



A chalkboard with the text "Back TO School!" written on it. In front of the chalkboard are several books, a green apple, and some pencils.

Feelings



Reassure your child. During the lockdown we have been told to stay at home, remain socially distant from others and wash our hands regularly. This means children may find it difficult to go back to school because it will be a huge change from what they have been asked to do during the pandemic. Talk with your child about ways they can stay safe at school, such as

washing their hands before and after eating, and reassure them that the school are putting measures in place to keep them safe.

Be aware that your child may struggle when they are initially separated from you and may feel a sense of anxiety for some time after.

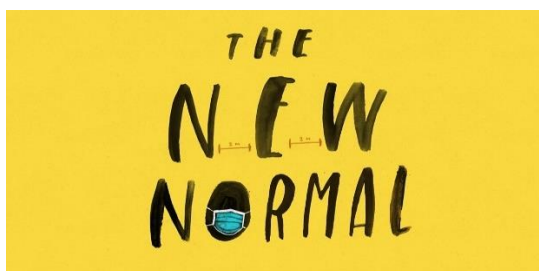
Routines



During lockdown it is understandable that your family's routine may have changed. Children are likely to have been waking up later or going to bed later. To help them get ready for school, try to gradually get them back into their usual school term morning and bedtime routines as they get closer to their return date.

Keep up with indoor and outdoor activities established in the lockdown i.e. Joe Wicks fitness workouts. Also eating healthy meals at routine times will also help with emotional regulation.

Managing the change



Encourage your child to familiarise themselves with the route to school by walking/driving to the school before they start back.

Set up a play date with friends who will be attending the same school

Provide your child with as much information about their new routine and school day as you can. School websites are often a good source of information and many have information on them letting parents know about the changes that have been made in school following government guidelines. This will help them to prepare for any changes that have been made to the timings of their day, the layout of their classroom, their peer groups and playtimes. For some children, it can be really helpful for them to visualise these changes, it may be worth asking your child's school if they can send any pictures to help make things feel more familiar. The key differences are:

- Start and end times may differ. Your school should update you.

- Children groupings may well be different, and children could be taught by different staff to those who were working with them previously. Schools will be able to share this information once they know the staff and pupils who will be returning to school.
- Your child may be taught in a different part of the school
- Lunch and break times will be different as they will need to adhere to social distancing
- There will be no large group assembly of children

All schools have developed clear risk assessments, rules and routines to support the health and safety of all children on return to school. These will include:

- Social distancing measures
- Hand washing and sanitising routines
- Regular cleansing of high touch areas
- Cough and sneeze etiquette
- Clear expectations of behaviour towards others
- Use of PPE where appropriate

Explain the new protective measures that will be in place to your child. The table below has been taken from the national autistic society website (www.autism.org.uk). The table lists some of the [Government's protective measures to reduce the risk of the spread of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in schools](#). Not all schools will be adopting all of these exact changes – it will look a bit different in every school. It would be worth checking with the school what measures they will have in place. These may be communicated to parents by the school anyway, via email or on their website.

As every child with ADHD is different, what might be considered positive about these changes for one child, could be seen as negative for another. The motivation for all of these changes is to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, in the right hand column of the table, there is a suggested specific explanation for each measure. You can adapt this table for your own use and communicate it to your child in a way that they will understand

Changes that schools might make (protective measures to reduce risks)	Potential positives (+) and negatives (-) about the changes	Questions to ask school	Reasons for the changes to be communicated with your child

Classes split into smaller groups of up to 15 children	+ less social interaction - your child may be in a group away from friend(s); may be in a group led by a teacher or assistant, who your child is unfamiliar with	Could my child be placed in their teacher's group and/or a group with a friend?	To help with social distancing – to stop the virus from spreading
Half class groups (no more than 15 pupils) won't mix with other children throughout the day	+ less social interaction - may be in a group away from friend(s);	Can Zoom/Skype chats be arranged with a special friend in another group?	To avoid larger groups of children mixing
One-way system around the school, or corridors divided in half (two-way 'traffic')	+ your child may like the social distancing: other children not entering their personal space - may have little awareness of personal space, so may unconsciously approach others; may be frustrated if there is a more direct route to where they want to go	Are there arrows to show which direction to walk? Are there lines down the middle of the corridor or a divider? Will the school consider a reasonable adjustment of allowing my child to leave class earlier?	To keep children apart as they move through the school
Break and lunch-times staggered, or children eating lunch in their classrooms	+ less social interaction; fewer people in the lunch hall means less noise - sensory issues: the smell of food lingering in classroom; not	If my child needs time-out of the room/hall at lunchtime, is there a safe space or alternative room they can go?	All children are not in one place or moving around the school at the same time to reduce the risk of the virus spreading

