Return to School Guide for the Reintegration of Children with SEND.

Introduction

Although the return to school will be a time of great excitement for many children, for others it will be a time of great anxiety. Whilst some will be keen to escape their homes, others will be reluctant to leave them and just as some will have spent hours at home undertaking a range of exciting learning experiences, others will have had little to no academic focus during this time.

Returning to school therefore, faces us with a conundrum: how do we balance the academic learning of some students with the Social and Emotional needs of others, and how do we reunite a divided class, so that they are ready and able to engage fully with learning again?

Amidst this challenge, teachers and SENDCOs will also need to consider the needs of individual pupils with SEND, who alongside the challenges outlined above, will have further specific needs that could impede their successful return to the classroom.

This guide aims to support SENDCO's, Teachers and TAs, in understanding the potential needs of these children, so that an effective transition can be planned.

Return to School Advice for the Reintegration of Children with SEND.

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Part 1: Cognition and Learning

Dyslexia and Dyscalculia

Whilst at home it is likely that pupils with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia (SpLD) will have spent their time focusing on things that stimulate and interest them. Home educating parents may have successfully encouraged them to complete some of the schoolwork that was sent home, but this is likely to have been accompanied by protests, tears and a high level of general distraction.

These pupils may return to school excited to share with you other special projects that they have been working on and this will be the key to successfully reintegrating these pupils. The project that the student with SpLD wishes to share with you is likely to be an insight into their area of expertise (Eide and Eide, 2011, argues that it's likely to be in one of five distinct areas). With this project, they are showing you what they are interested in, but more importantly they are showing you 'how' they like to learn. It would be very easy to pay lip service to the learning that students have completed at home, to feign interest and then quickly move on to getting back into the curriculum, but by doing so, we would be missing a fantastic opportunity to reshape the learning opportunities that we offer the children in our classrooms. The teacher that takes time to really share in the learning that pupils have done whilst at home, celebrates with their class the interesting work they've done, creates time and opportunity for others to try out these styles of learning, is more likely to engage pupils with SpLD in their return to the classroom.

Pupils with SpLD, particularly those with a phonological deficit, struggle to retain knowledge of the phonemic system and in their application of these sounds for reading and spelling of words. It is very likely that, no matter what age the pupil, they will have lost some of the sounds that they would ordinarily have been able to use. Undertaking a thorough sounds check with this group of pupils when they first return to school is critical.

Simple actions such as providing children with pictorial representation of the sounds (as shown below) or of the correct orientation of letters, could give some pupils the confidence that they need to settle back in more quickly.

Another element to be considered when supporting a pupil with SpLD back into the classroom is known as 'Dyslexic Fatigue' although it can apply equally to students with Dyscalculia. Dyslexic fatigue is caused by the physical exertion of having to concentrate so hard to whilst undertaking tasks that involve letters of digits. For an example visit:

You will find that if you concentrate hard enough, you are able to read the words on the page, however it takes a concerted effort. This challenge is also often combined with great anxiety over reading, writing or number based tasks leading the individual to experience the flood of adrenalin linked with 'fight or flight'. Attempting to function in the upper cortex of the brain, whilst experiencing the shutdown caused by fight or flight is impossible, leaving individuals with SpLD exhausted by their efforts. This obviously manifests itself in the behaviour of the pupil, whom may yawn extensively, appear uninterested or disengaged or employ work avoidance strategies.

To support these pupils on their return to school it is important to bear in mind that the level of challenge that they are experiencing is likely to be exaggerated by the circumstance, and to proactively seek to reduce this through:

1. Chunking text and information into manageable sections by either highlighting them, using a reading window or ruler or literally cutting the text into sections.
2. Using coloured card and inks to section pieces of information and drawing their attention to the most important areas of the text.
3. Provide secondary aged pupils with a key ring or one page profile that outlines their current difficulties and needs. They can carry this around and show it to other teachers as needed.
4. Provide the pupil with brain breaks (sensory snacks) regularly throughout the session.
5. Where possible reduce the quantity of instructions and be prepared to repeat them several times.
6. Encourage the pupil to try out, then use, calming strategies (e.g. sips of water, deep breaths, fidgets etc.) when trying to concentrate for longer lengths of time.
7. See behaviour as an indicator of the level of stress and anxiety being experienced by the pupil and be ready to respond in kindness to this.

Part 1: Cognition and Learning

MLD and Global Delay

This will not have been an easy time for children with learning difficulties, and I am sure that some pupils will have attempted the work set but many have been doing special activities with parents and siblings.

Some children may want to return to school to see friends but it may be a difficult and anxious time for them. They might find it difficult to focus once more on a strict routine, to apply themselves to classroom activities and to adapt to a very different school than the one they knew. For this reason, it is important that we initially focus on their wellbeing rather than their academic success.

- It may be advantageous to inform parents of what may be the same and what will be different so that pupils can be prepared for their return to school.
- Listen to the child if they feel anxious, let them talk about their concerns and give positive reinforcement to reduce anxiety. Explain to them why there is the need for social distancing and the use of a seating plan will reinforce this.
- Clear communication and planning are ways to reduce anxiety around the transition process for everyone
- Look at their individual needs, some children may have progressed well working at home while others will have found it very difficult, so the need to differentiate learning will be greater now than before. The impact of this increased learning gap may be reflected in the children's wellbeing so we need to show empathy to our students (as in 'we're all in this together') and acknowledging the difficulties faced during self-isolation.
- Reinstate routines and try to make school as normal as possible.
- Expect pupils to have lost some of their learning. They will most likely need additional scaffolding to what they would previously have needed.
- Provide multiple opportunities for children to explore their home-school experiences. We can use class discussions, writing, poetry, music, art, dance, and drama, to reflect on what we have being doing at home. Encourage children to write or draw about how things have changed and be open in sharing your own positive and negative experiences of this period.
- Make the learning seem relevant and important as they may have lost motivation – teach about real world issues.
- Make the learning meaningful and fun to each pupil to re-engage them. (i.e. base it on their special interests)
- Introduce multiple and varied forms of learning (activities, games, visuals, role-plays with peers) and worry less about the structures that we would previously have adhered to.
- Put aside dedicated time in the school day to focus on rebuilding positive relationships, both with teachers and with friends. See 'friendship activities' in our downloads section for suggested activities.

It is important to give these children time to process and reflect on their experiences at home this will be an important part of the initial transition – both for pastoral and teaching and learning reasons. Our children will need time and space to readjust to school-based learning. For some, this transition will be filled with as much anxiety as the first day of school or the school year. Being prepared and catering for their potential needs should be one of our highest priorities.

Part 2: Sensory and Physical

Sensory Needs

For pupils with sensory needs, the transition from one environment to another can be particularly challenging. After several weeks of becoming used to their own home environment, which is likely much quieter and calmer, to return to the hustle and bustle of a busy classroom, will probably be an overwhelming experience. Therefore, one of the key support mechanisms will be patience and allowing pupils to slowly adapt back into life at school at their own pace, and in their own way. Although this can be difficult, particularly with so many other pupils who will also be feeling anxious about things, it is vital that this is not a rushed process and that where possible, avoid a situation where a child reaches 'meltdown' stage as this could cause further anxiety to both the child themselves and also their peers.

