



Jarrow Cross  
Church of England  
Primary School  
Borough Road, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear NE32 5UW  
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Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I hope you are all well. Like you all I cannot believe we are now at the beginning our summer holidays and I have not had the opportunity to see so many of you since March. As I have said before I would never have expected to be still writing to you like this each week. What has happened since March has simply been beyond our imagination and something which I know we all hope will never be repeated.

I have gone back and re read the very first letter which I sent you way back in March. In it I reinforced the importance of the mental health of both yourselves and your child and that we would concentrate upon academic progress when everything was back to normal. Please be assured that is exactly what we will do. The curriculum for the children for September is planned and staff have identified exactly what the priorities are.

We totally understand how some children and parents will be anxious about the return to school. Our advice would be talk about it, discuss what is going to be happening and nearer the time talk about how the morning routine will be managed. Mrs Jackson has put together some information/ideas which could be used to support your child with the transition back to school. It is attached to the end of the letter. Our Facebook page Bee Kind Bee Happy will also continue to run over the summer holidays. If you have any concerns about your child's emotional health please don't hesitate to get in touch with Mrs Jackson through the Bee Kind Bee Happy page.

Looking ahead to September, as you know the usual rules about school uniform will apply. We have had a message from Clark's Shoe's asking us to inform you that if you want to buy new shoes for your child from their store please book online or call to make an appointment.

Finally, I would just like to take the opportunity yet again to thank you for all of your support and kind words over the last few months. Your ongoing support has made such a difficult, and at times stressful situation, so much easier to manage. I know I speak for all of the staff when I say we are looking forward so much to September and having our whole school community back together again. There is a message on the Distance Learning site from all of the teachers wishing the children a lovely holiday we would be very grateful if you could tell the children about it.

Take care and have a lovely summer.

Mrs S. McBeth



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### **Preparing your child to return to school**

It is helpful to recognise that the pandemic has triggered heightened emotions such as stress, anxiety and worry to an extent in us all. This is because there has been a danger and a risk identified, and linked to this even on the return to school some of those feelings may still be surfacing and very much present for your children.

***"Children will only learn if they feel safe"*** and it is extremely important that both school and home work together to ensure this can happen. Education serves a far more important purpose than just academic learning. It can actually transform the lives of children. School will therefore continue to be a nurturing and emotionally supportive environment for all.

When it comes to the reality of your child returning to school this may trigger an emotional and heightened response for them. Children who are already overwhelmed will be triggered more easily and will find this transition difficult to manage.

#### ***What you might see:***

- A need to be close to a familiar adult
- Seeking more adult contact (physically/emotionally)
- Refusal to leave parents/carer's
- Refusal to go into school
- Irritability/defiance/ anger outbursts
- Difficulty concentrating/ focussing



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- Difficulty sleeping
- Unable to self-regulate (calm themselves)
- Quiet and withdrawn
- Avoidant of contact
- Regressive behaviour (thumb sucking, clothes chewing, soiling)

Remember that ***beneath every behaviour there is a feeling or a need***. It is important that we recognise and meet the need rather than focussing on the behaviour. By doing this we deal with the cause not the symptom

It is crucial that children are seen, supported and understood. 55% of the way we communicate is through our body language. Therefore, you need to be alert to how your child is feeling and make the experience manageable for them. They need to feel safe. Adults should demonstrate being connected to the child through play and positivity. They should be curious and show a genuine interest in the child and how they are feeling (***I wonder, I imagine and I notice***) These phrases will support you to find out what is going on for them. Finally use empathy and let the child know that you understand (***You know that sounds really hard***)

### **Top tips:**

Start talking - Discuss the return to school and identify how this feels for your child. Exploring any worries that may arise. You are then able to help them manage and solve their worries. Listen and acknowledge feelings



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without judgement. Reassure them that their feelings are natural and that you are there for them. Remember all children are individual and will experience things in their own way. Some suggested questions to use as a conversation starter could be: What are you looking forward to? What might be hard? What do you think will be ok?

- Prepare them - Preparing children for change is always helpful. Involving them so they are aware in advance of when and why things will happen. As well as preparing them, this will help them make sense of the world around them and eliminate any surprises. This supports children to feel safe and secure.
- Routine - Implementing a good routine to support children to wake up early and adjust gradually so they can be ready for their school day well in advance of their return.
- Sleep routine - Start to get your child into a good sleep routine a few weeks before they are to return to school.
- Talk about school - Remind them of the routine that they were once familiar with.



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- Acknowledge what has happened - It is important to recognise what we have all been through over the past few months. Do not avoid talking about this.
- Reconnect with friends - Help them to reconnect with some school friends if possible. This can be virtually or meeting following government guidelines.
- Model coping strategies - the use of breathing techniques, grounding exercises, physical exercise, journaling etc
- yourself available - Create regular opportunities for talking in different ways. This could be when you are out for a walk, baking together or during quiet time before bed.
- Identify positives - Talk about what your child is looking forward to and help them to identify things they used to enjoy at school. Focus on looking to the future with confidence. Offer lots of reassurance.
- Be mindful - getting them to focus on the present (right here right now) Not dwelling on the past or speculating about the future as this can make worries worse.



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- Arts and crafts - Creative arts are a great way to help us express feelings. Get your child to show you how they are feeling through the use of paint, drawing, writing, sand, playdough, pompoms etc
- Self-care - Offer relaxation opportunities and quiet time. A nice bubble bath, massage, stories, meditation stories, build a den to relax in, breathing practice etc.
- Keep talking - Once your child is back to school ask and be interested about their day. What was good about your day? What was difficult? What went ok? This breaks it down for the child and gives them a direction.

***Remember to be repetitive and continuous with your support strategies until you can see them feel settled again***



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**Here are some activities that will further support your children:**

*The following creative arts and play-based activities encourage connection and are particularly helpful for providing emotional containment and safety.*

**Breakfasting together:** When schools reopens, a shared breakfast will create opportunities for chat, laughter and engagement before their day begins.

**Mood thermometers:** For children who may struggle to talk about and explain their feelings/ moods, try sticking selfie photos onto a 'mood-o-meter' with them. This will help them show and identify how they are feeling. Being aware of how children are feeling on different days and times will give an understanding of what they need from you.

**Jigsaw:** Each family member to draw and colour a jigsaw piece each for two different puzzles: one a representation of what they struggled with during lockdown; the other a representation of something they are proud of, something which helped them through it or a happy moment. By everyone placing their jigsaw pieces together as part of the 'whole' the children will gain a sense of connection and strength in togetherness alongside the celebrations of surviving the lockdown.



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**Mobile:** Children create their own cardboard cut-out representation of themselves to be made into a hanging mobile. Children can be encouraged to attach their daily mood identifying if they are feeling sad or needing a bit of extra help or support.

**Paper affirmation:** Each family member writes their name on the top of their blank sheet of paper. Taking turns on each person's paper, write down a positive word or sentence about them. After each go, the paper must be folded over so the words can't be seen. At the end, the words and sentences are shared together as a family.

**Favourite music:** Children create a decorated CD album cover that reflects the most important people and happy memories of their life. Other ideas that could be included on the cover for older children: their artist or group name; a title and design for the cover that represents how others see them; and eight songs to represent who they are, their philosophy of life, their safe space, their strengths, their life-goals, their family, what sort of friend they are and one of their own choice.



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