back message is sent to let the person know a message has been received. To advertise ChatHealth to parents please use this [short video](#).

## My child is worried about catching the virus at school

### What can you do?

- Evidence suggests that children are less likely to be poorly with COVID-19.
- Reassure your child that staff in school are working hard to make things safe for when they return, and any changes put in place for school drop off and collection, in the classroom, going to the toilet, moving around school and at breaks and lunchtimes will help to keep them safe
- Your child can help to keep themselves and others safe. Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water regularly for 20 seconds and if they cough to cover their mouth with their arm and if they sneeze use a tissue and put it straight in the bin. Remind them not to touch their nose, mouth and eyes, and if they feel unwell, they should tell an adult.
- Explain that when they go to school, they'll get plenty of help to remind them what to do.

### Where can you find out more?

- [Healthy Futures Calderdale Chathealth](#) is a messaging service for parents of children aged 5-19, the number is 07507 332157. Nurses pick up messages between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday and will reply within one working day. When a text has been received an immediate bounce-back message is sent to let the person know a message has been received. To advertise Chathealth to parents please use this [short video](#).
- **Information for parents** from Gov.uk [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) (updated 24 February 2021).
- **The Government** have provided advice to schools on the steps they should take to support children of key workers and others who are returning to school. This can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers) (updated 24 February 2021).
- **Young Minds** guides [Talking to your child about coronavirus](#) and [what to do if you're anxious about coronavirus](#).
- A resource pack from **NHS Grampian** for children under 12 years old It's ok to worry about coronavirus [36bcba96-c643-4a57-97c9-a5d0a468fe3a.filesusr.com/ugd/e3ca78\\_2a91693cc1b84b5bb9742f30bee5867b.pdf](https://36bcba96-c643-4a57-97c9-a5d0a468fe3a.filesusr.com/ugd/e3ca78_2a91693cc1b84b5bb9742f30bee5867b.pdf) .

## My child seems upset/worried about returning to school

### What can you do?

- Be positive and talk and listen to your child. Don't dismiss any worries even if they seem unrealistic.
- Remind them that it's OK and normal to feel worried, and that other children will be worried too.
- Some (but not all) children may be worried about leaving their families. If this is the case, reassure them that you will be safe while they're at school, that school know how to contact parents and carers – just like before, and explain your drop off and collection arrangements.
- Be patient and prepared to explain more than once what the drop off and collection arrangements are, and what will be happening at school. This may be helpful for younger or vulnerable children.
- Explain who your child can get support from while they're at school e.g. teacher, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.
- Encourage your child to get plenty of sleep and limit screen time before bed. Put normal school-time bedtime routines back in place.
- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries or concerns that you want to share with their teacher, let your school know.
- Make sure you are ok and seek support or advice if you need it.

### Where can you find out more?

- Your school should send you and your child information about what to expect and any changes.
- Emotional health and wellbeing information and advice to support you and your child can be found on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk).
- Emotional health and wellbeing support for coronavirus section on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus).
- Emotional health and wellbeing support for adults in Calderdale can be found at [www.calderdaleccq.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-emotional-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.calderdaleccq.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-emotional-health-and-wellbeing).
- It's important that parent/carers and children know that feeling of stress, worry or uncertainty are understandable under the current circumstances and that worry is a normal emotion. [This leaflet](#) provides parents/carers with some top tips, useful resources, and links to local support services.
- These [Worry Cards](#) have been created to help decrease stress levels surrounding any worries or queries that children and young people might have.
- **Anna Freud Centre** parent carers section [www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/support-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/support-for-parents-and-carers).