If you know a child in your class has sensory needs, it may be extremely useful to contact parent/carers and find out what environment the pupil has been used to working in at home. For example, if the child has access to a dark tent/ safe space at home, can this be recreated in the classroom? Or could the pupil bring a familiar item/comfort from home to ease the transition? Accessing some of this information could play a key part in ensuring the smoothest of transitions back into school.

<u>Sensory avoiders</u>

For those pupils who are averse to sensory stimulation such as noise or light, the return to the school environment will be tough. It is important that these pupils have access to a 'get out' card. This may be in the form of a safe space within the classroom (dark tent, quiet area etc.) or the option to leave the classroom to seek a quieter space or some time out if this is available. This may be more challenging for younger pupils as they would most likely require an additional adult to escort them outside the classroom, which is not always available. Therefore space within the classroom or access to resources such as ear defenders, desk screens etc. may be beneficial. For older pupils, creating a system where they can communicate a need to leave the classroom would allow them to feel safe with the knowledge that this is always an option. This could be as simple as holding up a red card, putting their hand up, use of a mood bracelet or any other signal that the pupil feels comfortable with.

 Also be aware that during these challenging times, you may see some new issues arising within in your setting and amongst pupils that may not have previously displayed any sensory related behaviours before. There will be many changes that may trigger a response from pupils such as an unfamiliar classroom layout, an overwhelming scent of cleaning products/ anti-bacterial gel etc., an extensive amount of handwashing, the need for the teacher to talk louder because pupils are more spaced out and many more. It is important to remain

predictable and always explain why these new procedures are so important. In cases where things may be too distressing for a pupil and they are clearly unable to cope, look for alternative strategies that can still keep a pupil as safe as possible. For example if a pupil doesn't like washing their hands, experiment with different types of soaps, temperatures etc. or if a pupil finds the teachers voice to loud, change their seating position in the classroom.

Sensory seekers

During this time of social distancing, our sensory seekers will likely find the lack of social interaction in terms of hugging, deep pressure massage etc. particularly challenging. This will also likely be something that was able to continue at home where social distancing rules didn't apply. However, pupil and staff safety during this time is paramount and therefore it important to ensure that these pupils can be supported in the safest possible way. The best alternative would be through use of alternative sensory input that doesn't require direct contact, or where this is proving to be too difficult, staff should ensure that they have access to the appropriate PPE equipment such as gloves, aprons and in cases where pupils are known to spit or smear, face masks. For these pupils, it would be advisable to have an individual risk assessment in place to state the protective measures that are being implemented.

Some alternative strategies for sensory input that do not require direct contact include

- Rolling a gym/ peanut ball over the pupil to create some deep pressure
- Provide the pupil with weighted items to replicate the feel of a human touch such as a backpack filled with heavy items, weighted bean bags, weighted blankets (always seek advice from at Occupational therapist for appropriate weight guidelines)
- Use of a lycra sock or wrapping the pupil in blankets
- Use of a large stuffed toy etc. for the pupil to hug
- A vibrating cushion

Part 2: Sensory and Physical Needs

Physical Needs

For those pupils with physical needs, it is important to note that these pupils may return to school with issues that either were not present before school closures or that have declined significantly since the return to school. This may be down to the cancellation of appointments, lack of access to healthcare or less supportive equipment available at home e.g. a standing frame that may have stayed in school. Therefore it is important to firstly note any of these issues and contact parents to explore reasons as to why this issue has arisen. Check that parents have a plan or access to the appropriate support mechanism. It may be that school staff need to support families to make contact with professionals such as physiotherapy or

occupational therapy for advice. The staff of the Wolverhampton Outreach Team based at Penn Hall School may also be able to support with any queries relating to physical needs, so if staff are unsure and need further guidance call 01902 558371 or alternatively email k.rogers@pennhall.co.uk

Pupils with physical needs may also require a significant period of adjustment back into school life. For a full time wheelchair user, it is likely that they have not spent as much time in their wheelchair in the home environment and therefore a return to a full school day sitting in a wheelchair without a change of position may be a challenge. It would be beneficial to seek support from a member of the physiotherapy team, and where possible provide these pupils with a change of position. Staff supporting pupils that require moving and handling or personal care, will need to ensure that they are familiar with up to date guidance relating to Covid 19 and the use of PPE equipment.

Useful Documents

 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people

Part 2: Sensory and Physical Needs

OT Advice

The following advice has been prepared by the OT Service for Wolverhampton. For further guidance please visit:

http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/service.page?id=5aAmaHDZrTk

Preparation for schools:

- o Social distancing clearly marked with bright tape on floors throughout school
- o Improve access e.g. internal & external steps & ramps – rails, visual markings e.g. yellow line
- o Map of school displayed in corridors with 'you are here' clearly marked at child height
- o Clear signage for rooms around school, ways to travel marked on walls and floors
- o Cloakrooms – accessible pegs, lockers – well marked, good space between
- o Specialist seating – temporary loan of chairs ready for start of term between schools
- o Toilets – low level access, good supply of soap accessible to all, lever taps, paper towels or hand drier, signs to remind about handwashing, separate cubicle with rails at low level Freestanding steps, toilet frame can be purchased by schools

- Classroom – social distancing with desks facing the board, own stationery provided by school & labelled for each child, kept in a box on the desk
- Hall – rules for lunchtime queue or own sandwiches, seating at a distance, overflow to classrooms, organised rota for inside / outside on playground, wet play plans
- Pass cards – picture to communicate with teacher e.g. need help, leave class early, lift pass
- Markings on playground to support social distancing & use to structure playtime activities to reinforce importance of this & educational concepts too e.g. counting games
- Use OT programmes if available for an individual child
- 'Occupational Therapy Advice' booklet for all schools to support fine motor skills, sitting & concentrating, access to curriculum, alternative cutlery such as caring cutlery etc. – see attached

Physiotherapy: Preparation for Transition

It is important that education settings are aware of the specific support requirements to maximise motor function for each pupil, and that the support is given consistently. Each pupil who has physiotherapy needs has an individualised programme and this may include specialised equipment, such as walking aids. In most cases each pupil will have chance to use these at home in advance and will be familiar with them. Reliable practical arrangements made when planning to start school, ensuring that walking aids or splints are brought into school each day.

The Physiotherapist will also liaise directly to parents and plan collaboratively with the child/young person/ family /carers. This means that goals can be agreed which are realistic, and individualised. For example it is not always better to push physical activities to the limits, and a good rest/exercise balance is preferable. Physiotherapy often commences in the early months of life, and this means that children are well known to the physio team before they start school.

