

Social Eyes – A Vision for Inclusion



Thoughts for returning to school:

Returning to school after a gap of nearly three months since the end of the autumn term is hopefully a sign of family and life in general beginning to return to some form of normality. It will hopefully bring excitement for your children in re-connecting with their friends and peers as well as staff together with daily routines of travel and sharing live lessons on site and in classrooms rather than remotely and virtually at home. Hopefully, it will also support your own wellbeing and ability to manage the demands of family and work and also to gradually begin to become re-connected in your daily life depending on current restrictions.

It can however also bring new anxiety: for yourselves around how your children will adjust to being back at school and for them around much of the security of learning at home as well as how they feel about being around peers and staff.

The following is a set of general thoughts about the time ahead and supporting your family through this re-adjustment, as always, these points may or may not be relevant for your family or for the age/presentation of your child/children.

Prior to returning to school:

- Be open with your child about why school is able to return and what form this may take – such as any changes to drop off/lunch times and collection from school
- Talk to them about how they may be feeling about returning – focus on the positives but most importantly, acknowledge what they may be feeling anxious about and normalise these feelings
- Treat them as respected and maturing young people by being honest about how you are feeling and how you are dealing with changes for yourself
- Celebrate their achievements (not just academic) over the last couple of months at home and how they have grown and developed in a range of ways, especially (hopefully) independence and self-organisation with their learning
- Re-assure them but avoid making promises about how they will feel/what will happen but rather reassure how support is there at home/school regardless of what happens
- Talk about down time/enjoyment with the family those first few weekends as they adjust back to school – have things to look forward to and preferably some of the activities you have been enjoying together during this period
- Go through how bedtimes may need to be re-adjusted back for them but also yourselves and remind of the previous routines around bag packing/bus catching etc.

Learning concerns:

- If your child has struggled with any specific subject/has shown anxiety about a subject or their learning please inform the school (as appropriate)
- Discuss with your child what they may have found difficult/why and involve them if possible, in them communicating with staff either before the return or that first week
- In general terms, it is valid to highlight with your child that remote teaching/learning styles may well be why they have found struggled or found concepts/working more difficult and that the staff will be fully aware and alert to how all the children have got on
- Let them know that the staff will be highly alert to and monitoring how everyone re-engages with classroom learning and progress as they return to school

Getting your child ready (the week before):

- Re-adjust bedtime routines/timings for the family to their usual school routine (the body sleep clock needs time to adjust into a previous norm – not the night before!!!)
- Equally, get back into early morning routines if these have changed

- Adapt back to digital family rules ie/when/how long/where they can 'XBox' etc
- Ensure that their bedrooms – school bag/school equipment are ready (...and found!!!)
- Talk through social situations – role play what may happen with peers and staff and how to respond
- Discuss what situations you would want them to communicate with you but acknowledge that they may want more space when they come home

Returning to school:

- Go with the positives – just ask your child for a positive of their day and 'anything else' they want/need to tell you but avoid forcing answers
- Acknowledge that they are likely to be very tired those first few weeks as they have to process returning to demands social and academic as well as travel and breaktimes
- Get back to homework routines but also ensure downtime/space
- At the weekend – share your stories and normalise/celebrate how you have adapted back but also use as an opportunity to make agreements around routines/solutions to any issues

Consider:

- That all children have been through huge upheaval and adjustments over the last year and Social Communication needs may struggle far more with re-adjustment/perceptions – their experiences need to be reflected on and their perceptions supported
- Social Communication and potentially other needs are also likely to impact more significantly on moods, perceptions/positivity and so special interests/release/downtime and exercise become even more important
- Your own health/wellbeing needs at this time as well as your own adjustments are interlinked with the wellbeing of your whole family – look after yourself

If, however, over the following weeks you are seeing:

- **Heightened anxiety levels or heightened perceptions/phobias beyond usual presentation**
- **Withdrawal/a level of anger management (beyond tiredness/typical mood changes) out of character for your child**
- **Refusal to eat/loss of appetite/sleep issues beyond usual recent/presentation**

Inform the school of your concerns

Links/websites for families:

List of COVID-19 resources from the National Autistic Society

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/coronavirus>

Managing Anxiety and isolation

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources-and-downloads/files/tips-for-families-on-managing-health-anxiety-and-self-isolation-ambitious-about-autism.pdf>

Aaron Yorke is an autism trainer & specialist teacher; he will be running live support sessions weekly on Facebook

<https://m.facebook.com/AcceptingBehaviour/>

Information on supporting individuals with autism and their mental health

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/covid-19-asd>

Looking after yourself

[More parents seeking children's mental health support in pandemic, with growing pessimism over support delays - Special Needs Jungle %](#)

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coping-money-worries-and-job-uncertainty-during-covid-19/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety/#support-cards>

For students with additional needs

[Specialist lessons - Oak National Academy \(the national academy\)](#)

Top tips for home schooling

[Schooling tips for parents of autistic children - BBC Bitesize](#)

[https://www.stem.org.uk/home-](https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term&utm_content=Button%3A&fbclid=IwAR1mi-CtGY50ksmG6FhC7GrpZCi3YXxUVyJfLiKucEvqXMq4IVDUOm2hcPc)

[learning?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term&utm_content=Button%3A&fbclid=IwAR1mi-CtGY50ksmG6FhC7GrpZCi3YXxUVyJfLiKucEvqXMq4IVDUOm2hcPc](https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term&utm_content=Button%3A&fbclid=IwAR1mi-CtGY50ksmG6FhC7GrpZCi3YXxUVyJfLiKucEvqXMq4IVDUOm2hcPc)

Selection of free materials for online learning

<https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/about-increasing-mobile-data>

Mobile data increase with some mobile suppliers

<https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/>

Help with Remote Education

<https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/london-learning-at-home>

Free resources for all ages

