

## Transitioning primary school children back to school Information for PARENTS

### Tips for parents to ease child anxiety about returning to school

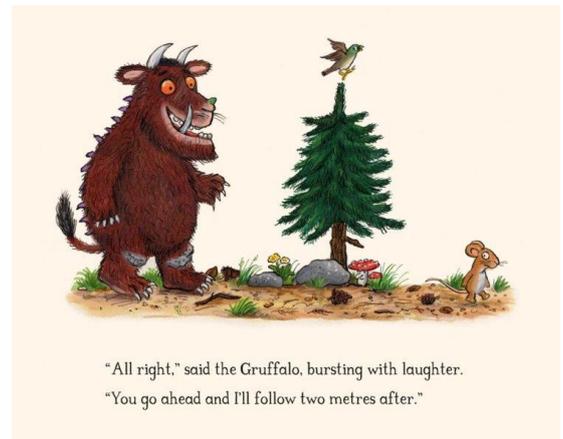
On the sheets below you will find lots of links to resources to help your child return to school. Remember not to overwhelm children with too much information; you may like to pick one or two appropriate links to share with them.

- A week or two before school start preparing children for the upcoming transition by getting back to school routines such as a realistic bedtime and get them to select tomorrow's clothes, getting them up early in the mornings etc.
- Arrange online calls (i.e. on zoom) with one or more familiar peers before school starts. Research shows that the presence of a familiar peer during school transitions can improve children's academic and emotional adjustment. If online calls are not possible show them class photos or talk to them about who they will meet again when back in school.
- Familiarise children with school again by showing them photos or videos of activities they did at school, i.e. photos of past sports day events and school plays or for early years show them their art work/drawings they did in school.
- Visit the school before it begins, rehearse morning routines and school drop-off; children are less fearful if they know what to expect. Talk to children about what to expect when they return to school. Highlight the fun as well as what they might find challenging.
- Come up with a prize or a rewarding activity that the child could earn for separating from parents to attend school.
- Validate the child's worry by acknowledging that, like any new activity, re-starting school can be hard but soon becomes easy and fun. Acknowledge that it will be especially hard returning to school after lockdown when children have been away from school a long time.



- Reassure children that school is a safe place and explain what they can do to keep themselves safe (i.e. when sneezing ‘catch it, bin it and kill it’ by washing their hands after throwing their tissue away). Explain what you as a parent will do to keep you safe while they are in school.
- Parents should try and manage their own anxieties in front of their children, model a sense of calm and confidence.

- Explain to children that social distancing does not mean social disconnection. Help children understand they are still valued and important, even if they cannot get physically close to their friends, extended family and teachers. Frame this positively “we are doing this to keep everyone safe.” Involve children in thinking about creative ways that they can connect with their peers in non-tactile ways such as coming up with new games. It is ok to acknowledge that this may initially feel difficult and there could be an element of loss around this. This is a lovely 2 minute animated video to show children during social distancing restrictions, it’s called ‘While we can’t hug’:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY>

- Give children time to adapt to the school routines again and to social distancing restrictions. School will look like very different place when they return so it may take even longer for them to settle. Allow them time to build a new ‘normality’. For children aged 3-7 years, Shere Infant School and Nursery in Surrey have created an excellent online book called ‘Coming back to school in a bubble’:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/15sUpyqOlgtI\\_eNWp1gnVHQRjopnS\\_axE/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15sUpyqOlgtI_eNWp1gnVHQRjopnS_axE/view)

There is an audio reading (4.34 minutes) of this book also available :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUXDX0WFyno&feature=youtu.be>

For anxious older children who do not want to attend school, explain to them:

- How avoiding school maintains their anxiety. Facing our fears may increase our anxiety at first but eventually the anxiety reduces.
- The body symptoms that we experience when we're anxious (i.e. fast beating heart, sweaty palms, fast breathing etc.) can be alarming but they are our body's natural response to a perceived danger.