The physiotherapist is able to discuss with school the practical implications for each pupil's condition, for example: the effects of spasticity in Cerebral Palsy, and factors which cause variation.

Each condition is likely to vary throughout life, particularly after surgical intervention, or after a growth spurt. Physio support may need to be changed or increased at this time and can directly teach exercises/positioning to education staff.

Physiotherapy staff are available to give advice about safe and effective use of equipment/ adaptations for mobility, such as walking aids or wheelchair, and use of equipment to aid long term positioning such as standing frames or gaiters, adaptations to curriculum, including inclusive PE.

- Recommendations about rest exercise balance and how to enable this

- Physiotherapists will support transition between schools and from Paediatric service to adult services.
- Adjustments to school environment are outlined in OT element, but there should be additional consideration for private space if required for specific exercises/positioning.
- Physiotherapy can support risk assessment process for physical activities and support.
- If pupils have been absent from school for a long period of time there may be a significant effect on their stamina and physical ability, and this should be considered when planning the school day.

More detailed advice about readiness for each age range can be found at:
www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids

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Part 3: Language and Interaction

Autism (Primary)

It has been an extremely unsettling time over the past few months for our pupils. Pupils will be looking forward to going back to school and socialising with friends, enjoy getting back into a routine, and embrace their learning with their classmates. For some pupils it is also going to be a highly anxious time. Having already dealt with unprecedented changes to routines, it will have taken time to adapt. Now we can expect more changes with the reintegration back to school, especially as it is likely to look very different for everyone concerned. For the pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD this could be a very stressful and anxious time. They are going to be dealing with lots of different emotions and feelings and will most likely have many different questions.

So the question we need to ask is: How do we support our pupils with ASD when returning to school after COVID-19?

Preparing our pupils as best that we can during this time is going to be key to their successful transition back into school life. Some ideas on how to do this are set out below:

Discuss what is going to happen

Where possible make visits to the classroom at quieter parts of the day.

- o Make a copy of timetable for parents – weekly and yearly (broader) calendar so pupils know what to expect long-term, such as trips/half terms (they may be insecure about long-term events due to the sudden lockdown)
- o Use virtual tours of a new school on the internet. Staff to make contact with SENDCo and arrange a visit (only if appropriate)
- o Provide pupils with photos of any new staff they will encounter
- o Consider adding a video or at least a picture of any new layouts, especially different entrances, onto the school website for children to view from home before their first day
- o Talk about the process because this is something that is going to happen. Be open and answer any questions as honestly as possible. If you are not sure about something then say that you are not sure but you will try to find out.

Use of Visuals

- o Using visuals can be powerful. They offer reassurance, reduce anxieties, and they are concrete. They will let the pupil know exactly what they are going to be doing and where they need to be. Visuals should be used as much as possible.
- o They can be used in the form of a timetable so they know what is going to be happening throughout the school day. They can also be used at home to show the pupils when they will be attending school. In addition, when the next school holiday will be.
- o Getting to know the individual will inform on the format in which you decide to present visuals. Everyone is different and one size does not fit all.

Communication

Pupils will need time to process lots of information all at the same time. School will be very different to home and expectations will have changed.

- o Allow time for the pupils to process information.
- o Use limited language when talking to them. Always use their name first when you address them.
- o Give one instruction at a time.
- o Expect some regression initially – Pupils may appear to have lost skills when returning to school – if this is the case, it is likely that this will only be temporary and it's important to focus on their overall wellbeing and transition back to school life before rushing in to address any perceived regressions.
- o Time to reflect on/share lockdown experience – If pupils are able to, it may be a good idea to give opportunity for pupils to reflect on and share their own lockdown experiences. Everybody's experiences will have been different and so an emphasis on respecting these differences will also be important. Please see document 'My lockdown experience' for an example worksheet.

Anxieties/Emotional Regulation

- o Reduce demands and allow chill out time – Allow time throughout the school day where the pupils are given time to engage with their special interest whatever that may be. This will help to reduce anxieties.
- o Allow Space – If the pupil wants to sit on a chair while everyone else sits on the carpet, this is ok to do so. If pupils want to sit alone at lunchtime then this is also fine. By being in their own space, it will allow time for the pupil to reduce anxieties and it will offer them reassurance knowing that they will be able to do that.
- o Consistency- Probably one of the hardest things to maintain throughout this tricky time. Where possible inform the pupil of which staff are going to be in their classroom prior to their return to school (Verbally and/or visually).

- Establish a structured routine in the classroom, so the school days start the same way each day. Once a routine becomes predictable and familiar it will reduce anxieties.
- Recognise that we as adults and teachers have a greater capacity to do things differently. Try not to expect the pupil to conform to educational and social normalities, especially after such a potentially long absence from education
- Check in – Make time in the day to go and check in on the pupil. See how things are going and if they need time to talk allow them that time. This is their chance to tell you about their worries and anxieties and discussing resolutions together for a positive outcome. It is important for the pupil to know that there is someone available to them if they need to talk or just need time out.
- Expect an increase in stimming behaviours – You may notice pupils engaging in an increased amount of their usual self-stimulatory behaviours (such as handclaps, repetitive actions, echolalia etc.). Please allow them to engage in this as much as they need to – they are engaging in this behaviour as a means to self-regulate and reduce any anxieties they may be feeling.
- Have a set of emotion cards available to support pupils in speaking about their feelings.
- Use Social Stories to reduce anxieties.
- Create a happiness box in which special items from home are placed and used to comfort in time of difficulty.

Sensory regulation

It is important to consider the return to school may also mean sensory changes for some children. The pupils may have been in a very quiet environment at home and may have had more control over sensory input – the adjustment back into a busier, louder, brighter and bigger environment at school may be a bit of a shock to the sensory system. On the other hand, some pupils may have experienced increased sensory overload at home and may already to be in a state of sensory overload when arriving – both groups of pupils will need lots of opportunity for sensory breaks in order to keep themselves well regulated.

Calm and relaxed environment – Adjust the environment so it creates a calm and relaxed feeling for the pupil. Create chill out areas in your spaces where they are completely distraction free. Consider changing some displays around school so that they are less busy with a reduction in information. You may wish to consider more wellbeing and personal hygiene type displays.

Plan for sensory snacks – Have a plan in place before your pupils come back into school. You may decide to prepare a sensory box or schedule time for them to use certain equipment individually, as appropriate.

Further information on sensory needs can be found in our 'sensory and physical' document.

<u>Relationship building</u>

Having worked hard on building secure and trusting relationships with your pupils up until the school closures began, it may be disappointing for many to find that these relationships may need some nurturing and rebuilding. It will take very little time for this to happen if the right steps and considerations are given:

- o Be a motivator provider – reduce demands and take the opportunity where you can to engage in play or their own special interests with them.
- o Provide lots of praise and positive reinforcement
- o Get to know the individual – Take time to get to know your pupils. Have fun with them. Get to know their likes and dislikes. Get to know their routines and special interests. The more you know about the individual the more knowledge you will have when it comes to supporting them through their anxiety and worries.

