

Maintaining Connection Whilst Setting Boundaries

Children may find it difficult to adjust back to regular daily routines and household rules. This is a difficult time for you and your child. It will be helpful to maintain connection with your child whilst setting boundaries and limits.

Communicate comfort and connection through nonverbal communication. Be relaxed in your facial expression and body, get down to your child's level, and offer gentle touch/affection.

Validate and Relate. Consider what your child might be feeling, and how they are experiencing things from their point of view.

"It is hard to get up early in the morning after you have enjoyed weeks of sleeping in."

"You have been doing a great job completing your work online. It must be frustrating not being able to do all your work on the iPad now."

Reason and Set Limits. Support your child to consider the bigger picture and help them problem solve. Communicate that wishes and feelings are acceptable, but some behaviours are not. It is important to remain calm, clear and assertive.

"It's hard to go back to school after such a big break. We have to go to school. Let's sit together and figure out how to make this easier".

"I hear you want to play more. It is important that you get a good night sleep before school. It is bed time."

"I can see you are frustrated but it is not ok to yell or hit."

Useful Resources:

- ◇ **Contact the Family Referral Service** at <http://www.familyreferralservice.com.au/>
- ◇ **Speak to your GP about mental health support via Medicare for adults and children**
- ◇ **Parent Line:** 1300 1300 52 or <https://parentline.com.au/>
- ◇ **Raising Children Network:** <https://raisingchildren.net.au/>
- ◇ **Parenting courses and seminars in your local area:** <http://www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au/>
- ◇ **For immediate support** please call:
Lifeline: 13 11 14
Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511



Supporting children's return to school during COVID-19



Children have experienced a lot of sudden change over the past few months, and may experience difficulty returning back to normality.

This **Parent Guide** includes information to support your child with their gradual transition back to school.

These are uncertain times and can be stressful for both adults and children. Ensure you're giving yourself time to relax and unwind, take some time to reflect on how you're feeling.

Things to do:

It's time to get ready to come back to school! We are looking forward to seeing everyone again. Here are some things you can do to get ready. This will be different for each family, and depend on the age of your child. Here are some examples:

- ◇ Find school clothes
- ◇ Make sure school clothes are washed
- ◇ Find school shoes and school bag
- ◇ Get up at the normal school wake-up time
- ◇ Eat breakfast at the normal time
- ◇ Help make lunch
- ◇ Pack school bag
- ◇ Drive past school at the usual drop off time for practice
- ◇ Talk about the plan for after school pickup
- ◇ Talk about what your child is looking forward to doing at school
- ◇ Ask them how they feel about going back to school

Going back to your family's normal school morning routine will be a powerful way to help them get back to school successfully.



How your child may be feeling...

Excited or happy: Some children feel ready for their return to school and be excited to see their friends and teachers again.

Nervous or anxious: Due to being away from their peers and routine structure, some children may feel uncertain about their place amongst their peers and how school will look on their return.

Frustrated or annoyed: Some children may have enjoyed learning in the home environment and do not want to return to school.

It is important to remember that all of these feelings are normal and we all react in different ways.

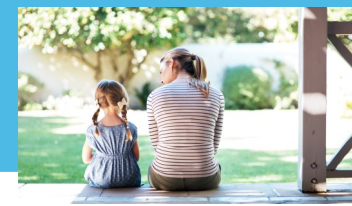


Your child may have a hard time understanding and expressing their feelings.

As a result, you may notice some **changes in their behaviour:**

- ◇ Changes to sleeping or eating habits, such as struggling to fall asleep;
- ◇ Becoming quieter or more withdrawn;
- ◇ Clinginess or difficulty separating from you;
- ◇ Becoming fidgety and restless;
- ◇ Seeming irritable and acting out, possibly refusing to attend school;
- ◇ Physical complaints such as an upset stomach or headaches;
- ◇ Excessively asking questions or seeking reassurance.

These are normal reactions to stress.



How should I talk to my child about returning to school?

Children may feel a variety of emotions. By providing children with a space to discuss and explore their feelings, we can support them to regulate, problem solve and overcome any difficulties.

Be aware of your child's emotions. It is important to show your child that it is safe to share their feelings by showing acceptance and holding a non-judgemental attitude.

Validate and normalise their feelings and experience.

Here are some ideas:

"You feel worried about returning to school. You don't know what to expect. Everything changed so quickly."

"I can see you're so excited to go to school and see everyone."

"You look nervous about seeing your friends after so long. It is normal to feel nervous. I felt a little nervous about that too."

Listen, be curious and encourage the conversation.

Here are some ideas:

"I wonder if you are feeling nervous about seeing your friends."

"You're excited! What are you most looking forward to?"