Below are videos aimed at children to explain overwhelming feelings like anxiety:

- **Fight Flight Freeze – A guide to Anxiety for Key Stage 2 primary school children:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O\\_5M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M)
  - **Fight Flight Freeze – A guide to Anxiety for secondary school children:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4>
  - **The owl and guard dog brain – For Key Stage 2 primary school children:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8>
- 
- For early years and Key Stage 1 children, find opportunities to talk about different emotions with them. Normalise, empathise, identify feelings, and reflect on what you might see 'I can see you are feeling worried'. Increasing children's emotional literacy helps them understand how they're feeling and whether they need to do something to manage those feelings. CBeebies have put together some videos for parents and children to explore emotions:
    - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/talking-to-your-child-about-emotions>
    - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/help-children-cope-with-emotions>
    - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/makes/feeling-better-feelings-tree>



The best way to reduce anxiety is by calming our body symptoms. We can do this by practicing techniques such as muscle relaxation, breathing, grounding exercises. Below are some ideas on how children can relax their bodies.

- Kids muscle relaxation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>
- Relax like a cat: <http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/26930/Relaxleaflet.pdf>
- Relaxation exercises: <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/coronavirus/resources/learning-at-home/relaxation-exercises-to-do-at-home-with-your-kids>
- Relaxation for sleep: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/parenting-in-pictures/sleep-relaxation>
- Calming anxiety: <https://copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety>
- Seven techniques for helping kids keep calm: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/seven-techniques-for-helping-kids-keep-calm>

## Parent resources to support children returning to school:

- **The Little Elf and Flowers of Hope and Bravery** is a therapeutic story to help children explore different feelings about returning to school after coronavirus lockdown: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/15063/eps-the-little-elf-and-the-flowers-of-hope-and-bravery.pdf>
- **Top tips for returning to school after lockdown:** <https://www.mrsmactivity.co.uk/top-tips-for-returning-to-school-after-lockdown/>
- **Advice to parents on children returning to school:** <https://www.annafreud.org/media/5103/all-change-parents-back-to-school-guide.pdf>
- **Information for parents to help children cope with change:** <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2039/top-ten-tips-for-coping-with-change.pdf>
- **A guide to separation anxiety:** <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/separation-anxiety-and-separation-anxiety-disorder.htm?pdf=12838>

- **Information on school refusal:**  
[https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/Content/refusal to go to school/#/id/59faef4f768f5e9649724d03](https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/Content/refusal%20to%20go%20to%20school/#/id/59faef4f768f5e9649724d03)
- **Information on how to support a grieving child:**  
<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/child-bereavement-support/advice-and-information/>

## Talking to children about coronavirus

- **Unicef:** <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- **Child Mind Institute:** <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- **Centre of Disease Control and Prevention:** [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschoools-childcare%2Ftalking-with-children.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschoools-childcare%2Ftalking-with-children.html)
- **World Health Organization** produced a video (from timestamp 10.56 minutes) which provides advice for parents on how to support conversations with their child about the virus: <https://youtu.be/zDx1LKkk5c4>

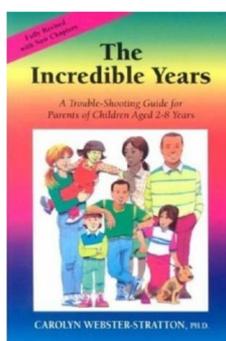
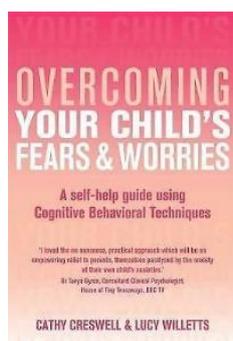
**For latest information on covid-19 please check:**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



## Online story books for children about coronavirus

- **A picture book for young children worried about coronavirus:**  
<https://en.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx>
- **Explaining coronavirus to young children:** [https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685\\_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf](https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf)
- **Dave the dog is worried about coronavirus, a picture book for young children:**  
<https://nursedottybooks.com/dave-the-dog-is-worried-about-coronavirus-2/>
- **A Carol Gray social story about coronavirus:** <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23zxNlbEumpw4oKIM7Xy3VlKnA25b8Gi53N6YiFleKB9Vx0LQypSPYzzg>
- **Coronavirus a book for children, illustrated by Axel Scheffler:**  
[https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus\\_ABookForChildren.pdf](https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_ABookForChildren.pdf)
- **The Little Elf who missed his birthday Party** is a therapeutic story to support primary-age children in exploring strong emotions linked to coronavirus pandemic:  
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/15063/eps-the-little-elf-and-the-flowers-of-hope-and-bravery.pdf>
- **Coronavirus a social story:** <https://humberisphn.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-Social-Story-.pdf>

## Recommended reading for parents



- “Overcoming Your Child’s Fears and Worries” By Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts
- “The Incredible Years” By Carolyn Webster-Stratton