

### Returning to school – what you may expect to see

The return to school is likely to involve significant changes to young people’s routines and daily experiences whilst they have been at home. For some children and young people this may be pose greater challenges than others. Below is a summary of some of the behaviours you may observe in school during the transition period, alongside strategies you can use. This should be read alongside *Trauma-informed Transition back to school*.

Observation	Possible explanations	Strategies
<p><b>1. Tiredness</b></p>	<p>Adjusting to a new sleep routine</p> <p>Out of the habit of being focused for long periods of time</p> <p>Tiredness due to ongoing worries regarding Covid 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear routines in school and at home – support with visual schedules.</li> <li>• Share sleep routine information with young people and parents – via school website or through weekly welfare checks.</li> <li>• Practise short mindfulness or visualisation activities during the day, which young people can use at night time if they are struggling to get to sleep (e.g. <a href="#">Sleep stories</a>).</li> <li>• Provide a smooth transition into school so children and young people are ready to learn- “beginning of the day” task to unload worries before beginning lessons.</li> <li>• Plan frequent breaks into lessons for activity, socialising or calm (see section 6 below).</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Difficulties paying attention or concentrating</b></p>	<p>Separation anxiety following a long period with key adults at home</p> <p>Out of school routine</p> <p>Concerns about or preoccupation with family members’/own health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular ‘brain breaks’.</li> <li>• Specific times in the day for activity e.g. <a href="#">Cosmic yoga</a>.</li> <li>• Active learning tasks.</li> <li>• Clear communication between home and school regarding possible trauma/bereavement/experiences during Covid-19 (refer to Salford EPS Bereavement Guidance and Bereavement Team within school).</li> <li>• Clarify communication lines so that children and young people (CYP) are confident that contact could be made with parents/ carers in case of emergency (phones as transitional objects).</li> <li>• Acknowledge feelings (Emotion Coaching/<a href="#">PACE</a>) and teach coping skills.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to ask questions about concerns.</li> </ul>

<p><b>3. Strong desire to interact and socialise rather than work</b></p>	<p>Missed opportunities for social interactions</p> <p>Anxiety and fear around current situation</p> <p>Out of school routine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow time and space to reconnect with each other.</li> <li>• Visual timetable with time to socialise built in.</li> <li>• Use of timers to support focus on learning and social tasks.</li> <li>• Opportunities for increased pair and group work.</li> <li>• Clear communication about extra times during the day students will have to share with peers, supported by visuals.</li> <li>• Structured peer interaction opportunities to encourage positive peer experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Reduced willingness or compliance to follow school routines</b></p>	<p>Anxiety and fear around current situation</p> <p>Need for rebuilding trust in adults out of the home</p> <p>Experiences of directing own learning at home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10:2 ratio (ten minutes of work with 2 minutes break).</li> <li>• Pomodoro Technique (work for 25 minutes, 5-minute break).</li> <li>• Reminder of school routine and expectations as a whole class.</li> <li>• Clear and honest communication and an acknowledgment of their concerns and unusual nature of situation.</li> <li>• Clear communication regarding safety measures in place and reasons for such measures.</li> <li>• Opportunities for CYP to direct own learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Difficulties with peers</b></p>	<p>Lack of contact with same-age peers during Covid-19</p> <p>Fears about transition and settling back into social groups</p> <p>Need for social contact that cannot be met due to safety restrictions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a buddy system.</li> <li>• Emotion Coaching techniques (see <i>Emotion Coaching</i> 7MB).</li> <li>• Collaborative class activities such as the <a href="#">“Tree of Life”</a>.</li> <li>• ‘People who care for me’ activity- draw around hand and add 5 people who they can talk to about their thoughts and feelings.</li> <li>• Talk about other ways to show you care about someone (<a href="#">While We Can’t Hug</a> video).</li> <li>• <a href="#">‘Growing around grief’ activity</a> or class memory book- as a way to share and compile people’s experiences.</li> </ul>

<p><b>6. Externalising behaviours</b></p>	<p>Feeling they have coped well with the crisis and schools being shut</p> <p>Some students will have developed resilience through various coping strategies and approaches</p> <p>Frustration about wanting school to get “back to normal” – difficulties adjusting to different ways of doing things</p> <p>Sensory overload</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement that students will respond to the situation in lots of different ways, some better than others and that this is fine- no shame in not coping.</li> <li>• Celebration of the ways in which students coped and managed to keep going and feel positive or hopeful.</li> <li>• Recognise and celebration of sources of strength and even joy they have discovered, what reserves within themselves and their communities have taken them by surprise.</li> <li>• Normalising feelings- a time of uncertainty for all.</li> <li>• Shared messages and scripts between home and school regarding safety measures, expectations and feelings in the current situation.</li> <li>• Ask children and young people on their first day back in school to note down <a href="#">one trusted adult in school who they can talk to</a> (Mary Meredith).</li> <li>• Emotional Wellbeing <a href="#">audit</a> of all pupils.</li> <li>• Encourage conversations about emotional wellbeing e.g. <a href="#">sentence starters</a> and <a href="#">Emotional Wheel</a>.</li> <li>• Positive memory in the palm of your hand activity- draw around hand and write a positive memory for each of 5 senses.</li> <li>• Provide extra breaks at planned times during the day to complete relaxation or grounding activities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Peaceful corner</a></li> <li>○ Mindfulness activities (e.g. colouring or <a href="#">Mindful breathing</a>)</li> <li>○ Creative tasks (e.g. <a href="#">Mood monster fans</a>)</li> <li>○ Calming sensory experiences (e.g. <a href="#">Calm zone</a>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><b>7. Anxiety and fear about being back in school</b></p>	<p>Concerns about COVID-19 and remaining safe</p> <p>Concerns about school work and catching up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear dialogue between staff and students with concise and open language “I know you might be finding things difficult and you might be worried about Covid-19. Can I show you the ways we’re helping to keep you safe?”</li> <li>• Use of social stories and scripts prior to starting school (e.g. <a href="#">ELSA story</a> , <a href="#">Twinkl</a> or for older pupils, <a href="#">Reach Out ASC</a> and <a href="#">LGfL</a> have examples)</li> <li>• Allowing ‘Time for worrying’/ ‘Parking worries’ and revisiting with a Key adult later.</li> <li>• Safety statements “You are safe” “We are doing X to keep safe”.</li> <li>• Explain to young people how you are going to help them get back into a learning routine.</li> <li>• Be clear about how support will be put into place to support young people who haven’t been able to learn from home, or have exams next year.</li> <li>• Seek support early for young people who show signs of emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), using the iThrive model of support.</li> </ul>
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*After a period of support and intervention, if difficulties persist or increase, then you may want to consider accessing support from outside services.*