We all need time to readjust to our working situations. For some this is going to take more time to process and understand.

It is important to note, that each child will have had different experience during this difficult time and we may not know the affect that this has had on them. They may have experienced such things as bereavement or a lost close relationships.

Allow pupils time to adapt, re-adjust and establish themselves in their environments. They need time to recover, understand what has happened and prepare for more changes that will happen at the start of the new academic year.

Be patient and take your time. There is no rush.

<u>Additional reading:</u>
<u>https://barrycarpentereducation.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/recovery-curriculum-loss-and-life-for-our-children-and-schools-post-pandemic.pdf</u>

Part 3: Language and Interaction

Autism (Secondary)

Covid 19 has brought huge challenges to all of our lives. Whilst at home young people with ASD may have spent much of their time focussing on their special interests. Home educating parents may have attempted to create structure and routine in order to encourage their child/ teenager to complete some of their schoolwork tasks, but this may have been unsuccessful

due to the changes of environment and the pure nature of autism and compartmentalizing e.g. schoolwork is for school.

Young people with ASD may have varied levels of understanding about the virus and the impact it has had on them and their lives. They may have difficulty in understanding the uncertainty of the situation and may have found the unexpected changes in routine difficult. They may have experienced a family member being poorly and may even have experienced bereavement. Young people with ASD may have difficulty with expressing how they feel about the many unexpected changes that have occurred due to the virus. Fear, frustration and anxiety may be expressed through challenging behaviour, which has not been seen before or in a long while. It also may result in withdrawal or dis-engagement.

Whilst at home for this extended period of time, relationships may have become strained, sensory needs may not have been met, anxiety may have been building over exams, which may not now be occurring or learning which has been missed, which may contribute to a rise in anxiety and discomfort.

Pupils may return to school anxious and uncertain about the changes again, getting back into a new routine, nervous about the levels of work expected, worried about 'coping' all day again, fearful about 'fitting in' once more, terrified about the pandemic still being present, overwhelmed to see and interact with their friends/ peers again, the list is endless.

Anxiety can affect both the mind and the body producing a range of symptoms categorised into psychological and physical. Psychological symptoms may include difficulty with concentrating, over thinking, obsessiveness with one subject, to name a few. Physically this may also present as headaches, fatigue, stomach upsets and behaviour outbursts.

We must consider though that being at home may have been a hugely positive experience for some of our young people with ASD. The need to 'conform' 'fit-in' and 'adapt' has not been present and they have been able to relax in the comfort of their own familiar surroundings, taking breaks when needed and ensuing that their sensory needs are appropriately met. Some may not have accessed schoolwork at all.

All of this obviously also creates its own difficulties as we attempt to return to school and some sort of new normality.

Whatever their personal experiences we must understand that our young people have in fact experienced loss. Loss of routine, structure, friendships, opportunity and freedom. We must not under-estimate the impact that this will have had on our young people.

As always we must remember that, all people with autism are unique and 'one-size' does not fit all, our pupils may all require differentiated approaches and have varying needs.

Many of our young people may return to school disengaged. Primarily we must provide time to recover from this experience. We must ensure that we promote and focus on building positive emotional well-being and mental health. Some students will not have the words to express their feelings so this will be shown in other ways, such as through behaviour that challenges.

We must restore our relationships with our young people. We must recognise the importance of this, plan and invest time in building those relationships. We must engage them as a learner once more and this takes time. It is important that our young people feel understood and that someone is listening to them and recognises their feelings.

We must make it explicitly clear to our students with ASD and their families that there has been a 'gap' in their learning and that we are addressing those gaps and working with them to close them. We must work hard to provide reassurances for them and plan for these gaps.

We must allow them space to rediscover themselves and find their voice and plan time and space in to enable them to share their emotions, concerns and experiences.

It is crucial that we continue to provide a range of personalised and appropriate coping strategies, including strategies to manage anxiety, and to aid self-regulation. We cannot expect all students to return to school and to pick up where they left off. The use of visuals to support emotional regulation and strategies such as the Zones of Regulation or 5 Point Scale could be used. The use of Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations to share information, develop greater social understanding and educate are valuable. Our young people may need a 'time-out' card or more frequent access to a safe and quiet place when they feel anxious or are overwhelmed with sensory stimuli. Links for further information on these strategies are included below.

In our attempts to re-engage our young people, think about how their special interests could be incorporated into the school day.

We can support our young people effectively by providing them with structure, making school a more predictable, accessible and safer place by building and adapting new routines. This may be through the use of scheduling, task lists, planners or checklists.

Visual supports also offer structure; the term visual support is wide ranging and encompasses a range of different ways to present information. The key message when using visual supports is that they must be personalised for the young person. Visual supports to explain what is going to happen, offer concrete information and can help to understand the subsequent steps of a situation. Simply colour coding work/ lessons/ tasks/ activities or numbering them can support a young person with their organisation. Prepare our young people for any changes through the use of visuals. Use timers to ensure that the young person knows what is expected of them and can monitor their own tasks/ activities, reducing their anxiety. In the same way, lists to help support independence again.

At this time, we may need to adjust our communication. Allowing additional processing time, or simplifying our communication. Using positive language and less language. Short and clear 'chunks'.

Consider the young person and their sensory needs, which may or may not be the same as they were prior to Covid-19. Make the environment more comfortable for them – this may be by providing ear defenders, allowing them to leave lessons 5 minutes earlier than others, allowing them to wear their hood over their ears in the corridor for example. Young people with ASD may experience a shift in sensory responses. They may return to school with

heightened alertness, which will leave them feeling overwhelmed, intense and exhausted. They may appear to be over sensitive to smells, noise, crowds in a way they were not before. Some students may have felt relief at the freedom to meet their sensory needs at home, for example by accessing the trampoline during the day or working in a quiet and calm room. Allow them time and space to relax and de-stress if needed. Some students may enjoy yoga or mindfulness activities.

In addition, young people who present with a demand avoidant profile are typically driven to avoid demands and expectations due to the anxiety-based need to be in control. For these pupils it is important to remember that even demands that are regular daily events can provoke extreme levels of anxiety. See:

https:// www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/classroom/pda.aspx

For more information on supporting these young people effectively.

