



## Supporting Pupils Returning to the Classroom

With all pupils returning to the classroom once more it is understandable that they, and teaching staff, might be feeling a little anxious. For children, the last year has disrupted their daily routine; this includes schools moving the majority of teaching online and children being restricted to contact only with their allocated bubbles. Routine is essential for most children to ensure positive behaviour, wellbeing and attainment.

With schools set to reopen on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, it is likely some pupils will struggle to readjust to being back in the classroom.

Here are some ideas for helping children to settle back into the classroom and adjust to necessary COVID-19 adaptations.

### **Social Stories**

Social Stories are a visual way to relay information to children. They are particularly useful for younger children (EYFS, KS1 and lower KS2) and children with special educational needs. The great thing about social stories is they are a highly adaptable resource which can be tweaked to suit your pupil's individual needs. You can use social stories to present child-friendly information about COVID-19 and new routines in the classroom, such as regular handwashing, hand sanitiser stations, desk wipe down time and bubbles.

### **Visual Timetables**

Timetables are key to establishing a successful classroom routine. For primary school pupils, a visual timetable is the most effective type to use in the classroom. Visual timetables comprise of the name of the activity/lesson and a picture representing this. For example, PE would show an image of children completing a sports activity. There is a vast array of visual timetables available to download on the internet; Twinkl are a firm favourite for visual timetables. Simply download, print, laminate and cut out.

Each day assign a different helper to put up the visual timetable for you. All you will need are the visual timetable cards and some blu-tack! You could target children who are finding it difficult to adjust, as it gives them an alternative to focus on.

Ensure that the visual timetable includes new additions to classroom routines such as regular hand sanitising, bubble break times and table wipe-downs.

## **Talking Therapy**

Children can find it difficult to express how they are feeling. It is often even more difficult for a children to understand why they feel the way they do. Talking mats are a great way to help pupils to express themselves and communicate their feelings. This should be completed on a 1 to 1 basis to ensure the children do not feel embarrassed to express their feelings in front of their peers.

For younger children, such as EYFS, it would be more effective to use emotion cards which simply contain faces expressing different feelings. All they need to do is hold up the card which best represents their feelings. Then, try to unpick why they are feeling this way.

## **Worry Jars**

For children who feel uncomfortable voicing their worries, a worry jar is a great option. Children write their worries on a slip of paper and pop it in the jar. Make time each day to read the worries in the jar and unpick them with the child.

## **Wellbeing Activities**

It is important to include wellbeing activities regularly as children return to the classroom. Activities such as circle time are a great opportunity for children to reflect, communicate and share with their peers. Factor in lots of PSHE sessions with a focus on health and wellbeing. Introduce reflection journals which could be completed in anyway, either using words or drawings.

There are numerous wellbeing activities that can be easily implemented in the classroom, such as...

- Write a letter to a friend explaining how they feel about being back in the classroom
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Positive thoughts: write down all the good things there are about being back at school
- Daily mile
- Arts and crafts activities

## **Hand-Washing Routines**

Hygiene is key to keeping COVID-19 under control. For some children, hand washing can be seen as an arduous task, especially if it encroaches on their play time!

To make hand washing fun, introduce music. You could either play a song for 20 seconds whilst groups of children wash their hands or you could ask the other children to sing or use instruments for 20 seconds. You could even create a class handwashing song.