



Top tips to prepare for the return to school

(compiled by Nikki co-chair Parent Carers Together)

- Drawing a heart on your wrist and a 'secret' one on your child's wrist, then you say we have matching hearts - when we look at them we will think of each other.
- Put motivational notes or jokes in their lunch boxes to cheer them up.
- Put their favourite books / comics in the car to help on the journey and to ease the transition home.
- Don't ask about the day when you pick them up, he / she will need time to process. If they seem quiet just say "I'll leave you in peace on the journey home, but talk to me if you need anything."
- Request to take a nervous young child in early, via a different entrance or perhaps to a breakfast club so they don't have to go through the 'big goodbye' in the playground which adds to the anticipation and anxiety.

Rebecca H. BCP area

- I'm buying a little bracelet set next week so my daughter wears one, and me and her Dad have the other two so when she misses us she can fiddle with the bracelet and know we are with her.

Nicola C. Bournemouth

- Snip off all labels and wash new school clothes so they feel less itchy and scratchy and smell less chemically as this will help children and young people with sensory needs feel more comfortable.
- Let your children write a list or cut pictures out of a magazine or use online pictures to show you what their favourite foods are at the moment, then you can be sure that they will be taking foods they will eat so they don't get 'hangry'.
- Let them listen to music on the journey if at all possible as it will help them calm and relax during the transition.
- Try to get them to eat breakfast - it doesn't matter what it is as long as they eat and drink so they are not hungry as this will affect how they feel - even if it's just a banana smoothie or a milkshake and a biscuit or yoghurt.
- Establish good communication with their teacher / staff before their first day. Agree the best way that the school can feed back to you about how their day has gone - is there a school diary or would it be better via email or a communications book? - discuss and choose what will work best for both the school and the parent.
- Find out what the school policy is around taking toys and treasures into school for comfort or show and tell so you can help your child understand what is and isn't allowed and they don't lose or damage a favourite item.

- Make a little scrapbook of pictures or activities you've done as a family and send it in with your child - this will act as a prompt for social communications skills during their first day back when talking to their class, peers or teacher.

Nikki J. Poole

- I made my child a 'treasure box' which had photographs of his family in and sensory play toys.

Katherine A. Bournemouth

- Good transitions - as many visits, visuals etc - my son's new school have put weekly videos on YouTube that have been fab.
- Drive to the school and just sit in the car park in the car if wanted - it all helps, especially when going by transport. Over time we've gone through the steps - where is the bus stop? Who will be there? Where to go etc?

Lindsay M. Poole

- Social stories, visual timetables and lots of talk and prep.

Robyn T. Hamworthy

- We have a good social story that school made that we are using. My daughter has also drawn a couple of pictures to give her favourite staff.

Beth P. Poole

- Countdown Calendar and we send my daughter in with a timetable that shows what we are doing and when we are coming to collect her. Pics of friends / staff if available.
- Lunches - I would try to make a list on ones you know will be received okay or usually are and use that as a reference for putting together as varied a packed lunch as possible - if I try to think off the top of my head I have nowhere near as many ideas.

Allana T. Poole

- Encourage your child to talk about what went well during their day at school, rather than just asking how their day was generally. Try to use specific prompts such as, "tell me one good thing that happened today" or "how was [lesson / subject] today?" This will support them to recognise the positive aspects of their day and you can help to increase their self-esteem in their learning / friendships if you praise them for what they have told you.
- When preparing your child to return to school, it may be helpful to walk or drive by their school regularly and point it out to them. You could then initiate a conversation about what they are looking forward to, about returning to school, or talking about something that went really well earlier in the school year.

Kirsty, SENDiass4BCP

- Sounds obvious but prepare as much as possible the night before - uniform, bags, PE kits etc to help reduce anxiety and give extra time for the inevitable anxiety, when trying to get out of the house.

Anon

- We talk about school about a week before going back then we are led by my son. If he wants to talk about it more then we do, we keep it relaxed.

Dawn C. Poole

- Use the Elsa website for back to school social stories to help with the anxiety see <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/category/free-resources/> or check under coronavirus support for visuals to support emotions.

Marci O, Poole

- Do a drive by of the school in lead up to the first day to remind your child of the journey you will take and the time it may take to get there etc.
- Maybe use a visual of the outside of the school and the uniform as a reminder.
- If your child has friends who will be in their new class, talk about it so your child knows there will be children they recognise on their first day.
- Let you child pick out their pencil case, school bag etc so they are involved and excited about returning to school.
- Tell them what will happen i.e. at 8.50am Mummy / Daddy will drop you off at school, you will have fun with your friends then at 2.50pm Mummy / Daddy will be at the school gate to collect you so they know you are coming back.

Beth C, BCP Area