

## Back to school top tips

### Changing body clock

Sleeping and eating patterns have been disrupted during the holiday. They're tired and wired. They may have missed key weekly activities and sports. Kids with ADHD may have been on and off their meds as you've struggled to cope with their energy levels. Just as their body clock is adjusting to holiday-time, the routine is changing again! Try creeping bedtime forward by fifteen minutes or encouraging them to wake up slightly earlier – it will make going back to school less of a shock.



### Dealing with trauma

If your child has experienced any sort of trauma e.g. a bereavement, an accident or illness during the summer holidays, make sure that the school is aware, as your child may experience flashbacks, anxiety and need extra support at times. I urge you to share this in confidence, with a member of the teaching team, as this information will enable staff to support your child better.



### Quiet Zone

If your child's school has a Quiet Zone, calm down area or wherever it is that they can go if they feel unwell, overwhelmed or need extra help, remind them that they should use this space, remind them how to get there, how to ask for help and who to ask for help. Rehearse this with them and make sure your version of your child's safety zone/opt out plan matches the school's protocol.



### Parents' Grapevine

Check the school website or the parents' WhatsApp group to make sure you're clear about the basics: school start and finish times, rules about pick up and drop off, seating plans lunchtimes, homework, locations of classrooms, canteen, toilets, main hall, school rules, names of key staff members and their roles. Make time to share this information with your child in whatever format they can best access. Visuals are a clear winner here again.



### Refresh yourself with their transition plan.

This will remind you of the process for the first couple of days, you may need to organise an early pick up for example. Does your child know their teacher, learning support person or SENDCOs name? Have they got the right uniform, taking into account any adaptations for comfort? Waiting for online deliveries or trying to find the right equipment can be stressful, so try to look at these details early (I've been there). If you need to get feet measured, give yourself plenty of time to avoid the crowds or book a slot with your local shop if they offer that service.



### Talk positively to your child about returning to school.

If you're worried or angry about the decision, your mood will transfer to your kids. Try to keep your conversations about school matter of fact, they will start to model your confidence about this big change.

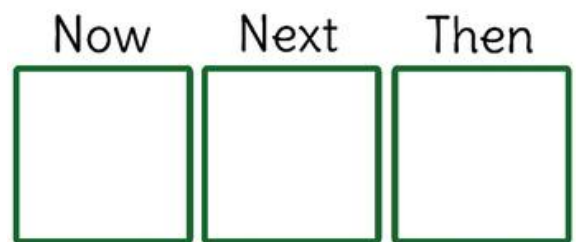


### Listen to your child's fears

If they've been worried about leaving established friendships or are fearful about certain subjects or other aspects of school, a little bit of reassurance goes a long way.

### Plan together – transition techniques: 'First... & Then or Now.'

Switching brain activity between different tasks, can be challenging for autistic or ADHD kids. The "First and Then" technique helps you explain with pictures or simple words, what's happening now and what is coming next. "First you were on holiday, now you need to go back to school to see your favourite teacher/friends again."



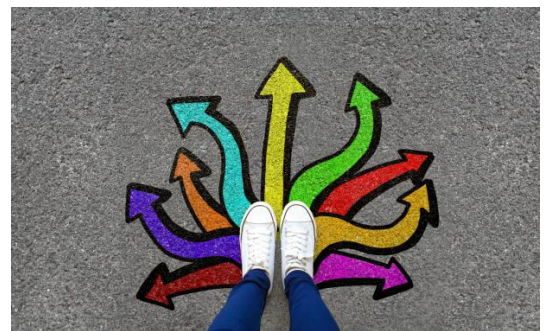
### Time Warnings

Nobody likes things sprung on them at the last minute and the same can be said for children experiencing any sort of change. Give your child time to process change and, in an age-appropriate way, help them understand timescales. This can be in the form of a sand timer, a visual daily or weekly timetable or just discussing upcoming events with older children, allowing them time to prepare mentally.



### Autonomy / Control Over the Situation.

Feeling out of control can be a very uncomfortable experience. Providing children with some say over the way in which transitions happen, can ease some of their discomfort. This can be choosing whether they hold your hand as they enter their new school or letting them choose a nice activity to do with you after their first day. Something little for them to feel familiar with and in control of can significantly shift their focus from feeling out of control.



### Reassurance

Leaving somewhere familiar / starting somewhere new can be daunting and unsettling. As parents, we often try to 'sell' the experience as exciting. Whilst being positive and encouraging is fundamental to easing our children's anxiety, it is also important to give them an opportunity to share their concerns and fears with us. Children often fear practical issues surrounding transitions – where will they have lunch? How will they get there? Do not underestimate the emotional upheaval of changing classrooms, leaving a setting or even trying a new extracurricular activity. Spend time discussing your child's fears and reassuring them that it is okay to feel scared – it doesn't mean that the change is bad!



## Model Positive Change

As parents, we too experience changes on a regular basis. It is important to process these with your child and model how to handle uncomfortable feelings and anxieties. 'I went somewhere new for the first time today and I was a little nervous as I had never been before. When I got there, I felt great as I was proud that I did it.' Children are sponges who absorb everything they see and hear. Let them see you experiencing transitions and show them how you manage.



## Help Your Child Prepare

Whether it is doing a practice run of a new journey, looking at pictures of a new school or even finding opportunities for your child to socialise with new friends, help your child prepare for the new transition in as many ways you can. Be prepared for a tricky few days as routines change. Be ready with after school snacks and drinks and allow time for decompression doing whatever your young person needs to do.



## Useful links

**Sleep** - The Sleep Charity advice: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/common-sleep-problems-in-children/>

Sleep charity Phone advice line 7pm – 9pm Sunday – Thursday 03303 530 541

Teenagers Sleep Hub: <https://teensleephub.org.uk/>

**Listening ear service** - Contact Listening Ear Service [Listening Ear | Contact](#)

You might be struggling emotionally and looking for strategies to help you cope. Or maybe you just need to talk to someone who understands the extra challenges you face and who can point you in the right direction to get the support you need for your family.

To help, we offer 1-1 telephone appointments with a family support adviser for parent carers looking for a listening ear, reassurance and practical and emotional support.

Making an appointment is simple: Choose the day (morning, afternoon or evening), and when you register choose the time slot you want. Appointments are regularly updated and are subject to availability.

## **Sensory friendly uniform / clothing** -

Adaptive by Marks and Spencers

<https://www.marksandspencer.com/MSFindItemsByKeyword?langId=-24&storeId=10151&catalogId=10051&categoryId=0&searchTerm=adaptive>

Easy on Wear by George at Asda <https://direct.asda.com/george/school/easy-on-easy-wear/D10M5G1C15,default,sc.html>

Fledglings by Contact <https://www.fledglings.org.uk/>

Autism friendly clothing by Sensory Smart Store <https://www.sensorysmart.co.uk/spectra-sensory-clothing---autism-friendly-clothing-247-c.asp>

**Shoe sizing at Home by Clarks** [Measure Shoe Size at Home with Tape Measure | Clarks](#)

**Book an in store fitting with Clarks** [Measure & Fit - Book a Clarks Shoe Fitting | Clarks](#) you might also want to try phoning our local store to ask about quietest times to come in to avoid sensory overwhelm as much as possible.

**Local Uniform shop (Uniform and Leisure)** Online shopping site [Schoolwear Uniforms - Uniform & Leisure Company \(ualonline.uk\)](#)