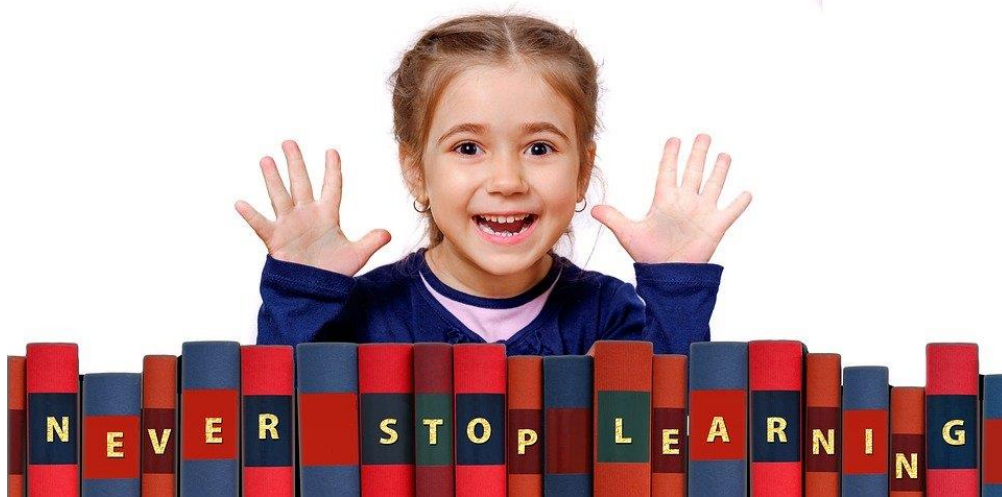


Returning to school: Children with ADHD

Advice for parents



Many children will be looking forward to returning to school and seeing friends and a return to a familiar routine will be welcomed by many. However, even our most confident children may feel nerves and anxieties creeping in as the date gets closer. For some children who may have settled into being at home and home schooling or perhaps are going to a new school, it may feel overwhelming. We recognise what an exceptional situation this is and want to support children getting back to school successfully.

We believe being proactive and planning for this can really be beneficial. Here we have put together some advice to ease the way, some guidance on your rights from SENDIASS and some links to other resources you may find helpful.

Sleep and Routine

After this very long break from the school routine, it is important to slowly bring sleep back into line with the school day. Being tired could make any feelings of anxiety worse and getting a routine in place early will help.

- **Term time patterns** Gently bring times back in line with school term days, most likely earlier to get up and to go to bed. Don't go for the big jump of suddenly

getting up or going to bed earlier. Get up 15 minutes earlier each day for example.

- **Enjoyable mornings** Entice them out of bed with eggs, a bacon sandwich, smoothie, pancakes or another favourite breakfast. Make the start of the day fun.
- **Mealtimes** Get meals back on track with the school day. Start having lunches at the same time as school lunchtimes and maybe eat a similar type of lunch as they would normally have on a school day. Have after school snacks and create evening routines that reflect school term time.
- **Relaxed evenings** Have more relaxed evenings. Try movie nights or a nice warm bath in the evenings. Reducing screen time and avoid watching TV or playing computer games at least 45 minutes before bed. Encourage your child to read a book or listen to a podcast. Keep noise volumes lower and light levels low to encourage relaxation and sleep.
- **Medications** Start taking medication again if appropriate and set up some systems at home for managing medication times. Ensure meds prescriptions are up to date as CAMHS is busy at the moment.

Reconnect

Re-familiarising children with school things, routines and teachers and classmates will help to reduce anxieties about the bigger concept of returning to school.

- **Remember** Start to talk through the daily routine that they were once so familiar with. You might find concerns or anxieties arise as you talk.
- **Get tactile** Get kids involved in finding their uniforms, checking pencil cases or finding their bus passes. Seeing and touching familiar things is a gentle way to start reconnecting with school life.
- **Recall school work** See if your child will revisit what they were doing before school broke up. Maybe they could tidy up an unfinished piece of lockdown work. We know this might not be doable for everyone, but the idea is to get their minds into thinking about school work so you may come up with another idea to achieve the same thing. What did they enjoy about lockdown learning and what was more difficult
- **What are they good at or enjoy?** Remind them about some of the pieces of work they were doing during lockdown, focus on something they did well or enjoyed. Remind them of times at school they were happy or something funny that happened.

- **Prompt memories of school.** Ask them who their favourite teacher is or what the best or worst school lunch was. Have a joke about it.
- **Login** Get them to login into their school portals to make sure they're working or check their school email. Refamiliarize them with school systems. Avoid asking them to do this alone, as it may trigger anxieties, sit with them and chat it through.
- **Friends** Suggest meetups with school friends or arrange a playdate with classmates.

