

COVID-19 transition back to school

Supporting your child with special educational needs

THINK PREPARATION

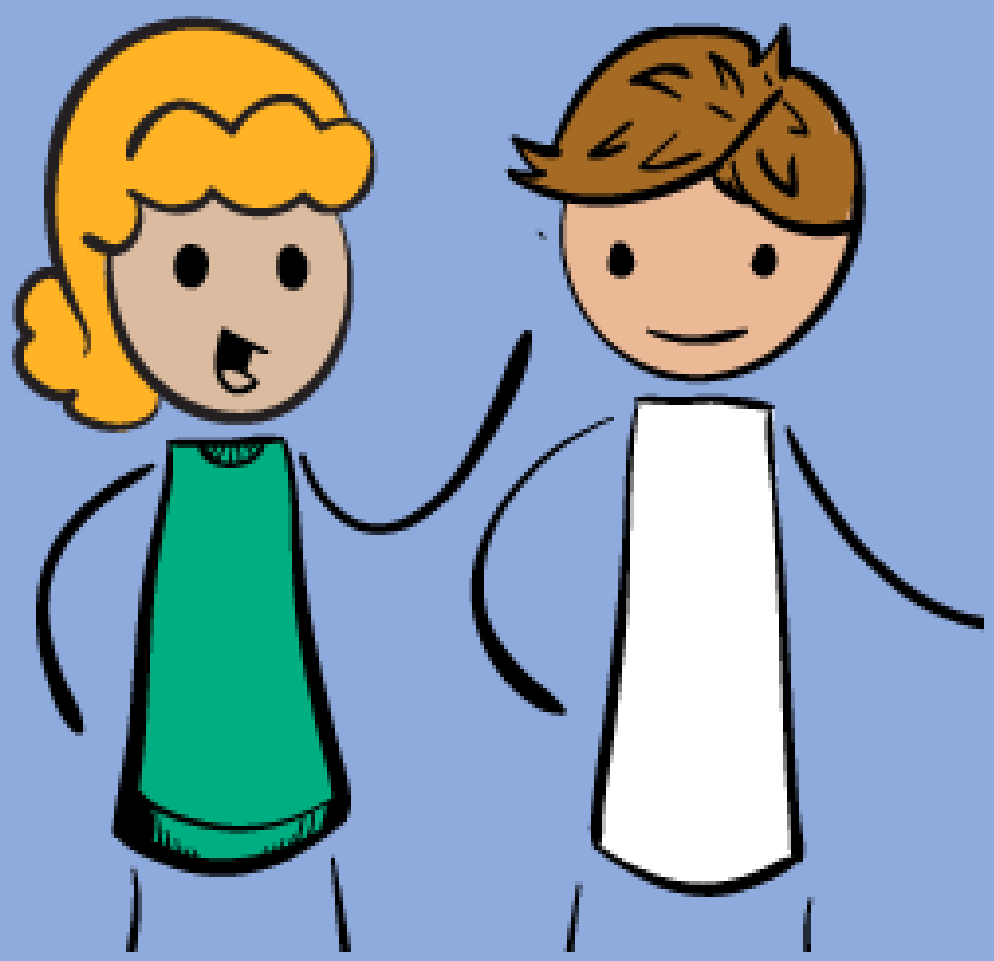
Children with special educational needs often find change difficult and will need time to adjust to going back to school.

- Give them as much notice as possible of changes including how they will be helped
- Talk to and plan with school about what support will be in place
- Use a calendar to mark down the days until they return to school
- Use social stories
- Try to get taster visits to school before other children come back if possible
- Talk to your child about what they may expect when they go back to school and some of the activities they may be doing



THINK RELATIONSHIPS

For a child returning to school, having a strong relationship with someone that they feel safe with can be vital, even for children who may struggle with social interaction.

