

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SUPPORTING CHILDREN GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Returning to school after the summer holidays can be both exciting and daunting for children of all ages. Different routines, classes, schools, and academic pressures can cause anxiety or uncertainty. Parents play a vital role in easing this transition. This guide will help you support your child emotionally, mentally, and practically as they return to school.

1 RE-ESTABLISH ROUTINES



Gradually shift back to school-time routines a week or two before term starts. Regular bedtimes, wake-up times, and mealtimes can help children feel more secure and reduce the shock of change when school begins. Having a routine creates predictability and stability, helping to reduce anxiety while improving sleep and concentration.

2 TALK ABOUT FEELINGS



Encourage open conversations with children about their feelings. Ask them how they feel about returning to school, such as what they're looking forward to and anything they might be feeling unsure or worried about. Validating their emotions can help reduce anxiety and show them it's okay to talk about their emotional wellbeing.

3 SUPPORT WITH SLEEP



Children need adequate sleep for concentration, brain function, memory, and emotional regulation. Establish a wind-down routine without screens at least an hour before bed, and encourage relaxing activities like reading or listening to calming music.

4 LOOK OUT FOR SIGNS



Some children hide their anxiety. Watch for changes in their behaviour, such as withdrawal, stomach aches, and irritability. If worries persist, speak with their teacher or the pastoral team early to ensure your child receives support.

5 REFRESH SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



Help children reconnect with school friends by arranging playdates or video chats in the week before school starts. Familiar faces and social interactions help the transition and provide emotional comfort on that first day back.

6 CREATE A CALM MORNING



Mornings set the tone for the day. Plan ahead with a consistent morning routine that allows time for breakfast, getting dressed, and talking calmly about the day. Avoid last-minute rushing to reduce stress for everyone.

7 FOCUS ON POSITIVES



Talk about the fun and interesting parts of school - seeing friends, favourite subjects, or exciting activities. One simple but powerful change parents can make is swapping "How's your day been?" for "What's been good about your day?" This invites more of a positive, open response. Focusing on positives can help shift children's anxious thoughts and reframe school as a safe and engaging place.

8 VISIT OR VISUALISE SCHOOL



If possible, encourage visits to the school grounds before the first day, especially if it's a new school. Walking the route or even looking at photos of classrooms and teachers can make the environment feel familiar. The school website is always a great go-to place for this. This is particularly helpful for younger children or those with additional needs.

9 PLAN AHEAD TOGETHER



Involve children in preparing for school - buying supplies, packing their bag, or choosing lunch options. This gives them a sense of control and builds excitement. Use checklists or calendars to prepare together, helping reduce last-minute stress.

10 STAY POSITIVE AND PRESENT



Children pick up on your outlook. Stay calm, positive, and present, especially during drop-offs. Avoid lingering goodbyes, and let them know you'll be there at pick-up. A consistent, reassuring presence builds their confidence and resilience.

Meet Our Expert

This guide was created by Jo Morton-Brown, an Emotional Health Practitioner with nearly 15 years' experience supporting children and young people's mental health. She produces uplifting YouTube content for pupils and trains adults to better support young people's wellbeing, with a mission to help every child feel valued and understand their emotions.



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