

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

Since 23 March 2020, nurseries, schools and colleges have been closed except to children of key workers and vulnerable children. With support from the Local Authority, schools and colleges have either begun, or are planning a phased return of more students to education.

This is being implemented in a measured way that prioritises the safety of students and staff. Some children 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.

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

#### What can you do?

- Have a discussion with your child about school and what it might be like. We know that things will vary by school and year group but it is likely that class sizes will be smaller; classrooms may look different; lessons might be outdoors; school start and finish times and lunch and break times may be staggered.
- Think about 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 and that school know how to contact parents/carers – just like before.
- Discuss any changes to travel arrangements to and from school.
- Discuss any changes to extra-curriculum, or after-school activities if they are being provided.
- Explain that the school staff will understand that it might take time to settle back in.
- Reassure your child that things are different for other pupils and the staff too.
- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries or concerns, share them with their tutor.
- Your school should send you and your child information about what to expect and any changes. If you haven't heard from your school yet, check their website for any updates or contact them in the usual way.
- 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.
- If your child would have travelled via public transport or car shared with another family pre-COVID, contact the travel provider/family to understand and

agree how this will work under social distancing guidelines. You may need to arrange alternative travel plans.

- Find out who you and your child can get information, advice and support from at school to support emotional health and wellbeing e.g. form tutor, head of year, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.

### Where can you find out more?

- Emotional health and wellbeing information and advice to support you and your child can be found on the Calderdale **Open Minds** website: [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk)
- Information about **Calderdale Open Minds** (CAMHS): can be found here [www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/cyp-ehwd-c19](http://www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/cyp-ehwd-c19).
- **Time Out Listening Line:** for children and young people aged 10-19 gives young people the opportunity to get some simple advice and guidance about how to keep busy and reduce their anxiety about the current situation. Available Wednesday's 1-4pm, on 01422 345154.
- **Noah's Ark Centre:** are running a call back service for parents/carers and school staff, providing confidential support, advice and signposting. For a call back about secondary school-age children, email: [sec.sch.cal.support@noahsarkcentre.org.uk](mailto:sec.sch.cal.support@noahsarkcentre.org.uk). Open Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm. [www.noahsarkcentre.co.uk](http://www.noahsarkcentre.co.uk)
- **Kooth:** an online mental wellbeing community for children and young people aged 10 to 25. Open until 10pm every evening, 365 days a year. [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- **C&K Careers Chat:** support, advice and guidance for children and young people in Calderdale and Kirklees aged 13-24 years. Open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Thur 9am-8pm. <https://ckcareersonline.org.uk/news/333-chat>
- **ChatHealth:** Healthy Futures Calderdale has introduced a new way for school-aged children and families to access advice and support about any physical health or emotional wellbeing concerns. ChatHealth is an NHS approved secure and confidential text messaging service. Open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. **Text 07480 635297** (young people) or **07507 332157** (parents/carers)

## My child is worried about catching the virus if they return to school

### What can you do?

- Evidence suggests that children and young people 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. Any changes put in place for how pupils and staff access and move around the building, take part in lessons and other school activities will be explained.
- Your child can help to keep themselves and others safe. Remind them about the 2 metre rule, 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 to use hand sanitizer and not to touch their face and if they feel unwell they should tell a staff member.

- Your school can give advice about bringing tissues and hand sanitizer to school.
- Your child's school will take steps to limit the amount of contact between pupils, such as smaller class sizes. They will also increase cleaning within school and encourage children to maintain good hygiene.
- 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?

- **Emotional health and wellbeing support on coronavirus** can be found on Calderdale **Open Minds** website: [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus)
- **Calderdale School Nurses** can be contacted via text: **07480 635297** (young people) or **07507 332157** (parent/carers).
- **Young Minds** Talking to your child about coronavirus [youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus](http://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus) and what to do if you're anxious about coronavirus [youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus](http://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus)
- **British Psychological Society** Talking to Children About Illness [www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/talking-children-about-illness](http://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/talking-children-about-illness) and talking to children about coronavirus [www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/talking-children-about-coronavirus](http://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/talking-children-about-coronavirus)
- **The Government** has 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)
- A resource pack by **NHS Grampian** for teenagers to help manage difficult feelings about coronavirus <https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Resource-pack-overs-its-ok-to-worry-about-coronavirus.pdf>
- **COVID-19 Resource Pack For Parents** <https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Resource-pack-For-Parents.pdf>

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

### What can you do?

- Be positive, 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 others will be worried too.
- Some children (but not all) 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 parent/carers – just like before.
- Discuss travel arrangements to and from school.
- Explain who your child can get support from while they're at school e.g. form tutor, head of year, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.
- Encourage your child to get plenty of sleep and limit screen time before bed. Put normal school-time routines back in place.

- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries or concerns that you want to share with their tutor, let your school know.
- Make sure you are OK and seek support or advice if you need it.

### **Where can you find out more?**

- Emotional health and wellbeing support for your child transitioning back to school can be found on the Calderdale **Open Minds** website: [www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/school-transition-support-2/](http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/school-transition-support-2/)
- Your child's school should send information about what to expect and any changes.
- **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)
- Emotional health and wellbeing support for adults in Calderdale can be found at [www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-emotional-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-emotional-health-and-wellbeing)