Getting ready

- **School information** If you have received information from school detailing how the school will be operating in September, read through this carefully and talk it through with your child.
- **Make a plan** Discuss what will happen on the first day of school. Work out the timings: what time they need to get up, what time they'll eat etc...write it down and put it somewhere they can see it. Talk to them about how they'll get to school, recall familiar aspects: the route they'll walk or where the bus is and who will be at the bus stop. You can always walk it with them if they've forgotten, and check for any bottlenecks which might cause them worry.
- **The classroom** If you can, find out which classroom they will be in. They would have likely missed out on visiting their new classrooms but perhaps you can help them visualize which room it is or where it is and see if they've been in it before. Some schools have posted video tours and photos on their websites.
- **Social distancing** Talk through social distancing and what you know about how the school will work (year group bubbles, form groups, lunch times). For younger children, you may want to use lego, other toys or [social stories](#) to demonstrate how social distancing in the classroom might look. Try and give them a sense of what 2 metres looks like so they have some idea.
- **What's the same?** Talk about the familiar things about school. Some things will be different, but some will be the same. Recall fun things and talk about the teachers, friends, the classrooms, the lunches etc... Have a giggle if you can.
- **Support in school** Talk through how they might feel at different stages of the day and what they can do to ease their anxieties and feel calmer and who they can speak to if they feel anxious, scared or overwhelmed.

- **Stay positive** Make sure you talk to your child about going back to school in a positive way, highlight things they enjoy and are familiar with, like friends and favourite school activities. Keep it short, a little every day.
- **Familiar faces** Make a plan to meet up with a friend on the way to school on the first morning so they have someone to go in with.
- **Find a buddy** Ask a friend to be their 'buddy' and help remind them to do things like take their PE bag home or not leave their school bag on the bus.
- **They are not alone** Make sure they understand that lots of families will have struggled with homeschooling and that many people, both with SEN and not, will be feeling anxious and may need to catch up and adjust.

Connect with school:

- Email the school and ask for any of the above mentioned information about new school systems and layouts if you haven't heard already.
- Email the teacher and let them know if you are concerned about your child's level of anxiety about returning to school.
- If useful, let them know how your child has coped with lockdown and homeschooling and any anxieties or difficulties your child has had.
- Discuss with school any changes in homelife which may cause emotional upsets.
- Ask the school to nominate a mentor or safe workspace where your child can go if distressed or anxious.
- Tell your kids to be honest with their teachers about what they found hard and what helped whilst they were homeschooling. Likewise, if you observed things that worked or didn't work for your child, share this with their teacher.
- Ask the school to provide feedback on how your child is settling in or discuss any concerns they have and how you can support your child together.

Coping strategies for times of stress

There may be times when your child is feeling stressed in the build up to the return to school. If appropriate for their age, talk about this before it happens and make a plan of what works to help calm them down

- Discuss coping strategies they can use when feeling stressed such as exercise, time with friends, spending time with a pet, listening to music.
- Describe a time when you have been worried and talk about what helped you.
- Encourage your child or young person to come up with some ideas to use to help them calm down.

- Be around and be present in the run up to the return to school and create lovely activities but also opportunities to talk.....walking, driving, try to be side to side and not face-to-face as that can help them to open up.
- Be prepared to down tools if they want to talk, but also give them space after their first days back. Let them take their time. Don't badger them to talk.
- Always have a snack and a drink ready after school or before even starting to talk. Let them 'chill out' when they come in from school.
- Notice how they seem and use active listening...'I can see you are exhausted. Have a snack and relax, I'm here if you want to chat anything through'.
- Create space for talking in different ways, such as going on a walk together or baking together – there may be less pressure in these circumstances than when sitting face-to-face.
- Chat about the things they are most looking forward to doing as things start to re-open. Make it clear that school is a first sign of things returning to some sort of normality and link other things they enjoy to that.
- If they are really scared about the virus, explain that children are less severely affected by the virus and if necessary/age appropriate give them the statistics to show that. Reinforce that washing hands and social distancing continues to be important.
- Explain that everyone will feel differently and respecting other people's views is important.
- If your kids are exhausted and upset when they come home, give them space and time. Be gentle. Food, a drink, time to unwind and relax and a good hug if allowed/appropriate.

Other resources:

Resources on supporting children feeling anxious

Our webinar on anxiety [Managing the Anxiety of Young People w/ T.Owen & G.Armstrong](#)

Article on our website: [Calming stress and anxiety for children and adults](#)

Childline website: [Calm zone: a toolbox to help you feel calmer](#)

Resources for primary aged children

Mental Health Foundation Scotland: [Activities to get children talking about their feelings](#)

Family Lives, The Center for Emotional Health website: [Resources for Parents](#)

Resources for secondary aged children

Young Minds website: [Starting a conversation with your child](#)

Family Lives, The Center for Emotional Health website: [Communicating with teenagers](#)

Young Minds website: [Coping techniques for when you feel anxious](#)

Sleep resources

Fastbrain website: [ADHD sleep routine](#)

Family Lives, The Center for Emotional Health website: [Teens and Sleep](#)

Back to school resources

Witherslack Group : Back to School program will offer a series of helpful resources, including webinars and downloads, to support you in making the transition back to school and will run from Monday 24th August to Friday 18th September with resources sent out every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. For more information email events@witherslackgroup.co.uk or visit the website www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/backtoschool.