	able to play with friend(s)		
Some lessons may be outside	+ may prefer learning outside, not confined in classroom with sensory overload - unfamiliar with outdoor lessons; risk of less structure to lessons and may find it difficult to differentiate between lesson time and break time	Alert teacher if your child is likely to find this difficult and suggest reasonable adjustments	The virus is less likely to spread in the open air
Stagger drop-off and collection times for parents at the start and end of day	+ may reduce feeling of chaos and bewilderment as crowds of adults and children arrive and disperse - may have to wait to collect older/younger sibling	Can I collect both my children at the same time? Can I stand at a particular place to collect my child?	To minimise adult-to-adult and child-to-child contact
Increased cleaning around the school and classrooms less cluttered	+ may prefer a tidier, cleaner environment - sensory issues: smell of cleaning products	Can my child wear a mask? (NB The Government's guidance: Face coverings should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.)	Cleaning gets rid of the virus; fewer things in the classroom means less chance of touching something with the virus on

Classroom layout different – increased spaces between desks	+ less social interaction; may be familiar with layout from practice tests/exams - may be sitting in a different part of the classroom causing anxiety	Can my child's desk be in the same place in the classroom as before lockdown?	Less chance of children touching each other and spreading the virus
No more whole school assemblies	+ may prefer smaller assemblies - may no longer feel a part of a school community; may find sitting in any assembly difficult	Can my child sit at the end of the row so that they can be supported or leave if feeling overwhelmed?	To reduce the number of children in the hall in close proximity
Play equipment will not be shared	+ may prefer having one object to play with and not have to share it; - may want to play with something another child has	Can my child be allocated a particular piece of play equipment for their own use?	The virus can be spread by touching the same toy that someone else, who has the virus, has touched
No soft toys and furnishings and toys with intricate parts	+ may prefer a less cluttered environment - may miss a favourite toy	As above	Hard to clean soft toys and toys with intricate parts
A group of children use the same classroom or area throughout the day; sitting at same desk all day	+ may prefer the familiarity of being in the same place - may need movement breaks	Can my child have (extra) movement breaks?	To stop the spread of the virus by children sharing classrooms and desks
Classroom doors propped open, where	+ may reduce sensory overload - may prefer doors	Can my child sit away/near the door (depending on preference)?	To limit use of door handles and aid ventilation

safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding)	and windows closed		
More frequent washing of hands	+ may find it reassuring that they are keeping the virus away; may enjoy the sensory stimuli of water - may not like wet/soapy hands or the smell of the soap	Can my child use a particular hand sanitiser instead?	Clean hands don't have the virus on
Limiting the number of children or young people who use the toilet facilities at one time	+ less social interaction - may need to suddenly go to the toilet	If you child has particular toileting needs, ask if they can have priority when visiting the toilet	To ensure that toilets do not become crowded
There may be a new timetable – fewer subjects being taught	+ fewer demands - may not be learning their favourite subject	Can my child have a visual timetable?	Some of the new measures (above) to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 are likely to use more of the school day – less time available for the curriculum; Teachers may not be available due to self-isolation etc.

Reassure your child that all these measures make it much safer for children to return to school.

If your child does not want to return to school



Encourage them to communicate with you about the problem. Using visual supports may help. Ask your child to rate events or places at school on a scale from 'not scary' to 'very scary'. This may help you to see when and where the problems occur and help build your child's resilience.

If you have an understanding of the reasons behind their reluctance, share it with school staff.

Create a 'worry book' for your child to record their anxiety during the school day. If appropriate, read the book together as part of their evening routine. You can then help them deal with any worries by suggesting how to cope with them in the future.

Identify strategies to regulate, reduce and monitor emotions and reduce stress, for example exercise, visual stress scales such as a stress thermometer or traffic light system.

Reward and praise any progress on specific tasks, like completing something they find difficult, putting on their school uniform or walking past the school prior to their return.

Provide structure at home by using visual supports.

Try to help them develop their social skills.

Help your child to understand the benefits of education.

Be kind to yourself



The transition back into school is likely to take some time. Lots of children will experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort them, without putting pressure on yourself to make sure their homework is done or they settle into a new routine straightaway.

Website links for more information

www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools