



Summer 1 2020

By Jo Folkes-Jones and Samantha Lewis



Supporting our pupils when we return to school

Life during lockdown will have affected our families in many different ways, with some families thriving from the time and activities they experienced together, but for many others, this time may have been one of isolation and trauma. Pupil engagement by primary care givers will not have been the same as those of their teachers, teaching assistants and all those staff who surround our pupils on a daily basis. There will have been different structures, familiarity and reassurance of the school day. All of us will have been affected by the sustained period of lockdown and the sense of community within our schools will have been disrupted.

The dynamics of each of our settings cannot have been reproduced despite the excellent home learning opportunities shared with pupils, the contact and communication from our staffing teams.

We will find that our pupils and our staff will return to school quite different to who they were prior to lockdown. These differences may lay silently within the child or be expressed overtly through their behaviour and communications.

Ultimately, we are entering an unpredictable time in education in which mental health and emotional development must take an increased priority alongside learning. School communities will need a period to rebuild.

HIVE Primary Behaviour Provision have compiled guidance and information to support practitioners for the return of pupils to school, and are there to support if and when needed.

Some pupils will return to school revived, ready to continue their friendships, learning and development as before lockdown. Coming back to school, however, will not be

a positive experience for all of our pupils as they may feel fearful, unsafe, be losing positive attachments made and many will have experienced many types of grief and loss.

Children will return to our schools at different starting points to each other and where we would developmentally expect them to be. Our key focus for returning to schools will be to identify gaps in learning and social, emotional and mental health development and look at how we will fill these gaps in order for them to flourish and learn.

All children have the right to feel safe, healthy, heard, and informed and as secondary caregivers it is our responsibility to ensure the best environment for these rights to be fulfilled. Above all we will need to be clear and consistent in our support.

Hertfordshire's 6 Outcome Bees

The outcome bees represent the positive aspirations we want for all our pupils from their own starting points when we return to school.





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Are you ready to support pupils returning to school?

As staff we recognise that we are role models for the pupils we work with but we must also recognise that each of us will have our own experiences of Covid-19 and the impact it has had on ourselves, our families and our friends; loss of relationships, loss of work, loss of life, prolonged illness and social distancing will for some made us deeply anxious about the crisis and the way forwards in all parts of our lives.

When we return to school we will once again be responsible for shaping the lives of the children we work with. Each of us will need to ensure we take that moment, that breath, those few seconds to think about the situation and check in on ourselves.

Firstly we need to be able to recognise our feelings. What triggers our emotional responses at the moment? Are we a trigger for others? Are we the right person to be dealing with an incident? Ask another adult to take over; this is not a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength. Work as a team.

How will you respond to the plethora of emotions pupils maybe presenting at the moment? Anger? Anxiety? Fear? Excitement? Remember you are that role model. It is important that you show how to deal appropriately with situations in a calm, clear and consistent way.

Hindering

Taking things personally

Over-reacting or not showing an emotional response

Expecting things to be the same as before lockdown

Insisting on the pupil saying why something happened

Being too lenient

Helping

Remain calm

Attuning to the pupil

Referring to the school rules

Use positive language, phrasing

Strike the balance between doing something and not doing something

Acknowledge what the pupil is saying

Have flexibility of mind

Acknowledge grief and loss

Ask the child to tell you what happened instead

Establish and use rules and routines. Pupils will feel safely contained.



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What can you do to support pupils returning to school?

Question

Advice, strategies and approaches

What do my pupils' need to feel safe?

They will need to reestablish a connection to the adults and children in their classrooms and develop trust once again that they are safe and cared for.

Children will be disconnecting from their daily familiars to return to a full school day, full of many different adults and children. Pupils will need to become reacquainted with the routines of school life. Reassuring for some and anxiety inducing for others.

Those working in schools will need to be asking themselves what do their pupils need to feel safe and how do we rebuild our school community and instill a sense of belonging for all.

- ◆ Revisiting or establishing new rules and routines
- ◆ Protective Behaviours; network hand, safer people, safer places, etc.
- ◆ NSPCC 'Speak out, stay safe' programme
- ◆ Whole class Herts Steps 'Roots, shoots and fruits.'
- ◆ Creation of a safe place such as a peace corner
- ◆ A check in buddy or champion. An adult to be available and present
- ◆ Worry monsters/ boxes
- ◆ PSHE/ Circle time lessons
- ◆ Transition objects
- ◆ Building healthy relationships
- ◆ AET sensory audit: individual and class
- ◆ Establish clubs that pupils can attend
- ◆ Tap into good influences: speakers, role models, visitors (when social-distancing measures allow)
- ◆ Consistency amongst staff

What do my pupils need to be healthy?

Unfortunately some of our pupils will have experienced a lack of a healthy diet, exercise and fresh air, disrupted sleep routines, limits to play and leisure activities and for some an over indulgence in screen time.

It will also be vitally important that we remember our core purpose as educators. Our children will need to continue to grow healthy minds, gain new skills and understand concepts on their learning journeys.