Safety Net e-Zine: [3rd Edition – Sussing out School](#)

SENDIASS Richmond and Kingston have put together some helpful information regarding your child's educational rights. We're happy to share that with you here.

Preparing for returning to school – Frequently asked questions answered by SENDIASS Richmond and Kingston

The government has announced that all children should be returning to school in September. What are your rights in relation to this change? What should you expect from schools in helping this to happen and giving you confidence that your children's needs will be met when at school?

What can my child expect school to look like?

Many schools will already have written to you to give an idea of what to expect when children return to school. There is lots of planning around:

- staying in class or year groups
- reduced movement around the school sites ; unless in "bubbles"
- Staggered arrival/ leaving and break times
- Shorter days in some schools and colleges
- Reduction of access by parents to schools.

Some of these could be very challenging for children with SEND so it might be sensible to speak to your school SENCO/ Head teacher in advance of the return bearing in mind the information contained above. This conversation should explore what “reasonable adjustments” can your school put in place to meet the needs of your child and avoid “less favourable treatment” due to their additional needs. (Note the phrases in quotes here relate to schools’ duties under the Equality Act 2010).

Some examples of things you may want to discuss could include:

- My child needs movement breaks how is this going to be possible?
- My child sometimes needs to move to a quiet space to relax or calm down. How will this happen?
- My child has support from a classroom assistant will this have to be offered in a different way due to social distancing?
- My child reacts impulsively/ is too young/ doesn’t understand social distancing how will this be managed by school?
- My child is very stressed and anxious and may feel overwhelmed. What support will be available for them?

What if I don’t feel my child will be safe at school?

Government removed the duty to send children into school during the early part of the COVID 19 outbreak allowing families of Key worker children, those with EHCP’s and a few other categories to attend.

The Government expects all children to return to school in September, so you will need to discuss any worries with the school and see if they can provide support.

If there is a medical reason why children cannot attend (in most cases the shielding requirement has been removed) the discussion with school should include how a child unable to attend will receive education and may include the continuation of some of the support offered during the summer term lockdown.

What are the consequences of not sending them to school?

If a child remains on the roll at school it is most likely that their absence will be recorded as unauthorized. Therefore it is sensible to have early discussions with school, especially if this is likely to be a long term issue and result in attendance levels dropping to a point when the school would need to involve the Educational Welfare Service.

While the local authority ultimately has the ability to fine families for non-attendance, this is unlikely to be the first step and the School/ Education Welfare team should work with you to try and address the reason for non-attendance.

Can I choose to home educate?

Parents of children who don't have an Education Health and Care Plan are able to write to a school and ask that their child is removed from a school roll. The child then becomes Electively Home Educated and the parent/ carer needs to ensure that the child or young person receives an Education. The Local Authority (LA) remains responsible for ensuring that the child is receiving an Education. They will check in with the family to ensure that this is happening. The LA can, if they are concerned about a child missing education, take action to ensure something is provided.

If your child has an Education Health and Care Plan you need to speak to your SEN case officer before seeking to remove a child from school and this may lead to an Early Annual Review. The aim of this would be to try to ensure that the child / young person's needs are met and they progress towards the outcomes listed in the plan. It may be difficult for support to be written into a plan to be delivered if the child does not attend school but this would be discussed at the review.

What if school asks me to take my child home/ attend for reduced hours compared to peers?

Once children return to school all of those over the age of 5 are entitled to attend school 'Full Time' although the exact hours that constitute this differ slightly according to age and school. Any reduction in hours for individuals is not something schools should be asking families to do and can be seen to constitute an exclusion and therefore needs to be formally recorded as such. IPSEA offer advice on this here: <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/pages/category/exclusion-from-school>

What if my child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

The Emergency COVID 19 legislation gave the Department for Education the ability to require LA's and Schools to only take "reasonable endeavors" to deliver the provision named in section F of an EHCP plan. For this to apply the minister had to issue a monthly "notice" which was done in June and July which allowed schools to 'not deliver' all of the provision named in section F of the EHCP. You should have been involved in a risk assessment that outlines any provision that will be provided during June and July.

The minister did not issue a notice for August and has stated it is not their intention to do so from September. If this does not happen the duty to deliver all provision listed in section F will return to “best endeavors” duty.

This means you should expect the school to be delivering everything listed in the plan. If they are not, have an initial discussion with the school but you may need to involve the Local Authority in this, as the duty to ensure that the provision listed in the plan is delivered is the authorities and not the schools.

Where do I seek extra help if I’m worried or have a dispute with a school?

SENDIASS Richmond and Kingston contact Kids via RichmondKingston@kids.org.uk or 020 3793 9596

For other local authorities see this website for local services:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service>

Other local charities (Richmond and Kingston)

Ruils SEND Advice <https://www.ruils.co.uk/services/send-advice/>

Skylarks Charity <https://www.skylarks.charity/activity/249/send-advice/4617>

National Charities

Contact Helpline: <https://contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/our-helpline/>

IPSEA Website and Helpline <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/>

SOS SEN <https://sossen.org.uk/>