Practical reminders - Summary:

- **Planning:** This is new to all of us. Transition needs to be built around the familiar. Draw on past experiences to help understand the new ones. Send resources home to gather information from young person and/or their family about their experience and how they feel about going back to school. Use colours if words are difficult to express their emotions. Create a mind-map. Use a Social Story or factual written piece in clear, direct language to explain what is happening. Students can refer back to this repeatedly when seeking constant reassurance. Use videos or photos to send home in advance or upload to the school website with visual information of how things look in preparation for returning.
- **Communication:** Some young people will have experienced a narrowing of their social and communication circle whilst being at home and will need extra support and planning to prepare for the shock of returning to school. Some will experience real trauma on returning to the communication rich environment of school. Plan to ease the demands by using visual resources, such as; lists, schedules, calendars – these can be used to share expectations and allow for processing time. Plan to build in times of quiet to prevent or ease sensory and emotional overload. This may take several weeks to build up resilience back to pre-Covid levels. Plan for eventualities and how these will be communicated, for example when another student coughs in class. This may need to be address by talking about safety, respect and the actual risks.
- **Flexibility:** The first few weeks back will need to have an element of 'wait and see'. Your young people may react differently to how you expect and their needs will be varied. Lots of reminders and practise for new systems and expectations will be needed. Do not leave it until the day of return to inform ASD students what to expect. Share information in advance to families to help prepare and support their young person.

Familiar – Planned – Flexible: students with ASD and/other SEND have always been at a disadvantage within the education system. This is an opportunity to do something good and lasting to make changes to your school approaches to how needs are met. If you keep these

young people at the heart of what you do when planning for returning to school – the rest of the pupil population will benefit too.

Useful links:

Carol Gray Social Stories https://carolgraysocialstories.com/

Social Stories and Comic strip conversations https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

Zones of Regulation http://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html

5 Point Scale https://www.5pointscale.com/

A free online series of video clips providing more advice and information to support with returning to school: https://www.schudio.tv/courses/preparing-autistic-send-children-for-going-back-to-school

Further reading and practical support for those ASD students experiencing anxiety: https://www.reachoutasc.com/blog/8-ways-to-help-autistic-pupils-manage-anxiety

Return to School Advice for the Reintegration of Children with SEND.

Part 4: Social, Emotional and Mental Health

SEMH (Primary)

'The anxious child is not a learning child'

Children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) generally have difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. The loss of routine and structure may have caused huge anxieties for some of our children. Particularly those with SEND and SEMH consequently having a big impact on their wellbeing.

There will be a wide range of experiences including loss, stressful home environment, prolonged absence of a close family members and living in fear. For some it may have been a more positive experience, but whatever the experience, many will be reluctant to leave their families. Given what we now know about the impact of trauma, it is clear that our schools will need to incorporate therapeutic approaches. Schools will need to provide a safe and nurturing environment ensuring those who are the most vulnerable have the wrap around care they need to build resilience - a complete recovery plan personalised to their needs.

We must not also assume that all children received the same level of input emotionally and / or educationally. Avoid statements about how far behind children may be in their learning, as this will only add to their anxiety. We need to first look at re building relationships not only between staff and children but also peer relationships.

Many will find getting back to school an emotional trauma in itself; so ensuring that staff are aware of how to manage these issues and how to support on an individual and wider basis will also be necessary. Supporting children who are volatile, nervous, scared, hyper-vigilant or withdrawn is something we will all need to be aware of and confident in doing.

School staff may wish to consider the following ideas – emotional support:

- o Holding celebrations/memorials to celebrate carers/NHS staff or simply the school community itself. It is important to make use of such opportunities to reinforce power and resilience to ensure that everyone feels safe and secure.

- o Relationships need to be the centre of all we do. Ensuring that we connect with those who find it the hardest to connect – kindness will need to rule!

- Keeping lines of honest communication open - sharing our experiences and feelings will be important for all of us

- Flexibility will also be needed - some will require more support and more specialised input

- We need to make sure that assessment processes are used to identify those most at risk and to act at the outset to provide the support that they may need

- Flexibility around attendance and engagement – reduce demands, engage in play, use special interest and motivators to engage and reduce anxiety

- Listening authentically and with empathy needs to permeate all we do. Children may feel frightened and overwhelmed by leaving home – particularly regarding the dangers of contracting the virus. This is the essential therapeutic approach. It is healing in itself – to talk, to feel heard and to feel safe. We need to provide time for this as and when needed.

- Reinforcing safety rules, boundaries and consistent approaches - new rules around social distancing need to be phrased as do's rather than don'ts as this helps to reduce anxiety by framing these as positives. Order, calm and reassurance need to be paramount.

- Giving time to reflect on what we value is also important given that most of us will have spent some time doing just that during these stressful times. Children need to talk about this too. What is it they want now from school and how can it be better, more empathic, more inclusive, kinder? We are creating a 'new normal' so maybe this will be the chance to make it better than the old one.

- Encourage children to share what they have learned at home and what activities they enjoyed- what are their likes and dislikes. Sharing lock down experiences will be an important part of the process.

- Provide lots of praise and positive reinforcement – praise for effort as well as achievement.

- Build opportunities for success; building children's confidence to learn again.

Practical approaches:

Visual support- using visuals aids is hugely beneficial. They help children understand what they are doing now and what will come next. This offers reassurance and helps to reduce anxieties about their day – these can also be used to prepare for any changes. Visual supports reinforce verbal language and remain as a consistent reminder.

Structure and routine- where possible stick to familiar routines and prepare children for any significant changes.

Free play / less structured times – these may cause anxieties for some children-
- Plan for more structure during unstructured times for children we already know struggle
- Choice boards – these visually show what activities are available but still provide the opportunity to make independent choices
- Planned activities - team games during outdoor play, lunch time, etc.
- Interest clubs e.g. art club, Lego therapy
- Buddy system

Sensory regulation- children's experiences will vary greatly. Some may have been in busy, loud environments while others in quieter ones. Whatever their experience we need to plan for sensory regulation to include:
- Sensory snacks / breaks
- Sensory / safe space
- Sensory boxes / Fiddle / stress toys
- Regular movement breaks to include physical activity to improve mental wellbeing

Interaction- turn taking games and shared attention to encourage positive interactions and re build friendships e.g. board games, Lego therapy.

Social stories – personalised to meet the needs of individual children to support understanding, specific needs and anxieties.

Positive approach to learning-
- Phrase correction as positive instructions- '……., you've nearly finished well done! Come and do the last bit' rather than 'you still haven't finished!'
- Provide opportunities for errorless learning e.g. finished examples of work or a picture of a word they may need to read
- Some children may struggle with correction and it may be beneficial to provide some opportunities for self-correction e.g. a list of correct spellings
- Sequence of steps during tasks / task lists
- Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable chunks
- Multi- sensory approach

Emotional regulation- plan for work around Emotional Literacy - use 1:1, small groups, circle of friends to explore emotions and feelings e.g. using storybooks that depict emotions - encourage children to describe how the characters are feeling, etc. This will help increase their vocabulary of emotions and allow them to better express their own emotions. There are lots of fun activities - emotion board games, feelings bingo, emotions fishing game, matching emotion cards that help to develop these skills. Think about calming strategies - emotion board 'I feel…. I choose' or emotion key ring / lanyard to include personalised coping strategies e.g. go to my safe space, sensory toy, drink of water, draw a picture.

Emotion Coaching - is a communication strategy which supports children to self-regulate and manage their stress responses.

Through repetitive, consistent and empathetic Emotion Coaching, the ability of a child to regulate their emotions is promoted.