- ◆ Whole school nurture snack time. All pupils are offered a snack at the same time to ensure the basic needs of food and drink are being met as well as supporting social interaction
- ◆ Prompt pupils to have a drink
- ◆ Remind children to go to the toilet
- ◆ PSHE/ Circle time lessons
- ◆ An increased awareness of the importance of play and physical exercise: daily mile, wake and shake, fizzy gym, GoNoodle, SMART moves, mindfulness (staff may need to be wary with this activity because it may be a trigger for certain children, especially those who have experienced trauma, as it provides them with too much space for deep feelings to surface)
- ◆ Yoga for children
- ◆ Planned outdoor learning opportunities
- ◆ A skills or knowledge based curriculum accessible for all in your setting
- ◆ Growth mindset
- ◆ Mentors



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What is my pupil communicating to me?

Communication comes in many forms, from aggressive outbursts to silent withdrawal. Be on the lookout for these signs in your pupils and check in with them, without assumption, and ensure you really listen. All behaviour has meaning; behaviour is communication.

- ◆ *Herts Steps script*
- ◆ *'Things I wish my teacher knew.'* (TedX talk by Kyle Schwartz)
- ◆ *Huge bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside
- ◆ *Check in, check up, check out circles*
- ◆ *The incredible 5 point scale*
- ◆ *Zones of regulation*
- ◆ *Small world play*
- ◆ *Worries monsters/boxes*
- ◆ *Name and speak about feelings; use the definitions for older pupils and colours as metaphors for younger children*

What can I do to support my pupils resilience and coping skills?

Some of our pupils will have lost touch with their core-selves during lockdown. Cut off from routines, family, having their basic needs met may mean that our pupils will have a resilience deficit. Their ability to cope with uncertainty, change and looking to the future may have left them in a place where they feel unsafe and not ready to learn. They may be recycling old self-regulation strategies.

Some pupils and their families will have had resources and connections around them helping them adapt to changing situations, others will not.

- ◆ *Look for noticeable changes in the pupils narrative; keep DSP's informed*
- ◆ *Set boundaries and keep within them*
- ◆ *Problem solving activities*
- ◆ *Foster children's' interests*
- ◆ *Teach self-soothing techniques*
- ◆ *Use your Herts Steps training and supporting paperwork: anxiety mapping, roots, shoots and fruits prompt, risk reduction plans*
- ◆ *Make expectations clear, realistic and achievable*
- ◆ *Attune to your pupils, just be with them*
- ◆ *Empathy activities. Understanding your own and others feelings too (including adults)*
- ◆ *Whole class Roots, Shoots and Fruits*
- ◆ *Lean on others for support*
- ◆ *Instill a sense of hope*
- ◆ *Learn about who you have responsibility to and for*
- ◆ *Foster their talents*
- ◆ *Have a laugh*
- ◆ *Show kindness to others*
- ◆ *Recognise their efforts: class rewards, assemblies etc.*

What can I do to keep my pupils informed?

Children are very aware with regards to changes and information being withheld from them. This can negatively impact on trust and attachment development. Information should be shared based on pupils emotional maturation skills.

- ◆ *PSHE/Circle time lessons - share thoughts, worries, relevant expectations e.g. SATs*
- ◆ *Clear liaison between school and home*
- ◆ *Open evenings*
- ◆ *Use news forums/programmes such as Newsround*



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But they have missed so much: transition

At this time of year pupils, parents and staff will often be thinking about our children moving onto the next step in their educational journey. Moving between year groups, and for some, different schools, always involves change. We need to be thinking about how to best support our pupils with these transitions whether we be back to school or still in lockdown.

- ◆ *Transition booklets*
- ◆ *Transition calendars*
- ◆ *Personal Life Timelines*
- ◆ *Transition activities*
- ◆ *Current pupils to write to pupils coming into that year group sharing what that year is like.*
- ◆ *Pupil Progress meetings are held with the current teacher, the new teacher and a member of the Senior Leadership*
- ◆ *Plan a video tour of their new classroom and cloakroom, new school*
- ◆ *Peer influence work*
- ◆ *Create a piece of work to be displayed in the new room*
- ◆ *New teacher to send letter/postcard home to say bello and so pupils can start to get to know them. Send a photograph of all staff who will surround the pupil if possible.*
- ◆ *Create opportunities for the pupils to interact with their new teacher/teaching assistant e.g. read a story via class webpage, social media etc.*

Disadvantaged pupils and Enhanced Transition

Some of our pupils are recognised as having additional needs e.g. SEN, looked after children, pupils with child protection issues, pupils with social communication difficulties are to name but a few. It is important these pupils are identified early and receive an enhanced transition.

- Ensure pupils are clear that the transition is a natural and positive part of their development
- Clear preparation including: information sharing between all parties—the pupils, parents, current setting and new setting
- Pupils and parents co-produce the transition action plan. Transition is for them not to them
- Transition visits via video link to the new setting which include: navigating the physical environment as well as meeting new staff
- Activities focusing on dealing with challenge and change, building confidence and resilience, developing good friendships, managing time and expectations
- Pupils and parents to attend additional social events (social media)

Supporting Parents

Parents will be anxious about their child's transition. Ensure they are well informed, are supported in not passing on their anxieties and are co-producers in all plans.