

Families are adapting to the evolving changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included trying to keep children occupied, feeling safe, and attempting to keep up with their schoolwork as best as possible. Now families are adjusting to a new normal which will involve schools reopening and dealing with the changes to school life that this will bring. It is important to stay focused on what is possible in order to reinforce a sense of control and to reassure children that they are okay, and that the situation will get better as we practice staying safe. We know that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful situations, so it is ok to acknowledge some level of concern as we move ahead as well as being positive and hopeful.

Teaching children about continuing positive preventive measures at school, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some choice and control can help with dealing with change. As adults we are having to process new information about the lifting of restrictions and implementing new ways to connect with your child's teacher and the school. This will have a different impact on each family.

We can monitor our children when returning to school. We know children overall are very resilient. Some children will show minimal effects whilst others may show that they have been impacted later. It is hard to predict what will happen for each individual child. There are small steps you can take to help support each child's return to school, to minimise the likelihood of ongoing difficulties and to connect them to the support they need.

1. Continue to check in with your child about how they are feeling

This gives children the security of knowing they can speak to you about how they are, the good and the worrying things. Make time when they are back at school for this to happen.

2. Be on the lookout for changes in behaviour and mood.

Be aware of how they are feeling. Children can seem perfectly fine at home but display worrying behaviour at school or vice versa. Communicate with their teacher and seek professional advice if needed.

3. Be open with your child about how you feel and share some positive thoughts.

Share with them what has helped you and share about how it may be hard for you too, of course depending on their age and ability to understand. Normalise their feelings of stress and dealing with change but remain hopeful and positive that, with support and time, things will get easier.

4. Talk to each child about their own experience of the event.

Ask questions and be curious and remember that each child has their own experience, including children within the same family. They have their own coping styles and personalities and perspectives.

5. Take time to check in with yourself and reflect on the changes to your family.

Your wellbeing is a priority too. Find time to do things that bring fun as well as a sense of accomplishment, and to plan things to look forward to. There may be some positives you will look back on from this time together at home.