Key Elements are involved in Emotion Coaching:

- Becoming aware of the child's emotions
- Recognising the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching
- Listening empathetically, validating the child's feelings
- Helping the child find words to label the emotion
- Setting limits and explore strategies to solve the problem at hand

http://www.emotioncoachinguk.com

Part 4: Social Emotional and Mental Health

SEMH (Secondary)

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are a type of special educational needs in which children /young people (CYP) have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations.

Due to the Covid crisis, the world will be a very different place for our learners when they return to school and schools will need to support their emotional health more than ever. This will be most apparent in our learners with SEMH needs.

As learners, parents and teachers consider a return to school, school leaders and staff will be aware that everyone returning to school will be in a different place to where they were before lockdown, both academically and emotionally. Schools must take this opportunity to make wellbeing a priority and lay a strong foundation of support that responds to these changing needs. Putting wellbeing first, can help the whole school community to recover and can allow learners to thrive.

A whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing is central to achieving these aims. Schools will need to provide a framework that supports the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of both students and staff. It will need to recognise the contribution of parents, families and the wider school community, including the external that support schools in their duty of care to CYP.

<u>Prepare Learners</u>

Learners will need time to focus on their return and have time to adjust to the fact that they will be returning. They may also be starting at a new school when transition isn't possible in the summer term.

Where possible, provide the learner with photographs of the area that they will be working in, so that they have some familiarity before their return or create and share a virtual tour of the school. Some learners may need a social story weeks in advance, with photos of new key staff they will be working with. Allow them to ask questions and where there is doubt about responses, be honest about this.

From the outset, it is important to establish clear boundaries, both in terms of behaviour, but also in terms of the new expectations they will be obliged to conform to (e.g. social distancing, hand washing etc.) Provide these in simple and direct language and reinforce with either visual or written support.

<u>Communicate with honesty.</u>

Learners should be encouraged to look to the future positively. If a CYP asks questions, do not make unrealistic promises about when activities will resume or what the future will hold. Many adults do not know the answers themselves and are also struggling to put this situation into some sort of context. Allow your learners to see that you don't always know the answers, but that you will endeavour to find an outcome to what they have asked.

When engaging with learners about their behaviour or about the current circumstance it is also important to keep your own emotions in check. Verbal confrontations are common in challenging situations, keeping yourself calm will feed into the emotions of the CYP. It is important to remember you are dealing with learners who have real difficulty with understanding and regulating their emotions. They will show behaviours that are illogical and hurtful at times. Please do not take their words or actions too personally, no matter how tempting it may be. Maintaining the same calm and consistent approach, whilst maintaining respectful boundaries, will more likely build a successful relationship with them.

<u>Focus on positivity</u>

Create a diary or jar of positivity and each day, write down something positive that has happened and share this with others.

Lean on and allow for positive relationships. If a CYP has good relationship with a peer or adult allow them access to this relationship. Nevertheless, we all need a break sometimes, so plan for an occasional change of face. Even if you have a very positive relationship with a SEMH learner, too much time can be damaging.

<u>Discuss worries and concerns</u>

Many CYP will have a heightened state of worry and anxiety during this time, sometimes this is exacerbated by the worries of adults around them. It is important that learners discuss their worries and anxieties and feel free to do so when they need to.

Encourage your learners to take exercise daily as this has been shown to help greatly, maybe discuss their worries or anxieties whilst on a walk, practice deep breathing and meditation, read or have quiet time to reflect, but not so much time alone that they internalise their worries. If a CYP has difficulty telling you their worries, allow them to write them down, or illustrate them in cartoon form. CYP need to know that you are there to listen to them, even if you cannot provide the answers.

<u>Promote routine</u>

For many CYP, the routine of school helps to ease their anxieties on a daily basis. Without this routine, they may have been struggling at home. However, returning to the long school day and a very strict routine could be a step too far for some of these learners.

For many of our learners with SEMH needs, the Covid-19 lock down will have broken their usual sleep routines leading some of them to live an almost nocturnal life style in which they sleep most of the day and either game or are on social media late into the night. These CYP will return to school tired, unable to concentrate and completely out of routine. Starting the school day slightly later for these learners may be of benefit.

Challenging learners that fall asleep in lessons can often lead to unnecessary embarrassment and consequential confrontation. For a CYP that frequently displays this sort of behaviour, it is better to provide a private space that they can go to for a short (and agreed) time period and to send them there discretely. Be careful not to allow the learner to develop reliance on this strategy and place clear expectations on them that this will not be a repeated occurrence.

Wherever possible be predictable! CYP with SEMH needs like predictability; they like consistent routines and often do not respond well to surprise. However, this needs balancing with flexibility and an acceptance that a 'one size fits all' approach to the transition period is not going to work for some CYP. Consider instead a phased re-entry through a shortened day, beginning with core subjects and favourite lessons to attempt to motivate and engage.

<u>Support in managing emotions</u>

Many CYP with SEMH needs have real difficulty in expressing and managing their emotional reactions. This can result is disproportionate responses. These learners need us to provide them with two strands of emotional regulatory support. Firstly, they need us to proactively teach them to manage their emotions and secondly, they need us to manage them for them at times when they are unable to do so for themselves.

Schools should spend time developing the emotional literacy of these learners, with key staff allocated to focus on delivering planned content. For example, see the Outreach WELL programme here:
http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/service.page?id=v_Q6e9DtRgE

Allocated staff also need to reflect restoratively on any incidences that have occurred using a restorative script such as that given below or the PIL app.

1. What happened?

2. What were you thinking / feeling at the time?

3. What do you think / feel about it now?

4. Who has been affected by this? In what way?

5. How could things have been done differently?

6. What has been the hardest thing for you?

7. What needs to be done to put it right?

Staff also need to use de-escalation techniques to acknowledge and reflect on the emotions being communicated by the CYP through their behaviour. This can be achieved using the following strategy:

1. Acknowledge that the CYP is experiencing difficulty in managing their emotions

2. State what you can see physically

3. State what you believe the CYP to be experiencing physiologically

4. Label the emotion and describe

5. Give possible causes

6. Ask for validation

7. Lead to a solution

The 'emotion coaching' approach outlined in the Primary section of this guide could also be used.

Some CYP with SEMH needs will have very specific adaptations that they will need us to make. The section below outlines actions staff may wish to take on the return of CYP with a specific SEMH need.

Anxiety

Anxiety takes many forms but the types most likely to manifest during the post covid-19 return to school period are: General Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorders and Separation Anxiety. It is important to remember that there will be some learners who are aware that they experience anxiety based difficulties and will be able to articulate this, whereas others will display this through their behaviours and will need staff to recognise and offer support accordingly.

As with the overview given above, preparing learners effectively for the transition is essential and this can be achieved through clear communications and the promotion of routine. However, the points below give some ideas of specific things staff can do to ease the transition of very anxious CYP.