Encourage hope by supporting your child to problem solve, plan or consider a difference perspective.

When they come home from school, take the time to talk about their day, for example:

- ◇ *"What did you like about today?"*
- ◇ *"What was it like seeing your friends again?"*
- ◇ *"What did you learn?"*
- ◇ *"Is anything worrying you?"*

HELPFUL TIPS FOR COMING BACK TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Your teacher is looking forward to seeing you and we know that you are looking forward to seeing your friends.

Sometimes learning from home felt easy, sometimes it felt a bit hard. Everyone has a different learning from home story to tell. Here's some helpful tips for you as you get ready to return to school.



GET READY

Check your uniform and shoes still fit, and repack your school bag. Your school will have hand sanitiser and masks, but you can take your own too!



BE SAFE

Safety first – wear your mask. Sneeze or cough into your elbow, put used tissues in the bin, and wash your hands during the day and before you eat.



BE KIND AND PATIENT

Everyone will settle back to school in a different way. Showing kindness and being patient with the people around you will help everyone feel better.



SCHOOL WORK

Try your best. Let a teacher, parent or a carer know what you found easy or hard when working from home. They are there to help you.



FEELINGS

It can help to talk. It's ok to feel a little unsure, worried, nervous, happy, angry or any feeling in between. Talking to your parent or a carer, your teacher or other staff is important when you feel unsettled or are worried about a friend.



HAVE SOME FUN

Your teacher wants you to enjoy being back at school. Join in the classroom and break-time fun, and play outside with your friends and classmates.



EAT

Food is fuel for your body and brain. Don't forget to eat breakfast and grab a healthy lunch and keep your water bottle topped up!



SLEEP

Nothing beats a good sleep. Go to bed early and keep phones and other devices in another room, so you're not disturbed. It might take a little time to get back into your routine.



| NSW Department of Education


Roadmap for parents and carers Return to school for Level 3 plus

Information current as at 7 October 2021.

Developed in partnership with NSW Health

education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families





In Term 4, schools will return to face-to-face learning either through a ‘staged return’ or ‘full return’.

The best learning environment for students is in the classroom and we are looking forward to welcoming back our staff and students in Term 4. We know that while there will be excitement, there will also be some anxiety and uncertainty about being back together at school.

Recent evidence shows that very little COVID transmission happens between children in school settings, and only a very small number of children who contract COVID-19 get seriously ill. However, to support school safety we are requiring all staff on site to be fully vaccinated, and we are strongly encouraging our students and school community to do the same.

We have worked with NSW Health on our COVID-safe plan to return to school sites and have developed effective practices to support this, including staff vaccinations, mask wearing, reduced mingling of staff and student groups, ventilation in classrooms and continued good hygiene and cleaning. We are confident that this, in combination with support from our school community, will minimise risk and help to keep schools open and students learning face-to-face next to their peers.

How the staged return to school will work

Students will return to face-to-face learning at school in the following order:

- from 18 October – department preschool, Kindergarten, Year 1
- from 25 October – all remaining year groups.

To maximise the re-establishment of a consistent routine, students who attend schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) are recommended to return at the same time as students in mainstream settings. Students with disabilities in mainstream classes or support classes can also return as part of the staggered return at the same time as their year groups.

Students completing their HSC can already return in a limited way and this will continue for the first two weeks of Term 4. From 18 October, these students will have full-time access to school campuses and their teachers.

Some schools may have slightly different return to school plans, particularly if they have stage based classes or are very small schools.



School attendance

All students should be at school on the date indicated for their year group, unless:

- they have a medical certificate which says they can't return to school due to a condition or illness
- they are currently unwell
- they have been asked by NSW Health to self-isolate.



Wellbeing

If you are worried that the impacts of COVID-19 or going back to face-to-face learning may be affecting your child's wellbeing, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

You can find more information to help your child's wellbeing through the mental health and wellbeing resources on the department's website.



Break times, drop-offs and pick-ups and canteens

To make sure students reduce the risk of transmission across cohorts, schools will put in place staggered recess and lunch breaks, start and finish times and drop-off and pick-up points.

Students can use the canteen during breaks. This will be different at each school depending on the size of the school, the number of students, traffic flow and other factors.

Creating a safe learning environment



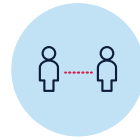
Masks and face coverings

Masks will be mandatory for all staff and all students in Year 7 and above while they are indoors and outdoors on school sites unless eating or exercising. Masks are strongly recommended for primary students both indoors and outdoors unless eating or exercising.



Students should bring their own masks where possible, but schools will have back-up supplies just in case.

Masks are mandatory for all travel on public transport for children 13 years and older.