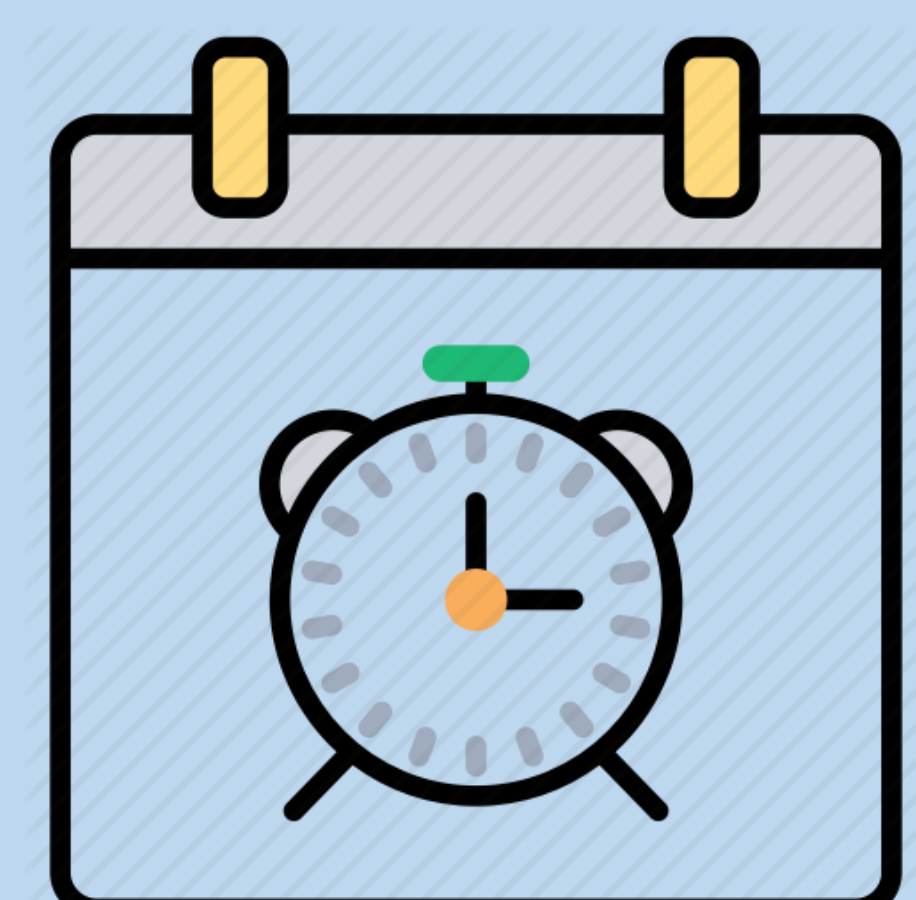


- Try to speak to the child's teacher or key worker before transition
- Talk with your child in terms of what staff members there will be in school to support them (use photos if possible)
- Remind them of friends they will see and activities they will do with them (if appropriate)

THINK STRUCTURE

Children with additional needs often thrive on structure, routine and may struggle with the sudden change to their day.

- Have a clear routine for school mornings – practice beforehand!
- Use visual timetables and 'now-and-next' boards
- Go through their school timetable with them beforehand if possible including which days they are going if part time.



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THINK SENSORY

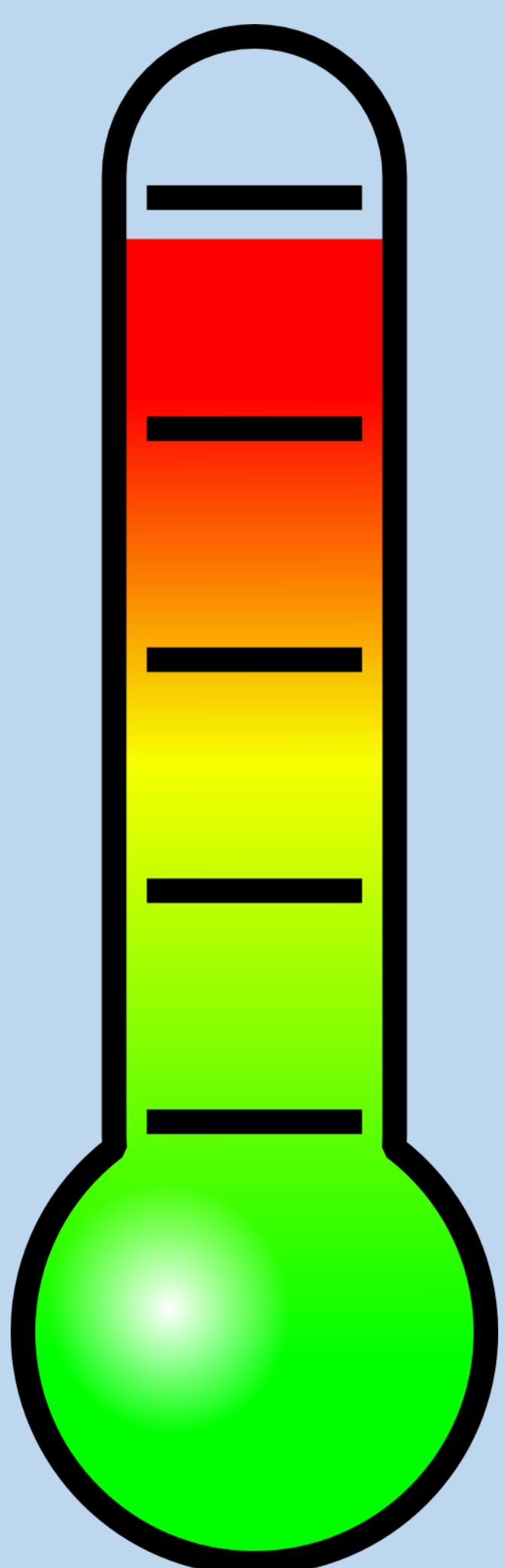
Anxiety will be high during transition back to school and supporting the sensory needs of your child can help reduce this.

- Communicate with school if your child has any specific sensory needs that have changed during lockdown eg. obsessive hand washing, anxiety about the virus
- Use a sensory toy as a transitional object for them to take to school (e.g. a fiddle toy, stress ball)
- Plan with your child what they can do to help with specific sensory difficulties in school



THINK EMOTIONS

All children will have many different feelings about going back to school, perhaps also related to worries about COVID-19, or feelings of loss and bereavement.



- Be prepared for emotions to come out in other ways such as changes in behaviour, eating, sleeping
- Talk to them about how they are feeling, help them to name their emotions and to realise that these feelings are 'normal'
- Get them to draw how they feel about going back to school and what they are looking forward to
- Use visual prompts such as feelings thermometers or emotions faces cards to help them put into words how they are feeling
- After the first day reduce stimulation and demands – they may well be overwhelmed and exhausted!

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THINK SUCCESS

You have already helped your child with many difficult transitions in the past!



- Think what worked for them in previous transitions back to school (e.g. summer holidays)
- Build on any positives that have come out of being in lockdown
- Talk in terms of what they like in school

THINK YOU!

The COVID-19 lockdown has been a difficult process for any parent, especially when your child has additional needs. Looking after yourself means you can be there even more for them.

- Recognise how far you have come and what you have achieved
- Take some time for yourself
- Think of what helps your emotional wellbeing – and reward yourself, you deserve it!



Further information

Sheffield Children's Hospital COVID-19 resources:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/patients-and-parents/coronavirus-resources-for-children-and-families/>

This guide should be read alongside guidance produced for all parents and available on the Sheffield local offer:

<http://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer>