Be able to explain the basics of what Coronavirus is in an age appropriate manner, reassuring a child or young person that the changes in education attendance were necessary. Remember to stick to factual information and use sensitive narrative. Help them see the big picture, along with personal application.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* MindHeart: Coronavirus Comic (MANUELA MOLINA)
* Early Years Story Book: Don’t Worry Little Bear
* Twinkl: Dr. Dog eBook

Encourage active engagement in education life to normalise this again, focusing on the positives of returning to a setting, such as seeing friends again.

Create a safe environment that is nurturing and structured.

Engage with parents/carers to find out what worked well at home and how this may be assimilated into returning to education.

Re-establish boundaries with consistency.

Be alert that some parents/carers may not want to send their child back to an education setting and may be influencing their child’s behaviour. If this is suspected be prepared to work with parents/carers to understand and address their concerns.

Useful Resources:

Google – Childline: Calm Zone

Seek advice from SEN Leads who can advise colleagues on identifying those who might need additional support and reasonable adjustments.

Consider using social stories as a way to present information about Coronavirus.

Allow time and opportunities to readjust to the physical and sensory environment and reestablishment of key, familiar relationships.

Consider setting up a ‘calm’ sensory space.

Use age and developmentally appropriate play as a way of exploring feelings.

Understand that some Autistic children need more physical interaction i.e. hugs and do not have a sense of boundaries. Consider the impact this may have on other children and young people who may feel uncomfortable getting too close to someone, even though it is not done to intentionally cause distress. Closely monitor behaviours and enable easy, frequent access to personal hygiene facilities.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* The Autism Educator: What is the coronavirus
* Stars: Social Stories

I don’t understand what Coronavirus is or why I had to stop going to school?

I’m happier being at home.

Aside from operating an ‘open door’ environment, consider various ways to enable someone to ask for help, worry cards and posters. Use the pastoral team, ensure these are easily accessible.

Openly acknowledge across the setting’s environment that it is okay not to be okay and consider creative activities (such as feeding worry monsters) that allow children and young people the opportunity to share how they are feeling. To help reduce any frustrations, understand and focus on what is outside a child or young person’s control and what is inside their control. Allow them opportunities to exercise choice and access to pupil voice opportunities.

Be able to actively listen, know how to escalate concerns. Remain positive about the future with clear messaging. Use age and developmentally appropriate play as a way of exploring feelings.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* Get Self Help: The worry tree
* Place2Be: Coronavirus: wellbeing activity ideas for schools

I don’t want to come back to school.



I keep crying and/or getting angry and I don’t know why?

My family have been horrible to me whilst at home.

A setting’s staff must be prepared for disclosures and vigilantly follow existing safeguarding policies, procedures and training. Note that timeframes for disclosures vary immensely.

Establish clear behavioural boundaries, support a child or young person to stick to these, yet understand that they may act-out but this is an expression of their emotions and not a cause for punishment or getting into trouble.

Look out for behaviour changes, including deliberate self-harm and respond according to previous knowledge and procedures.

Help a child or young person to understand what is safe and who a safe adult to talk with is, e.g. preferred teacher.

Follow the safeguarding policy

I am finding settling into a change of routine difficult.

I am having trouble sleeping.

I am missing being with my family.

Be clear on what the new routine is, preferably in advance of a setting reopening, such as visual timetables, seating plans and when break times will be. More frequent breaks may be necessary for a period whilst routines resettle. Consider different (and maybe fun) sounds for transitions during the day.

Some children or young people may be concerned about not being able to go to the toilet whenever they need to, so additional flexibility around this will be needed.

Highlight what has stayed the same and help a child or young person they are only having to adapt a small number of changes.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* Two Meters Away - Social Distancing Song for Kids
* Social distancing video for early years: While We Can’t Hug

Be able to provide advice to parents/carers on establishing sleep hygiene practices and routines.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* NHS: Healthy sleep tips for children
* The Children’s Sleep Charity: Leaflets

Spend time welcoming children back, display empathy and positive affirmations.

Have a trusted, familiar member of staff present when the child or young person arrives if possible, preferably the same person every time, at least until the anxiety is reduced

Consider initiating projects that can be done at home and then brought into the setting for completion.

