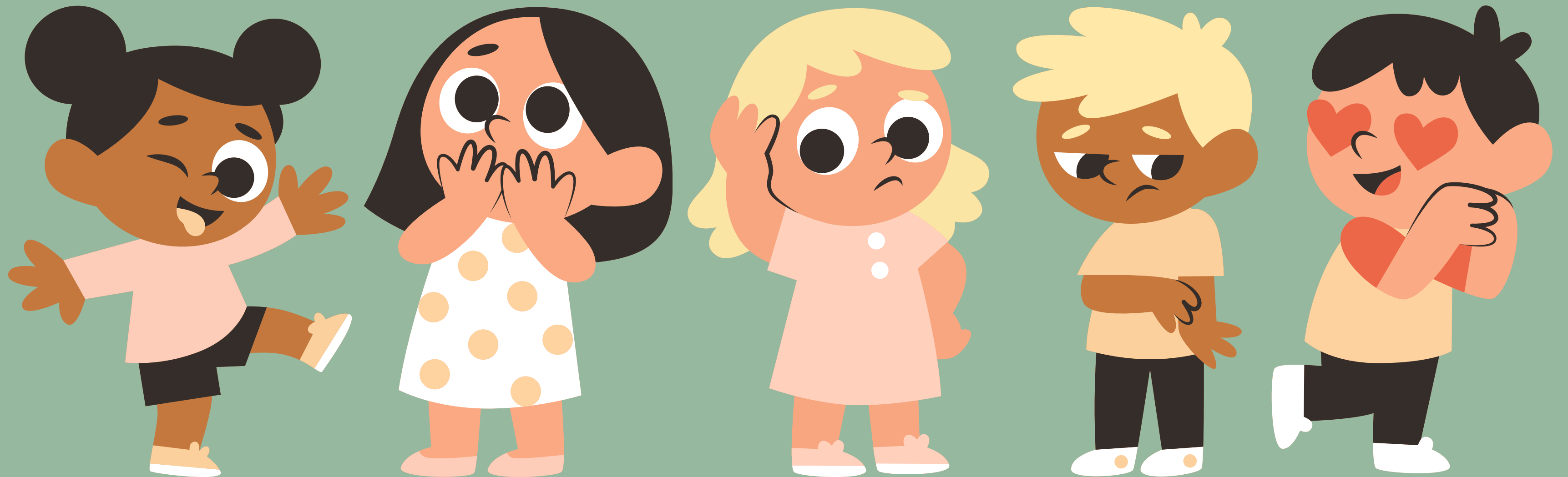


**Survive (and Thrive) in any
school holiday!**



Stage 1.

Holiday countdown

Sometime before the end of term, use a visual support to prepare your child for the upcoming change of routine. This might be marking days off a calendar, using lego bricks in a tower and removing one each day, or having a bowl full of marbles and removing one a day. Use a picture to demonstrate “School finished for _ days” and “Home time”.

Prepare a Visual Schedule board to use with your child so they can see an outline of how each day of the holidays will look. Eg. Morning / Afternoon / Evening. Prepare photos of whoever will be looking after your child each day, places they might visit and schedule ‘down time’ or ‘rest time’ every day to prevent sensory or stimulation overload. Changing these pictures on your child’s board each day will give them the information they need to reduce anxiety about the day ahead.





Drawing



Sensory time



Home



Play time



MY DAY			
7:00		4:00	
8:00		5:00	
2:30		5:30	
3:00		6:00	
3:15		8:30	

LEISURE SCHEDULE

Baseball 	Play With Cars 	Listen to Music 	Trains
See-Saw 	Sidewalk Chalk 	Jump Rope 	Kick Ball
Monkey Bars 	Slide 	Swings 	Tennis



Stage 2. Activity Preparation.

Search websites and social media for suitable places, events, activities, groups that your child might enjoy. Network with friends and other parents to benefit from their recommendations. Book events and add them to your calendar so you can spread activities out across the week.

