



## **Returning to School – Checklist**

### **A few weeks before**

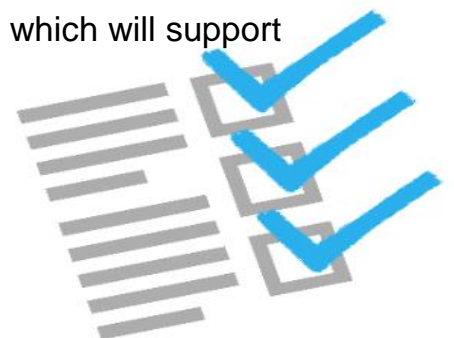
- Establish a routine and schedule to support your child to feel safe and reassured. A regular morning and bedtime routine will particularly help to prepare your child for the return to school.
- Talk to your child about the changes ahead; remind them about new safety procedures, including handwashing and hygiene, and the possibility that school staff and/or children may be wearing masks at school. A social story may be useful for communicating these changes.
- Be positive and calm when talking about school and try to protect your child from adult conversations about covid-19 that may increase anxiety or confusion.
- Share information with your child's school. If they will be starting a new school, relay your child's strengths and needs, likes/dislikes and what works best for them. If your child is returning to the same school, share with the school how your child has been over the last few months – have they been anxious, have they enjoyed being at home, what has been working well for them? This information will be valuable for schools to further support your child's transition.
- Remind your child of classmates and friends who they get on well with in school – who will they be pleased to see when they return?
- Get your child involved in planning the return to school by picking out a pencil case or schoolbag, trying on a uniform or asking them what news they would like to share with their teacher.





## The First Day

- Have a visual schedule/timetable of what the day will look like. You may need to contact your child's school in advance of reopening to get some guidance on this.
- Have your child's school uniform laid out the night before. If your child's uniform is likely to provoke anxiety, don't lay it out too early.
- Schoolbags can be packed the evening before and ready to go.
- Encourage your child to pack their lunchbox with you.
- Practise morning routines in advance, including dressing, feeding, getting ready and transport to school.
- On the morning, make some time to practise some strategies which you find help your child to feel regulated. This may be in the form of sensory regulation strategies or some deep breathing or guided imagery exercises.
- If your child appears to be anxious or worried about returning to school, name the emotion they are experiencing, acknowledge what they are feeling, and help them to make sense of why they may be feeling like this.
- An object from home may help your child to feel safe, such as a photograph or preferred toy, and help to relieve anxiety.
- Children learn from how parents respond to situations. Modelling calm and a positive attitude to returning to school will promote a feeling of calm in your child.
- It is likely that the first few weeks back in school will be tiring and possibly overwhelming for your child. Recognise the demands which come from being in school by providing a calm, relaxing space, on their return from school each day. Encourage activities or relaxation techniques which will support your child to unwind.





### Starting post-primary school

- When you get a copy of your class timetable, colour code it to identify the different subjects and rooms.
- Add visuals to the time table to make it easier to follow. These might include clock faces to show class times or symbols to indicate different subjects, like a calculator for maths or a test tube for science, for example.
- Photographs of key rooms, such as the PE hall, lunch room and science room would be helpful in navigating your new school.
- Find out the names of key people, such as your class tutor, year head and learning support teachers.
- Make a list of the equipment you will need for each subject; this will help you to organise your books and materials for different subjects. Packing your schoolbag each evening will save you time in the morning and help with organisation at school.
- Make sure to bring your homework diary to school each day. This will help you to keep track of homework to get done and you can keep notes or letters home in it too.
- If you know some people going to your new school, share the information you have found and ask them any questions you might have.

