

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER 2020

As the time is nearing for your children to return to school, here are some tips on how you can support your child to transition back to school life:

- 1** Firstly look after yourself, get support from family, friends and services if needed, and attend to self-care. Be kind to yourself and encourage children to do the same. It's been a massive upheaval and it's going to take time to get used to the new ways of doing things and time before things eventually get back to normal.
- 2** Talk to your child about how they are feeling about going back to school and try not to make assumptions. Ask them if they are worried or feel scared about anything, but also if they are excited about or looking forward to something. No matter how your child feels, let them know that it is completely normal to feel a mixture of emotions and that everyone will be in the same boat.
- 3** Get informed about what changes there will be to the school day and systems so that you can prepare your child. Provide your child with as much information about their new routine and school day as you can. This will help them to prepare for any changes that have been made to the timings of their day, the layout of their classroom, their peer groups and playtimes. For younger children, it can be really helpful for them to visualise these changes – so ask your child's school if they can send any pictures to help make things feel more familiar.
- 4** Reassure your child. During the lockdown we have been told to stay at home, remain socially distant from others and wash our hands regularly. This means children may find it difficult to go back to school because it will be a huge change from what they have been asked to do during the pandemic. Talk with your child about ways they can stay safe at school, such as washing their hands before and after eating, and reassure them that the school are putting measures in place to keep them safe. Let them know that you and their school teachers will keep them safe.
- 5** Re-establish a routine to help ease into school life. During lockdown it is understandable that your family's routine may have changed. Children are likely to have been waking up later or going to bed later. To help them get ready for school, try to gradually get them back into their usual morning and bedtime routines as they get closer to their return date.

- 6 Don't put pressure on yourself. The transition back into school is likely to take some time. Lots of children will experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort them, without putting pressure on yourself to make sure their homework is done or they settle into a new routine straightaway.
- 7 Think ahead. As well as reflecting on what has happened during the past few weeks, it is important to help children develop hope and a sense of excitement for the future. At a time like this, it can be hard to feel positive, but identifying the things that they can look forward to will help them to realise that the current situation won't last forever and their feelings will change.
- 8 Focus on connectedness when children come home from school. Try to notice what your child needs at this time. Some children will want to be close; others (usually older) might need time by themselves, 'down-time' after school. Be available even if your child doesn't want to talk or be with you. Just knowing you are there will be helpful. Focus on play, having time together and having fun rather than homework and learning as a priority.
- 9 Seek support if you need it. Transitioning back to school after being in lockdown is no easy task. You may find that your child struggles to get back into school or experiences difficulties while they're at school. If this is the case, reach out to your child's school as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges and work together to support your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health and you think they need professional support, speak to the school and your GP about the best next step.
- 10 Give yourself time. After six months off school it will take time to get back into routines. It's ok if you have bad days. Treat every day as a new one and try again.