

COVID 19 Primary Students Transition Back to School Information for Parents and Carers

This information sheet contains tips for parents and carers to support their child's mental health and wellbeing as they transition back to school

Our Catholic schools are preparing to welcome back all students to face to face learning. As a parent, it's natural to feel apprehensive about how well your child is going to transition after spending so much time at home. This sheet will help to you support your child as they adjust to face to face learning.

Pay positive attention to your child's emotions and needs

As your child readjusts to school, they may feel a range of emotions, including excitement, relief, or worry. You may notice changes in your child's behaviour, sleep, mood, interactions with others, or eating habits – these are all normal expressions of change and by noticing and responding with care and support, you will help your child to feel confident.

As parents, it is important to be able to:

- Recognise signs of increased anxiety, stress or worry.
- Know that it is a normal reaction and that it can take a couple of weeks for children to feel comfortable again in transitioning.
- Help children feel safe and supported.
- Listen and validate your child's feelings and reassure them that adjustment takes time.
- Be prepared for some social dynamics that may be a little stressful for your child as they socially navigate the school setting.

Coping with change, uncertainty and anxiety

Transitioning back to school can be like starting a new school year. School will also be different with social distancing and intensive hygiene practices within the school environment. This can be an exciting time, but also an anxious one. Lots of children – and their parents – may feel anxious. This is really common, but that doesn't make it any less stressful! Preparation and having a steady routine are key to dealing with situations where there are uncertainties. The more things feel familiar and controlled, the more your child or young person can relax and feel confident about what's happening. If you have concerns about your child then speak with the teacher, principal or school counsellor.

Below are some tips and strategies from Beyond Blue to make the transition back to school a positive experience.

- [Managing your child's transition back to school](#)
- [Tackling back to school anxiety](#)
- [Strategies to support anxious children](#)

Be aware of your own behaviour

It is important to understand the effect your own behaviour can have on your child. If you react in a way that suggests you are worried about your child going back to school, your child may worry too! Try to remain calm and positive when talking to your child about going back to school.

Reassure your child it is safe to go to school

During the home-based learning period, your family, along with staff at your child's school, have helped your child understand that staying away from school was necessary to keep them healthy and safe. Your child may now feel worried about whether it is safe for them to go back to school. Reassure your child that their school is aware of the need to restore a safe environment for all students.

To help your child feel safe and less worried about going back to school, have clear and calm conversations and tell them the facts, including that:

- The decision for students to return to school has been made based on health advice.
- Everyone at school is going to make sure they are keeping safe and following the required social distancing and health requirements.
- The Government is keeping an eye on COVID-19 – if it starts to spread again, decisions about what we need to do to keep everyone safe will be made quickly.
- If anyone at their school feels sick, they will stay away from school until they feel better.

Prepare for changes to school processes

Changes to your school's normal processes may be necessary to ensure physical distancing requirements for adults can be met. So that you and your child can prepare, your child's school will communicate with you about changes to their processes.

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Changes to your school's normal drop off procedures may mean that you are unable to walk with your child to their classroom. Schools understand that this may be unsettling for you and your child, particularly if your child is anxious about leaving you. Be assured that your child's school will have adequate staff on hand to ensure students are safe at all times, including getting from the school gate to their classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns about the new arrangements, you are encouraged to contact your principal.

Establish a back-to-school routine

Preparing for school and getting into a routine with your child will help make the transition back to school a positive experience.

Prepare to Return to School

- Get back into the routine of waking up, having breakfast and going to bed at regular times.
- Discuss any issues or fears your child might have about going back to school.
- Talk to your child about what they like about school and what they have been missing.
- Talk through the routine of what it's like being at school.
 - For example, "when I get to school I go and see (teacher's name); and then we hang our bags on our hooks; we say hi to our friends; we find our seat....etcetera".
 - Discuss what may be different now (for example, getting to their classroom in the morning).

Before the School Day

- Involve your child in:
 - Laying out their uniform so it is ready for the morning.
 - Packing their bag – you might make a game out of this with younger children. A visual checklist can help your child remember what they need to take.
 - Planning and packing their lunches and snacks.
- Try to have calm evenings and allow extra time to settle before bedtime if your child is feeling nervous.

- Allow extra time to get ready for school in the morning so that you are not rushing.

After School

- Talk to your child about their day, including what they enjoyed, what may have worried them, and what they found difficult.
- Include some family time. Children may miss being at home with you during the day, so it is important for them to feel close and connected with the family.

Physical distancing and good hygiene

School students do not need to follow strict adult physical distancing guidelines, but should follow good hygiene practices like:

- regularly washing hands
- avoiding sharing drinks or food
- coughing or sneezing into your elbow, or a tissue which should be discarded immediately.

Communicate with your school

If you feel that your child needs additional assistance as they transition back to school, get in touch with your teacher or principal to ensure the appropriate support can be put into place.

Available supports

Support is available for children through Kids Helpline on 1800 55 180 or by visiting the [Kids Helpline](#) website.

If you or your family are facing hardship during the Coronavirus pandemic, the Diocese has published information about how to access support on the [Parent Hub Covid-19](#) webpage.

Adapted from Department of Education Queensland.