

## \*\*Back to School\*\*

In this exceptional and unprecedented time we are facing together, many parents are experiencing a new role as 'teacher'. For those of children with a Special Educational Need (SEN) this may raise some unique challenges, and we would like to offer some ideas that might help. In this newsletter we are focussing on getting ready to go *Back to School* in September.



You'd better be safe, you'd better be smart.  
Stay on the broom, but stay well apart.

A child recently said to me '*this is the weirdest thing I have ever lived through*' - which is likely to be true for so many of us. Acknowledging that the situation we have all been through— although varied— has been challenging and that it will have had an effect on us is important. None of us can switch back on 'normal' and carry on as before. The website Restore Our Schools has come up with an acronym we can use to help think through the experience. Click [here](#) for more info.

# RESTORE

**RECOGNITION** of what's happened and that our experiences during lockdown have all been different, life-changing for many and significant for us all. How do we encourage everyone to share their story of the pandemic so far?

**EMPATHY** for the mix of emotions that we have in response to events at home, in school, the community and in the wider world. How can we respond with empathy, compassion and self-care, whether we are staff, students or parents?

**SAFETY** will be paramount, both emotional and physical. How do we re-establish a sense of safety for this new normal so that students are able to learn and all are able to thrive? How do we help those who may have felt unsafe whilst they've been away from school, feel safe again?

**TRAUMA** is now a collective as well as an individual experience, how does the school community process this? How do we support people who have experienced very particular traumas during lockdown or who are facing an even more uncertain future?

**OPPORTUNITY** to change what needs to be changed, to reflect on what matters to us and if we'd like to do anything differently. How do we learn from this experience, now that we know we can question even seemingly fixed aspects of our world?

**RELATIONSHIPS** are key, as they always have been. How do we reconnect, and (re-)build inclusive, responsive relationship at all levels in school?

**ENGAGEMENT** in our own health and well-being and with the issues that affect us: our teaching, learning and community. How do we foster a culture that enables staff and students to have ownership of and agency in their lives?

### TOP TIPS

1. **RECOGNISE** your child's experience, whatever it might be. It may be bereavement, for others missing out on summer activities, but some feeling of 'loss' is likely. There may also be achievements to recognise. Young Minds have produced this resource to help with identifying the positives <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/3913/celebrating-achievements.pdf>
2. **EMPATHY** is described by Brene Brown as being '*communicating that incredibly healing message of 'you are not alone'*'. Realising others have similar feelings can be really helpful.
3. **SAFETY** could be both physical and emotional. Talk about what is needed to feel safe, and practically what school might be like in September to keep everyone safe.
4. **TRAUMA** is likely to be felt across society following the pandemic. This may lead to feeling separate and isolated, and can be helped by recognition and empathy. Relationships are also helpful and schools will be aware of the need to recognise trauma and not rush back to '*normal*'
5. **OPPORTUNITY** can come from difficulties. What did your child get to do that they hadn't before? Is there any changes they would like to keep?
6. **RELATIONSHIPS** may have changed and those in school will need to be rebuilt. Talk to your child about who they are looking forward to seeing. Maybe they need a specific person to check in with if things are difficult.

As school approaches, put together a visual list of how the day will be– including such things as when you will need to get up, what you will need to take to school and how you will get there. You could even try a ‘dry run’ before September. We have already produced a newsletter about using visuals– see [here](#) for more details. School down to SENS Resources and click on ‘Visuals and Multisensory Special July 2020’.



### Ideas for summer

- Be available to talk about what school will be like and look at the website to jog memories of the buildings and people
- Meet a friend who will be in the same class
- Plan what you will wear (many schools have suspended uniform)
- Complete the attached ‘Back to School’ worksheet
- Keep a box or ‘worry monster’ to put in any worries about going back– then take time to discuss each one
- Take chances to connect with your teachers online if you can
- Try and get into a sleep pattern that will work for school before September
- Ask school for a timetable of your first day to look at beforehand

	Thursday
	Put things in tray
	wash hands
	castle colouring
	drawing
<b>abc</b>	letter work
	wash hands

Make your own VISUAL timetable using WIDGET Online – click [here](#) and sign up for a free trial.



Sesame Street has put together lots of lovely resources for younger children. Click [here](#) for more info.

The YOUNG SCOT website has some good clear information aimed at young people– for example a jargon buster, click [here](#).

## What (NOT!) to say to your worrier about COVID-19

Try not to...	If you say....	They will think..	Instead you could try...
<b>Ignore it!</b>	<i>Don't be silly! Everything is fine!</i>	<i>No one else feels like this! What is wrong with me?</i>	<i>'Lots of things have changed and people are worried, but this will not be forever. The grownups are all working together to make everyone better. Let's think about the things we can do at home and still have fun.'</i>
<b>Join in!</b>	<i>It's not just you...we are all upset!</i>	<i>This must be REALLY bad if mum is upset too!</i>	<i>It is an upsetting time for everyone but try to take a break from media coverage during the day. Information is coming in very quickly and people have lots of opinions – not all of them helpful! Instead distract yourselves by being outside when you can, noticing the signs of Spring, playing a game or completing a project. It will help you both.</i>
<b>Predict the worst!</b>	<i>If you don't wash your hands properly Grandad might catch it.</i>	<i>If my Grandad gets sick then it is my fault!</i>	<i>'You are being really careful about washing your hands and that will help Grandad stay healthy!'</i>