Look on the Halton Local Offer website and click the 'Leisure' page to consider local groups and activities. Also look on this website at the 'Short Breaks' service who may be able to help with funding towards increasing your child's social and leisure opportunities.

Plan a range of activities for at home. Try and include sensory play, solitary play and adult led play activities. Aim to rotate toys during each day so your child is stimulated by different things. Build a stock of craft items, sensory resources and play ideas so you can adapt play as required. Search sites such as Pinterest and social media for ideas. Remember to include calming sensory input throughout the holidays and utilise your child's specific interests.



Stage 3.

Prepare your 'Day out' survival kit!

Consider what equipment your child will need whilst on days out. Have a bag ready to use, filled with things such as ear defenders, blanket, snacks, preferred toys / items, fidget tools, comforters, chews, wet wipes, pain relief / meds etc.

Check your disability buggy, Blue badge, Carers card, DLA letter, sunflower lanyard and radar toilet key are all at hand to make places easier to access.

Phone the venue ahead of the day out to enquire about their disability support availability.

Enlist the help of another person wherever possible. Having another pair of hands on days out will really help. By seeing when family or friends are free to accompany, you can plan your days out around their availability. The 'Short Breaks' service may be able to support in securing your child a PA. Speak to Louise in school about this for more details or look on the Halton Local Offer website for information

If something goes wrong on a day out, always have a 'Plan B' ready to minimise your child's upset.

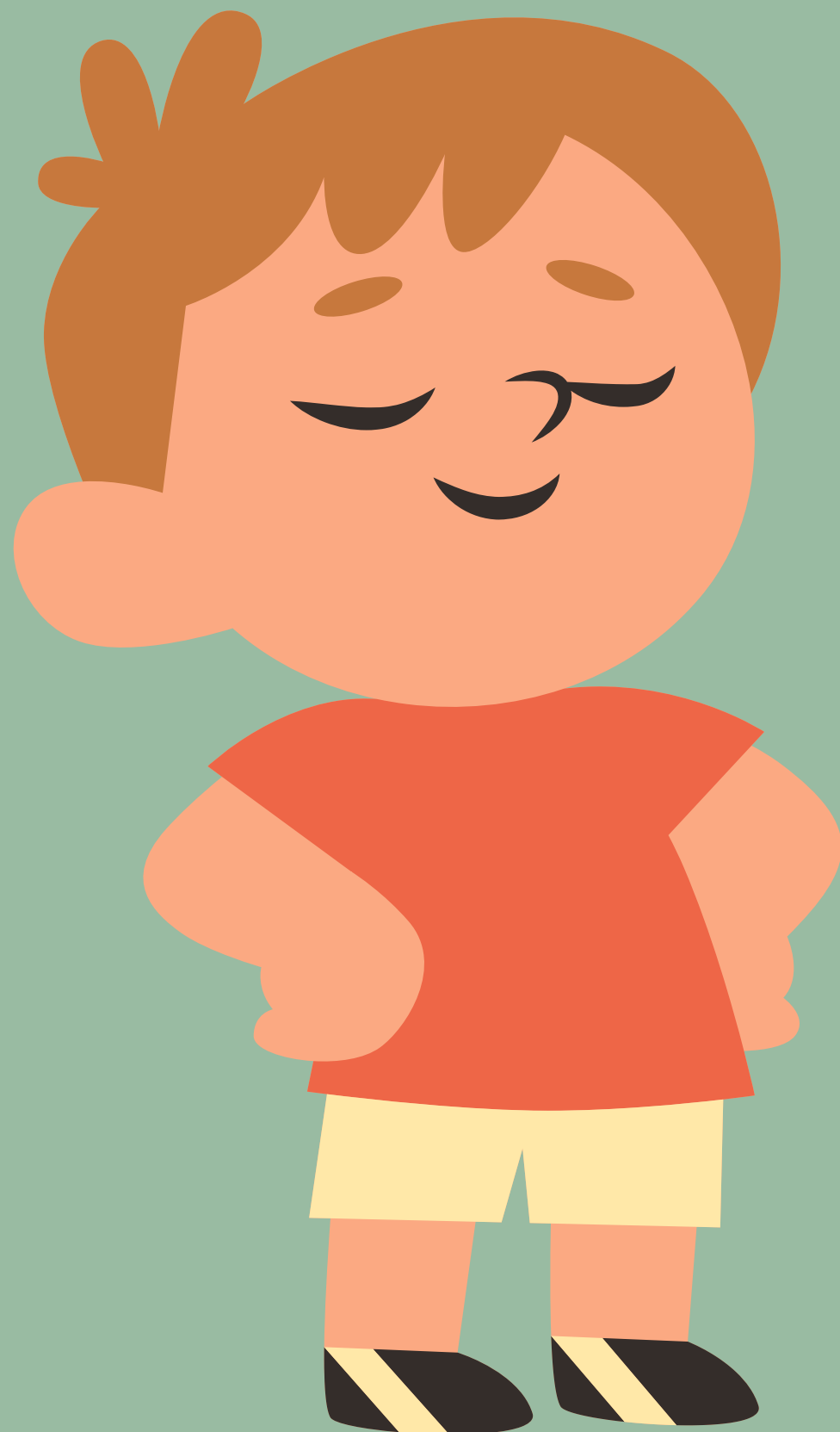
Stage 4.

