

Going Back to School in September: How can I prepare my child with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs?

Educational settings throughout Gloucestershire are working hard to provide safe environments for children to return to school in September 2020. The government has issued guidance for schools and settings and in addition all staff will use their professional experience and knowledge to make schools as safe as possible for the children, their families and staff.

Whether your child finds change difficult or not, it is important that you help them to understand which parts of going to school will still be the same and what will be different - predictability and understanding will help your child to return to school safely and successfully in September.

The Advisory Teaching Service (ATS) and Educational Psychology Service (EPS) have researched, written and collated a range of resources that may help you in preparing your child to return to school successfully.

The teams that support children with Cognition and Learning difficulties & Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties have provided some links to resources on the Gloucestershire County Council website. These may be helpful in supporting children with their return to school. It includes approaches to help children and young people who: -

- May be feeling a sense of loss as they face up to changes that they may not have been able to process
- Might be finding the idea of being away from those close to them difficult manage

Please click on the link to find out more about the [Team for Children with Cognition and Learning / Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties](#). This page includes leaflets on the following topics:

- ✓ [Returning to School \(PDF, 784.7 KB\)](#)
- ✓ [Social Distancing \(PDF, 611.6 KB\)](#)
- ✓ [Washing Hands \(PDF, 729.7 KB\)](#)

It is important for parents to know that you can contact your child's school or educational setting and talk to someone about your thoughts or concerns about your child returning to school. It may be helpful to create a 'back to school' plan with them using a child-centred approach. Schools may have lots of useful information on their website too, for example, there may be visuals, a photos of their teachers, classroom, information about their 'bubbles' etc. It might be helpful to show your child some of these resources too.

Top Tips

How can I help prepare and support my child to return to school successfully in September if they are showing or telling me that they are anxious about it?

Speak to school about your concerns. Ask to speak to the SENDCO specifically about the things you and your child are worried about.

Check on the school's website to see what changes there will be and show or talk to your child about these changes AND what will be the same.

Gather any professional reports or medical evidence that supports your concerns about your child's needs which may be unmet in the new environment, and discuss with school how barriers to a return to school may be removed or addressed.

Ask if you can bring your child in to school the day before term starts so that they can see for themselves what the new environment looks like.

Keep a diary of what you or your child are worried about so you can give your child's school a good picture of where the priorities are.

Try not to let your own worries transfer to your child if they appear to be coping - they could surprise you!

Measure your child's mood before and after school and respond to any negative changes quickly.

Don't ignore your own worries or those of your child and simply hope for the best - be positive but proactive.

Ask for a meeting at school to discuss your concerns and how they can be addressed.

Check how your child's absence will be coded if they do not attend and what the consequences will be for you.

What else is out there to help me?

Corona Virus Return to School	This link has support and additional links to learn more	Return to School Toolkit
	Gloucestershire Health Living and Learning This storybook has been created with the input from a network of teachers, parents and public health professionals.	My Back to School Bubble
	Covid 19 – a guide for young people	It's Normal to Feel Like This
	Children specifically returning to nursery:	Returning to Nursery
Social stories	These can be really helpful in times like these but they must be designed specifically for your child and their situation to be most effective.	Social Stories - What is it?
GCC Children with Additional Needs YouTube Channel	Here you will find a variety of videos which you may wish to take a look at. It includes topics such as, managing worry, mindfulness, de-escalation tips and much more.	GCC CWaN YouTube Channel
Books to help with SEMH needs	This link will take you to a resource for supporting children and young people with social emotional and mental health needs using stories as a place to start. It has a list of books to help children and young people to make sense of what they are feeling and provide a stepping stone to help them in talking about their problems.	Books For Parents Carers Teachers Supporting Children With SEMH Needs (DOCX, 1.3 MB)
Anna Freud - Schools in Mind	This link will take you to the Anna Freud Schools in Mind webpage which contains useful resources for schools and parents to support children and young people to manage mental health.	Schools In Mind
Exploring Feelings	A therapeutic story to help children to explore the feelings they may be having and witnessing during the return to school transition during the coronavirus pandemic.	The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope and Bravery
Returning to school	GCC Education Psychologists Webpage	Supporting transition to school following Covid-19
Resilience	Promoting resilience when considering transition	Resilience & Coping
Reflection	Helping a child to reflect on their experience of 'lockdown' using Widget symbols	My Lockdown Experience