Useful Resources:

Google – ELSA Support: Separation Anxiety

Allow a child or young person to express their feelings their way, whilst attentively listening and letting them know that grieving and crying is okay. Use age and developmentally appropriate play or arts and crafts as a way of exploring feelings.

Useful Resource:

Google – Winston’s Wish: Bereavement Training for Schools (free 20 min training)

Acknowledge and normalise concerns but be explicit about physical safety; provide verbal and visual guidelines. Do not make anyone feel guilty/weak for wanting to be close to friends.

Useful Resource:

Google – It’s ok to worry about coronavirus (NHS Forth Valley)

Provide reassurance and reminders about public health guidance and shielding which in place for protection.

Whilst ensuring that public health guidance and social distancing is adhered to, suggest activities that a child or young person can do for a family member who is vulnerable, such as making cards or kindness boxes.

Useful Resource:

Google - Kindness Box Template

Reassuringly acknowledge that some increased friction between family members is normal during this time.

Apply existing motivational skills; creating a sense of hope, teach them about purpose, building relationships, allowing opportunities for choice and providing a sense of autonomy. Ask a child or young person what has previously helped them get motivated, then build on what they enjoy and incorporate into activities.

For a period, focus on play and activities rather than academic achievement.

The capacity for concentration may be affected but it can be re-developed through existing teaching strategies, support and adjustment to the school environment over time. Make expectations and tasks clear, break tasks down into chunks with check-ins on progress and provide feedback, building on successes.

Remember the importance of physical exercise, including opportunities within the classroom to move around and stretch.

Be open and honest, willing to share as an adult that you at times also struggle to get motivated and give age appropriate examples on what you do.



I’ve felt lonely whilst away from school and I am not sure if I have any friends.

Reach out to actively welcome children and young people back as a group and individuals to cushion the discomfort of returning.

A setting’s staff can give positive messages about belonging such as ‘we are all looking after each other’. Use communal language, such as ‘our class’.

Consider allowing opportunities for friendships to be built through paired/group activities and play, peer mentor programmes, buddies, and participation groups. Consider longer break times to allow for social opportunities, play and friendship building. Consider games such as shadow-tag. A play rota for outside activities may be necessary for maintaining social distancing.

Provide social skill reminders and help children and young people learn/re-learn social skills and emotional self-control in larger groups/with peers.

Useful Resources:

Google –

* Childline: Top tips for making friends
* The Communication Trust: Top Tips for Developing Talk

I’m worried that things won’t be like they used to be, and I don’t understand the changes. What are the changes?

I’m worried about some vulnerable members of my family becoming poorly.

I’m sad because a family member or someone very close to me has died.

What is my risk of catching Coronavirus now I have returned to school?

I’m worried I’m now behind in my education.

I’m worried about my family because they have been arguing more.

Acknowledge that many children and young people had less time for doing academic work but avoid using language that indicates a child or young person is now ‘behind’ or has to ‘catch-up’.

Focus on sharing and celebrating skills and activities that they have been done during lockdown – this could include crafts, games or new life skills such as cooking, helping with younger children, getting along/ sharing with siblings. Reframe these as successes.

Hold ‘what have we missed’ group sessions and phased academic learning to help all reach a fair level.

Consider ways of helping pupils ‘catch-up’ and prioritise disadvantaged ones.

Useful Resource:

Google - Edutopia: Positive Words go a Long Way

Acknowledge there may be a lot of unknowns, but communicate in an age-appropriate reassuring manner, using active listening, clarity of language and a supportive approach.

Don’t be quick to reprimand children for breaking a bubble; rather work with them in supportive way to communicate the need to adhere to guidance, but acknowledge the desire to be close to friends.

Highlight what has stayed the same and help a child or young person appreciate that they are only having to adapt a small number of changes. Consider ways to emphasise the positives and look to the future optimistically, embracing the changes as an opportunity to grow. Frame the changes/new rules within a setting using simple, positive language that can easily be remembered, i.e. Do…as opposed to Don’t.

Useful Resources:

Google – How to Establish Classroom Routines

I can’t get motivated anymore.