Keep expectations realistic - don't compete with what you see on others' social media.

Whilst we'd all love to have a stress free, blissful holiday period, it's important to be realistic about what most people actually experience when their children are at home for long periods. Children become frustrated, overwhelmed, bored and agitated - despite everyone's best efforts! This tends to show in their behaviour and emotional dysregulation. Be kind to yourself as you co-regulate and tend to their needs. Aim to keep everyone safe and reduce demands at these times.

If things are becoming regularly challenging, aim to reflect on any patterns to the time of day when meltdowns occur, who is around, what the environment is like, if there might be any pain or discomfort, if they have just eaten or are hungry, etc. Have a look on the school website, Family Support page for tip on things like Sleep, understanding behaviour, diet, visual supports and sensory sensitivities. Making changes to your child's inputs might help to ease things.





Stage 5.

See the holidays as a time to re-connect with your child and marvel at how far they've come.

Schedule time every day to play with your child. This is the single most important thing you can do to deepen relationships and extend their development. Play can look like many activities. The only thing that is important is that your child is having fun! Let your child take the lead and you follow. Look at some videos online about Intensive Interaction and try it out. Think about your child's interests and use them to initiate play. Try this out in different environments for a totally different outcome - the car, the garden, the bath!

Cast your mind back to a year ago and consider how much has changed since then. Progress can be big or small, but it's all so important. Look for opportunities to give your child specific praise about things they have tried or accomplished. Aim to celebrate positives and watch as your child's self esteem and confidence grows.



Stage 6.

Prepare for the return to school.

Just as you used visuals to prepare your child for the end of term, you can use the same strategy to prepare them for the end of the holidays. This is particularly important if the holiday has been more than a week long. Think about adjusting routines slightly each day to reduce the shock of morning demands on a school day. Use their uniform as a visual cue for your child the day before school starts so they are prepared for the expectations of the next morning.

Make a list of any things you think your child's teacher will need to know and email them with it before your child returns to class. This might include any injuries, illnesses, changes in medications or changes in family circumstances. Ask for a meeting with our Family Support Worker if you would like some help or advice.

Stage 7.

Use your experience to help inform the next holiday period.

Make a note of things that worked and things that didn't. Use these notes to inform your planning for the next school holiday. Keep visuals in a safe place ready to be used again. Have a chat with other parents about their experiences and consider their tips and advice for your family.

Speak to school about any support needs you have identified to discuss offers of referrals, support, workshops and advice.

Parenting is a learning journey and staff at school are here to help and guide on any individual issues. Please feel free to contact Louise, our Family Support Worker on 07546 694714 or at louise.green@bfs.set.org.

