

# Back To School Tips For Parents & Carers



Here's what our children can expect:



- Social distancing
- Different start and finish times
- Areas out of use
- Possibly being taught by a different teacher but being with the class Teaching Assistant

These can all be causes of anxiety and worry for children of any age.

So what can we do to help them return to school successfully?

Here are some ideas to use that will help your children feel ready to go back to school.

## **I. Explain that there will be new routines and rules**

It's important our children don't go into school expecting everything to look like normal - only to get a shock when they walk through the door.

Explain things will look different - but tell your child not to worry, because the teachers have been thinking about how to make the school safe and will help you get used to the new layouts and routines.

Share the video we've sent with your child so they know what the layout will look like. And it can also be reassuring to talk about the things that haven't changed.

For instance:

- They'll see the same adults around school
- You'll be taking the same route to school

And remember to tell them who will drop them off and who will pick them up. Even if this seems obvious to us as adults, it helps give kids reassurance and a sense of security.

## **2. Talk about worries or fears**

In the run-up to returning, make time for little conversations about how they're feeling about going back to school. Be careful how you do this - the aim is to see if they do have concerns, not to plant new ones! If your child does have worries, acknowledge their concerns first before offering reassurance.

For example:

- It's normal to feel worried about the virus, but here's what you can do to stay safe in school
- I bet other children will feel worried about having a different teacher too. That's why Mrs Crittenden will spend time explaining how everything will work.

And a good way of turning a negative into a positive is using the phrase, "At least..."

As in:

- I know we can't spend time together today, but at least we can have some time straight after school
- I know you're in a different class from your best friend, but at least the teachers are going to make sure everyone makes new friends

And don't be surprised if children want to talk about the same issue a number of times. Kids often need to (repeatedly!) revisit an idea with an adult to get reassurance nothing has changed.

### 3. Convey calm

It's natural for all parents to have some level of anxiety about returning their child to school.

But however you feel on the inside, it's important to convey calm to your child. Kids pick up on lots of little clues about how their parents/carers are feeling - and they use this information to inform how they should be feeling. If we look worried, they pick up on this and start worrying too!

So, if you do have concerns, it's time to be an actor. However you feel on the inside, aim to convey calm on the outside.

To do this, we need to think about:

- What we say (and what they overhear)
- Our tone of voice
- Our body language

### 4. Routines for sleep

In most families, routines around kids' sleep have become more... flexible! Bedtimes have drifted until later in the evening... and kids are getting up later in the morning as a result. To move immediately from these routines to 'normal running' and getting into school on time could be jarring.

So start moving your child's bedtime back towards normality now. Do this gradually, before they get back to school.

Because if we leave it to the last minute, it's likely our kids won't have time to adjust, and won't be able to get to sleep at the earlier time. And then your child won't only have to cope with going back to school on the first day back - they'll be managing exhaustion too.

### 5. Be kind to yourself

Everyone has been through an emotional rollercoaster over the last few months - that includes **you** and your child.

And if you've felt overwhelmed or worried about sending your child back to school, that's okay. It's entirely normal.

So be kind to yourself.

Make sure you:

- Build in time for activities you find de-stressing
- Get some exercise (even if that's just walking)
- Take some time alone, if you need it

All of these activities will help make sure you're in an emotionally strong place - so you can support your child with their emotions too.

### Key takeaways

Lockdown was a massive change for all of us - including our kids. And now they're going back to school, we need to help them prepare for another big change.

So:

- Talk through what school will be like - and what will happen during the day - so your child knows what to expect
- Make time to talk about any worries they may have
- Let them see you looking calm and in control (even if you feel differently on the inside)
- Ease them back towards normal bedtimes (so they're not exhausted on their first day back)
- Take care of yourself (so you can take care of your child)