

Newnham Junior School



26th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Returning to school advice for Parents and Carers

With the recent announcement of a return to school on the 8th of March, it may be useful to consider and reflect on how a year of uncertainty may have impacted on your child/children. Many children would have very much enjoyed being at home in the safety of their immediate family. Coming to school can, for some children, be a daunting experience, especially in the current climate. We would very much like to reassure you and your children that we are planning for a gentle approach to the first few weeks back at school. Of course, our main focus will be on restarting the children's passion for learning, however, we will also focus very much on the social, emotional and physical developments that make children well rounded and healthy individuals. With this in mind, the following are key ways in which you could support your child in the transition back to full time schooling:-

1. Start talking - Explore children's questions or worries about the virus, the restrictions, their home school experience and thoughts of school. Help them to think of ways to manage their feelings. The link below is a good tool for exploring these issues

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/MHF-Scotland-Parents-Pack.pdf>

2. Sleep! Sleep is very important for your child's mental health and wellbeing, as well as their development. Many children are slightly out of routine or maybe not sleeping as well as a result of not being as busy during the day and having missed clubs and activities. Try and help your child build a healthy sleep routine in preparation for the school return. The link below gives guidance to a better night's sleep.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-sleep-better>

3. Screen time - Screens have been a saviour at times and the chances are that your child has had more time on their electronic devices over lockdown. It is now a good time to try and reduce the time on screens by replacing some of that time with increased exercise, physical playtime, drawing, lego or a book. It will also aid a successful sleep routine. A simple timetable of events for the next few weeks is an easy way to plan and reorganise.

3. Coping strategies - Strategies you use when feeling stressed such as speaking with friends or family, participating in regular exercise or using breathing techniques. Many small children enjoy making fiddle boxes that they can explore if stressed. They might also have an area they can go to and relax or calm down. Spotting your child using these items or areas is a great way of recognising stress. If you feel comfortable, you could share your own worries and feelings about the current situation and ways you are managing these feelings.

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4. Being around at the right time - Make yourself available as much as possible. Children are often tired after school and this is not always the best time to ask, 'How has your day been?' Sometimes a bit of down time is good. When your child starts to move around again, often they may want to come and “debrief”. Create space for talking in different ways, such as going on a walk together, playing a game or baking together – there may be less pressure in these circumstances than when sitting face-to-face. With many parents being back at work, a timely video call is a great way of touching base until you get home.

5. Look at the positives - It might be helpful to talk with your child about the things they have enjoyed during the pandemic and what they may be looking forward to, like their favourite shop reopening, seeing friends in the park or getting ice cream from their favourite café. Also academically many parents have acknowledged gaps in their children's learning so it is good to remind your children of new strengths they may have gained.

We are not expecting the children to return to school ship shape and will do everything we can to ease the children back in. Please monitor your child's transition back to school. Many will be looking forward to coming back and seeing their friends. If you have any ideas that you think will help your child return to school or you are concerned that they may struggle to return, please contact your child's class teacher or a member of our leadership team to discuss. This can be done via the School Office on office@mail.newnhamjun.org.uk or by telephoning 020 3745 6216.

In addition if you have any questions or concerns in regards to mental health please email me directly at ourmentalhealth@newnhamjun.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Mr Kent
Mental Health Lead

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