- o Avoid placing emphasis on 'catching up with work'. Initially agree and set goals that are linked with personal wellbeing and not academic attainment.
- o On the first day, make sure that the individual knows which member of staff will greet them at the door. Have this person call the day before to say 'looking forward to seeing you' and to see if there is anything specific that would help with the transition.
- o Build discussion times into the start of every day, preferably with a known and trusted adult and have a pass made ready so that if an exit from the classroom is necessary it is done in a way that is permissible.
- o Allow regular breaks from learning. Make these structured and timed, so that the learner is quickly ready to return to learning.
- o Teach the learner about the cycle of 'thoughts, feelings and behaviours'. Encourage them to record what thoughts or feelings are driving their anxious behaviours so that issues can be tackled.
- o Teach deep breathing strategies and provide a key ring prompt to remind learner of these.
- o For CYP who are experiencing attachment difficulties, allow a small number of transitional objects from home. Agree a place for these to be kept safely in school and time out with these items in an agreed area as required.

Self-harm

Concerns about a CYP's self-harm may have been raised prior to or during the Covid-19 lock down, or may be raised on return to school. Different actions may be required in each of these scenarios.

Learner already known to self-harm: It is important to contact home to discuss the degree to which the learner displayed self-harming behaviours during the lock down period. This will give critical insight into whether factors in school influence the level of self-harm being displayed.

Learner has begun to self-harm during lock down period: It is important not to assume that a return to school will 'fix' this behaviour. Staff should be prepared to function on the assumption that this behaviour is likely to continue and take actions as shown below until they are confident that this is not the case.

Learner has begun to self-harm since returning to school: Actions should be undertaken to attempt to understand the motivator for the behaviours. Is this linked to the return to school? Are there factors in school that need to change? Is there an alternative known cause?

- Pay close attention to learner's behaviour (e.g. covering scars, wearing long sleeves even in warm weather, unwillingness to change for PE, repetitive behaviours, unexplained injuries, general secrecy)
- Involve a school counsellor and the CAHMs service at the earliest opportunity.
- 'Check in' with them regularly and in an unscheduled manner, so that a genuine picture of their wellbeing can be gathered.
- Reduce work demands/pressure and increase social time
- If a break pass is provided, this should be linked with an agreed person for the learner to go to if they leave the room and an alert system should be in place to secure this transition.
- Try not to panic or overreact as this can worsen the situation. Remain calm and listen carefully to what support you can give.
- Provide some sensory alternatives (elastic band, ice, tearing paper, punch bag, hands in cold water, treadmill, spiky sensory ball, nail brush, deep pressure massage).
- Create a sooth box, which contains some of the above alternatives, and enable to the learner to access this in a safe space with adult support.

Depression

Depression can be diagnosed in three ways: Major Depressive Disorder (short waves of depression), Persistent Depressive Disorder (permanent state of depression) and Bipolar Disorder (moving between depressive and manic states). However, we are all also mindful of CYP with whom we work that display characteristics of depression but as yet remain undiagnosed. Whether formally diagnosed or not, the key to supporting these CYP in their return to school is to consistently place their emotional wellbeing above their academic attainment, as the latter cannot be delivered if the former is not addressed. Essential strategies for these learners include:

- Create a timetable of support. It is essential that these learners know which people are there to support them and when and where they can access these individuals.

- Check in regularly and at unplanned times, dropping into lessons, finding them on the playground or in the lunch hall.

- Identify mindful or relaxing activities that work for the individual and make sure these are available on request.

- Identify safe spaces and timetable when they will be available.

- Discuss ways of asking for help and agree a strategy that works for the individual.

Useful links

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-CYP-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-CYP-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?fbclid=IwAR2UEHXxCmeKozXiqutQlAWhaTHnc7GWVzQIoOngr2w_Z-O2pfLlC4EqEi0#experiencing-grief-or-bereavement

https://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/uploads/chronicler/document/document/1620/PSHE_and_SEMH_School_Resources_4_May.pdf

https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/cottenham-primary-school/UploadedDocument/68b9377d959e474e8808ddaf5bceab88/coronavirus-social-story.pdf

https://www.semh.co.uk/types-semh-intervention/

http://www.emotioncoachinguk.com

Part 4: Social, Emotional and Mental Health

ADHD

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or attention deficit disorder (ADD), is a neurodevelopmental disorder. It affects and impairs how people think and act. People with ADHD usually have problems with focusing and remembering what is said or done around them.

Pupils who have a diagnosis of AD(H)D or display signs of AD(H)D but do not have a diagnosis, will need careful consideration when returning to school:

Lack of exercise

Pupils may have experienced a substantial reduction in physical exercise during lockdown and may be feeling incapable of sitting for long periods of time or on the other hand feel very lethargic and disengaged. In both situations, it is important the child has more opportunity than usual to participate in movement.

Incorporating energy breaks before and after each lesson will be essential if children are to have a successful day. Although some staff worry this will disengage the class research suggests it more often than not has the complete opposite effect reengaging, refreshing and refocussing all the class not just children with AD(H)D.

Useful sites for energy breaks are Go Noodle (Banana Banana Meatballs, Milkshake and Pop Si Ko are firm primary school favourites) and Just Dance exercises which can be found on You Tube, such as Eye of the Tiger and Timber all of which take no more than 5 minutes.

<u>Changes in medication</u>

Whilst children are at home, some parents feel they do not need or want to give their child the prescribed dose of medication. Although this is understandable, it can have a detrimental effect when returning to school. The medication works by levelling out the 'peaks and troughs' of the day so without it the child may experience fluctuations in hyperactivity and/or feel unable to concentrate. In this situation, it is imperative the medication is returned back to normal dose and given at the correct times of the day, as stated by the doctor. It may take some time for the medication to enter the system and for the child to feel the 'benefit' so allowances should be made during this time, such as setting shorter tasks, giving breaks from writing and wherever possible setting practical activities.

<u>Change in wellbeing</u>

Children often develop a healthy self-esteem through a consistent routine of achievement and praise. As our children have had a long period away from school, they may be feeling anxious about returning and incapable of concentrating and thus achieving. Positive reinforcements are key to reducing anxiety and enabling the child to feel good about themselves once more. Individual reward systems work best alongside whole class rewards and the reward should be daily rather than weekly as, at this time a weekly reward may feel unachievable for the child.

'Catch me being good' books are also a useful strategy. Staff provide the child with a book in which a close member of staff writes at least five positive comments about the child each day. The book is taken home and shared with parents/carers, then returned the next day. This strategy has been shown to have a positive impact on how the child views themselves and lessens the urge to make the wrong choices in favour of positive comments.

Wherever possible, pupils with AD(H)D would benefit from a shorter school day and phased return, so that they can gradually build up their ability to cope back in the school setting. It is also important to note that research shows that 80% of children with AD(H)D also have attachment issues. The break in schools has the potential to have broken down relationships with the child, so a period of rebuilding will be required. This will be especially difficult from a physical distance, so before the child returns prepare some fun activities that will involve your entire attention and affirm your relationship with the child. An example of this is the game 'something different'. Stand opposite the child (2m apart). Ask the child to close their eyes. Change one small things about yourself (e.g. rollup a sleeve or undo a shoelace). The child opens their eyes and tries to spot the difference.