Physical distancing

All adults must keep 1.5 metres distance from each other, including teachers and support staff, and parents and carers waiting to collect children.

Physical distancing between children in the same class is not required under the latest health guidelines. Mixing between class groups will be minimised and students will be supported to follow strict hygiene practices like:

- regularly washing hands
- not sharing drinks or food
- coughing or sneezing into their elbow, or else using a tissue which should be put in the bin straight away
- filling water bottles from bubblers rather than using the bubbler directly.



Vaccination

All adults at school sites, including employees, contractors, volunteers and essential visitors, must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 8 November 2021. Adults that are required to support the staged return to school in October 2021 will be required to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by that date. For schools under Level 3 settings, adults are strongly encouraged to have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, but are not required to be fully vaccinated until 8 November.

Students aged 12 or above are now eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination. Parents and carers can book in a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine now.

Vaccination appointments are available at more than 3,000 locations across NSW, including GPs and pharmacies. For students and families who have questions or concerns related to getting vaccinated, refer to [NSW Health's Know the facts COVID-19 vaccination fact sheet](#).



School cleaning and hygiene supplies

Schools will continue to receive additional cleaning in line with advice from NSW Health.

Schools have received extra supplies of soap, hand sanitiser, toilet paper, paper towels, disinfectant wipes and personal protective equipment and can order more as needed.



School activities

Many school-based activities will remain on hold, including large celebrations such as presentation days and graduations, arts and sports events. For a full list of what is permitted and what is on hold, refer to education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families.



Visitors

Only essential visitors are allowed on school sites at this time. When dropping off or picking up your child, parents and carers need to stay outside school grounds, you will need to wear a mask and physically distance. Some exceptions may exist for:

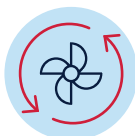
- schools for specific purposes
- vulnerable students
- students with disability
- preschools.

In these instances, follow the vaccination and mask-wearing requirements and sign in using the Service NSW QR code when entering the school.



Reporting and assessment

You will receive your child's Semester 2 report by the end of the year. This will be a simplified version of the report you normally receive.



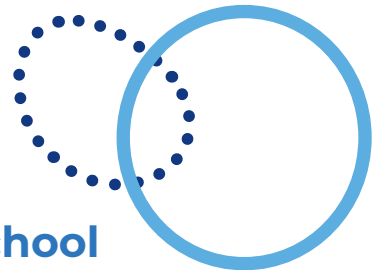
Ventilation

Open or well-ventilated spaces reduce the risk of COVID-19. Where possible classroom doors and windows will remain open and fans and air-conditioners will be set to use outside air, where possible.



Rapid antigen testing

We are exploring with NSW Health the use of COVID home testing kits (known as rapid antigen testing) as a further screening measure to reduce the risk of outbreaks in schools, or the length of time students need to isolate after contact with someone with COVID. Further details will be provided in Term 4.



Orientation and transition to school

We have flexible arrangements so that students and parents and carers can still get help with orientation and transition to school in a COVID-safe way. Kindergarten and Year 7 orientation programs will be possible for schools that are no longer under stay-at-home rules. Transition and orientation programs will be virtual for schools still under stay-at-home rules.



Responding to COVID-19 cases

Where there is a case of COVID-19 in the school community, the department has established systems and protocols with NSW Health to manage and respond accordingly to keep our staff and students safe. These protocols include communication with parents or carers if their child has been in contact with someone who has tested positive to COVID-19 while at school or if the school becomes closed.



If your school reverts to learning from home

If schools revert to learning from home due to a Public Health Order or direction from NSW Health or the Department, the school will continue to provide learning activities for your child to do at home and will communicate with you about their learning.

If your child's school needs to revert to remote learning, your school will let families know through the usual channels, which might include email, social media or the school website.



If your school becomes closed due to a COVID-19 case

Parents and students will be notified when a decision is made to make the school closed for onsite attendance due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 or other events that require the school to close. Information about the operational status of the school will be distributed through the school's information channels, including the school website, Schools Safety App, any school social media channels and the department's website. During this period, the school will continue to provide learning activities for your child to do at home and will communicate with you about their learning. Parents and students will be informed by the department when the school is ready to resume onsite learning.



Get in touch with questions or concerns

Your principal has already started planning for a COVID-safe return at your school, taking into account the unique needs of their students and school. To support this planning, and to allow for your teachers to be fully vaccinated by 8 November or earlier, it is important that students return on the date specified for their year group.

Get in contact with your principal directly if you would like more information about your school's COVID-safe return to school plan or if you have concerns or questions about your child being back in their classroom for face-to-face learning in Term 4.

If you need further information, please call your school. If you need an interpreter to assist you with your enquiry, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. You will not be charged for this service.

Say hello

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