



Back to secondary school guide for parents and carers

Barnsley schools, Barnsley Council and Public Health have worked together through the Barnsley Alliance to plan for all children returning to school in September.

We understand that you and your child may be feeling different things about the return to school in September. There may be things your child is excited about or looking forward to, as well as things they are worried or anxious about.

What will my child's school be like when they go back?

There will be some changes to schools when your child goes back and these changes will vary from school to school, but this is to ensure your child, their friends, other students and school staff are all safe.

Schools will be following government guidance and working with public health. Your child's school will keep you informed of these changes through their website and newsletters.

Back to school anxieties

Understandably, your child might be anxious about returning to school. Even older young people can find it hard to name and understand their emotions and this may result in changes in behaviour.

Some signs to look out for are:

- You might find they are more upset or find it hard to manage their emotions
- They may appear anxious or distressed
- Increasing trouble with sleeping and eating
- Appearing low in mood, withdrawn or tearful
- Reporting worried or negative thoughts about themselves or their future



Ideas on how to manage your child's return to school

As children often take their emotional cues from the key adults in their lives – including parents and teachers – it is important that you manage your own emotions well and remain calm, listening to their concerns.

Speak kindly and reassure them.

Listen to their concerns

One of the most important ways you can support your child is to calmly listen to them and acknowledge that their fears are real to them. Remind them how important it is to attend school and reassure them that staff have worked hard to make sure school is a safe place to be. Encourage them to talk about what it is that worries them about their return to school so that you can help them plan ways to manage this, for example they might be worried about the work that they have missed or it could be that they are worried about how the school will manage social time. If you don't have the answers be honest but help them think about how they can find the answers on their return to school.

Talk to your child about how they are feeling

About going back to school and try not to make assumptions. Ask them if they are worried or feel scared about anything, but also if they are excited about or looking forward to something. No matter how your child feels, let them know that it is completely normal to feel a mixture of emotions and that everyone will be experiencing similar feelings.

Provide your child with as much information

About their new routine and school day as you can. This will help them to prepare for any changes that have been made to the timings of their day, the layout of their classroom, their peer groups and break times. If you don't have this information reassure them that school will help them with this on the first day back.

Reassure your child

Talk with your child about ways they can stay safe at school, such as washing their hands before and after eating, and reassure them that the school are putting measures in place to keep them safe.



Re-establish a routine

To help ease into school life. During lock down it is understandable that your family's routine may have changed. Young people are likely to have been waking up later or going to bed later. To help them get ready for school, try to gradually get them back into their usual morning and bedtime routines as they get closer to their return date.

Don't put pressure on yourself

The transition back into school is likely to take some time. Lots of young people will experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort them. Caring for you child emotional well being is as important as making sure they are up to date with learning take time out with your child for fun and family time.

Think ahead

As well as reflecting on what has happened. It is important to help young people develop hope and a sense of excitement for the future. At a time like this, it can be hard to feel positive, but identifying the things that they can look forward to will help them to realise that the current situation won't last forever and their feelings will change.

Seek support if you need it

Transitioning back to school after being in lockdown is no easy task. You may find that your child struggles to get back into school or experiences difficulties while they're at school, including displaying challenging behaviours. If this is the case, reach out to your child's school as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges and work together to support your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health and you think they need professional support, speak to the school and your GP about the best next step.

Visit the [Young Minds website](#) for even more useful information on mental health and well being.

Your own mental health

It's not just been a tough time for kids – parents and carers have been under immense strain over the past few months. Make sure you look after your own mental health and contact your GP or visit the NHS website (www.nhs.uk) if you need support.



Considering home schooling?

It's understandable that if you or your child is worried about returning to school that you may have been considering home schooling.

However, please note the following:

If you choose to educate your child(ren) at home, you accept full responsibility for their education. Once your child has been removed from the admission register, they can't be re-admitted without you reapplying through school admissions. It may not be possible for your child to be placed at the school of your choice.

We recommend before making a decision on home education that you:

- consider all the issues very seriously. It's a great responsibility that requires a considerable commitment of time and energy.
- plan what you intend to do with your child before making a decision. Consider the costs involved.
- be aware that your child may well miss the social side of school, especially contact with other children and joint activities.
- are aware that no grants are available to help with home education. You will be responsible for any costs of materials, equipment, examination fees etc.

Our [Parental Guidance for Elective Home Education \(EHE\)](#) document gives more information.

Our Education Welfare Service is always on hand to give you advice and support.

They can be contacted by our Families Information Service on 0800 0345 340.