For children that need a lot of reassurance, you may also wish to prepare a 'little hug'. You can buy these online, but I have also made my own by just cutting out two little arms and hands on a small piece of paper, adding on a short and personal message to the child.

As well as rebuilding relationships with yourself, a child with AD(H)D will also most likely need the opportunity to rebuild relationships with their peer group. Their tendency towards spontaneity may mean that some of these interactions are inappropriate and reminders of how we engage socially with our friends will need to be given regularly.

Social distancing will be difficult for a lot of us but paired with AD(H)D this can bring more difficulties. As mentioned above, children with AD(H)D can behave spontaneously, therefore potentially breaking social distancing rules. Gentle reminders at the beginning of each lesson to the whole class and then again to the individual child will help to keep the issue at the forefront of the child's mind. Where possible display visual reminders. Encourage others to help each other to remember the rules in a friendly rather than an accusing manner.

Seating plan

It may help a child to consider the seating plan. As classes are now expected to have a reduced number and for social distancing to be in place, consider placing the child at a desk near the door so they will feel less 'caged in' and able to leave the room without disrupting others.

Managing behaviour

As with all children, positive behaviour management is essential for children with AD(H)D. The bullet points below give reminders of the strategies that are most likely to have a positive impact on behaviour.

- Reward good behaviour - Rewards and incentives should always be used before punishment to motivate a student.
- Keep expectations consistent - Classroom rules should be clear and concise
- Limit distractions - Students with ADHD are susceptible to distractions, so it can be beneficial to seat them away from sources of classroom disruption
- Breakdown tasks into manageable pieces – Do not overload the child with a high volume of work, break it down into small sections if required
- Create structure - Make a routine for your child and stick to it every day

o Define the rules, but allow some flexibility - Remember that children with ADHD may not adapt to change as well as others

Part 4: Social Emotional and Mental Health

Bereavement

Bereavement is the period of sadness and loneliness that we experience from a loss. Typically this loss is the death of a loved one; however, the loss can be due to other factors, for example, it is possible for someone to experience bereavement as a result of losing contact with someone close to them. It is also possible for children to experience bereavement when their best friend moves away

Most young children are aware of death, even if they don't understand it. Death is a common theme in cartoons and television, and some of their friends may have already lost a loved one. However, experiencing grief first hand is a different and often confusing process for children.

The length of bereavement often depends on numerous factors, including:

o Age at the time of the loss
o Reason for the loss
o Closeness to those lost
o Support systems in place
o If there was anticipation for the loss

How can we help?

o It is important to recognise that all children will grieve differently. They need to know that this is ok and that there are no expectations on them of how they 'should' grieve.

o Acknowledge their loss. This does not need to be done repeatedly, but the child needs to see that you are not afraid to talk about their loss and that you are willing to engage with them about it if they need you to.

o When you judge the time to be right, encourage questions from the child. Hold a group discussion, in whatever style is familiar to the child, and let them know that everyone feels sad when a tragedy happens

o Give a child that is grieving the opportunity to express their feelings. This could be through art or drama, through quiet time or time with a close member of staff. Equally it is important to recognise that grief can manifest (even in adults) as anger. As always, remember behaviour is communication and before you respond to a

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child's behaviour take a second to consider what they might be showing you through the things they are doing.

- o Executive function challenges – challenges that focus on Self-awareness, Inhibition, Non-verbal working memory, Verbal working memory, Emotional self-regulation, Self-motivation and planning and problem solving can all be impacted on by grief, simply because 'the mind is elsewhere'. Be prepared for this and use scaffolded approaches and repeated instructions as required.

- o Be direct - When discussing death, never use euphemisms. Kids are extremely literal, and hearing that a loved one "went to sleep" can be scary.

- o Stick to routines. When one acts within a routine, we think less about our actions and free up more of the brain to think about other things, thus allowing the child to process their feelings and experiences.

- o Try and keep a close dialect with parents and help monitor their behaviour – report anything you find concerning

- o Nurtureuk.org have a bereavement box that contains 60 activity cards for use with children that have experienced a bereavement. The Outreach Service have this resource to loan if required. Please visit: http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/service.page?id=402xj1K2z5k

- o Therapeutic approaches should always be made available to children that have experienced a bereavement. As teachers, we have to remember that we are not counsellors (although it often feels like we are!) and it is important that we be ready to refer to external agencies that can offer specific professional support.

- o The revised RSHE curriculum focuses closely on wellbeing and developing emotional literacy. This will be a useful tool in providing us with a suitable curriculum at this difficult time. For staff that would like additional support in this area, the Outreach Team provide WELL (Wellbeing and Emotional Literacy Leaders), which can be accessed via the SEMH page of our website here: http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/service.page?id=v_Q6e9DtRgE

- o Provide the class or group with opportunities to write or draw about 'special people I know or have known'.

- o 'Beyond Words' is a series of books that tackle the topic of the loss of a very close loved one (titles include 'when mum died' and 'when dad died'). The Outreach Service have copies of these in our loan library.

http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/service.page?id=402xj1K2z5k

- Discuss the importance of crying. Look at images of a range of people crying so that it is clear that all people cry. Discuss reasons why we might cry and most importantly, what we can do to support someone who is crying. Proactively teaching the group to empathise with each other and to understand that often the upset individual just needs someone to listen, not to advise.

- Create a topic based on the theme of 'memories'. Find out about things other people remember, read books from historical periods, interview people about their lived experiences and learn about the grief experienced by others.

- Teach about the stages of grief and how going through this cycle eventually leads to healing, but that there is no set timeline to this.

- Provide the bereaved child with a book that they can turn into a memory book. Give them a special place in the room to keep the book (e.g. top draw of your desk). Encourage them to add photographs, drawings and memories as well as recording how they feel about their loss.

- The child bereavement network have a range of resources to support children who have specifically been bereaved by the Covid-19 pandemic. Visit here to find out more: http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx

Even children that have not experienced a bereavement may return to school displaying unusual behaviours that present in a similar manner. By being away from school, many children will have lost their sense of security and safety, relationships with trusted adults and closeness with their peers. Children may have been scared by the things they have seen on the news, be fearful to be in school or worried about breaking the social distancing rules that have been put in place. Returning to the changed circumstances of schools, may serve to further reinforce this sense of unease.

Wherever possible, we must provide pupils with a sense of safety in school. This can be achieved by providing clear and simple rules to follow, providing increased time for social communication, extending break and lunch times, sharing lock down experiences and most importantly rebuilding trust and close bonds with staff.

For further information on any of the above or for support on reintegrating a child with SEND, please contact the Wolverhampton Outreach team by emailing: egriffiths@pennfields.com