

Advice for Parents/Carers to support the return to



Hillside School

June 2020



We are very aware that many children and families will have some anxieties and worries about the return to school after very unusual and unsettling times. This document offers some tips and advice to support discussions and activities to reassure you, your child and family on returning to or starting at Hillside School.



Prepare your Child for Going Back to School

It is important to be honest and open with your child that going back to school might look different and that plans may change depending on National advice. Discuss the '**Whole School Social Story**' on a regular basis and explore some of the '**Things to try in July**' ideas.

Talk to you child about what they are looking forward to about going back to school.

Make time to visit School and practise the journey to and from school together. There will be signs on the doors and windows to show pupils and parents where their class will enter the building. **Look out for your child's class entrance during the Summer holidays.**

Talk to your child about leaving them at school and reassure them that someone will return to pick them up. This could be upsetting for your child as well as for you, especially after such a long time together at home for some families.

Watch the SLT videos on Twitter to help prepare your child for some of the routines that will be in place when we return to school.



Talk About Emotions and Worries

When worries and fears are shared with peers or adults it can be an important learning opportunity. Discussing worries can help to develop healthy coping skills together. Some children will be reluctant to talk about their worries and might find it easier to write their thoughts down or draw how they are feeling. You could create a 'feelings' or 'worry' box where you write down feelings or worries, pop them in the box and then share and talk about them. When discussing what is in the box, it is important to keep things in perspective and build resilience, without minimising a child's feelings. It can be helpful to describe worries on a worry scale e.g. is it a big worry or small worry? It is also important to recognise that some worries will be short term and others will be longer term worries that we might need to discuss more regularly.

'**Standing in the Gap**' are an Early Intervention Mental Health Charity, helping pre-school and primary aged children manage big emotions, such as fear, anxiety, anger and grief. They have some resources on their website along with free online workshops for parents to attend. www.sitgap.org



Routine and Sleep

Many children cope better with routine and sometimes children can feel unsettled or upset with changes to routine or structure. It is important to continue encouraging a good sleep pattern as sleep helps to improve attention, behaviour, memory, learning and has benefits for general wellbeing. It can be helpful to discuss changes with children so they can be prepared. Create a timetable together e.g. Monday - go for a walk and reading, Tuesday - go for a cycle and maths games, Wednesday - baking and drawing etc. Creating a routine or timetable can help to alleviate anxiety and stress. Adding in calming activities such as yoga, puzzles, games, art, cooking, exercising and gardening can all help to allow children the opportunity to relax and reduce stress. The Childline website has lots of practical ideas in the calm-zone section.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/>



Share Information in a Child Friendly Format

It can be difficult for children to understand what is going on around them. If you are watching the news it is a good idea that parents watch the news with their children when they can talk through what they are seeing and help a child understand things with appropriate vocabulary. Rolling news and social media can cause increased anxiety in children. It is important to remind children of the facts and explain that media can be false or inaccurate. Allow children the opportunity to ask questions about things that they see in the media to help acknowledge worries. 'Coronavirus - A book for Children' is a book that has been produced that explains Coronavirus in child friendly language <https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-A-Book-for-Children.pdf>. Another resource is a picture book that has been adapted into a video and shows children the ways that we can still be affectionate while social distancing called 'While We Can't Hug'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tarq5nkkG1k>



Keep in Touch with Others

It is important to understand the huge impact that missing family, friends and schoolmates can have on children of all ages. For a young child not seeing their best friend for four months can seem like a lifetime. Allow your child the opportunity to talk about their feelings and look for safe ways that you can continue interactions.

Ideas for ways to keep in touch with friends and family:

- Drawing pictures and writing stories
- Recording audio or video messages
- Writing a letter
- Have a conversation online
- Keep a diary (with photographs, drawings and writing) and share with family or friends. Keeping a diary is also helpful for children to go back in the future.

We are very much looking forward to seeing you all at Hillside School and hope that you all have a wonderful Summer holiday.

