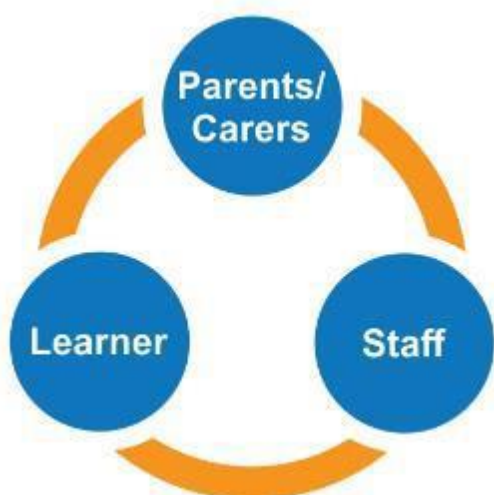


Highland Guidance for Parents and Carers on their Child's Return to School

In a recent survey of parents in Highland, 53% said they were worried about their child returning to school, but interestingly, far fewer children were worried (26%). What parents are looking for is reassurance about their child's safety and information about the curriculum and your child's head teacher will provide this before the pupils return to school in August.

We have never experienced anything like this "lockdown" before but we know that it has had an impact on all families across Highland and each one has experienced it in a different way. Simply being in lockdown has been a major transition in children's lives. As they prepare to return to school, they will be faced with yet more change and uncertainty. The antidote to these concerns will be to provide nurturing environments and positive relationships both at home and school and to provide the 'social buffering' that we know can support individuals and help them cope and build their own resilience following adversity.



You and your children's teachers know your children well and you will be able to provide them with the reassurance they need.

The British Psychological Society suggests that parents, carers, teachers and other professionals supporting children can help by asking children:

- How can we feel safe in school, what ideas do you have about things like how do we make sure everyone washes their hands?
- What sort of feelings are you having about school now?
- What have been your experiences of education at home? What was good? Are there things that you would like to continue with?

Some schools have surveyed their pupils and found out some of what your children are thinking. They will continue to involve them in the planning for the return to school.

'With a return to school there will be increased levels of anxiety for everyone including children, BUT we cannot pathologise what is a NORMAL response to an ABNORMAL situation. We know what works - trusted adults, reassurance, predictability, good breathing, social connection. Being present counts. The good relationships that are there will buffer against stress.'
Dr Michelle McMahon

'An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behaviour'

Viktor Frankl



A Recovery Curriculum

Barry Carpenter has identified key aspects of a recovery curriculum that Highland schools are familiar with:

Relationships – we can reach out to families and use our relationships to cushion the discomfort of returning.

Community - recognise that the curriculum will have been based at home and in the community for a long period of time - listen to what has happened in this time.

Curriculum – all children will feel like they have lost time in learning and we must guide them in how we address these gaps together.

Learning – children will have been learning in different ways in

lockdown - it is vital that we make the skills for learning in a school environment explicit to our children, to reskill and rebuild their confidence as learners.

Space – to be, to rediscover self, and to find their voice in continuing their learning.

The five pillars of recovery



Safety



Calm



Connectedness



Self and community efficacy



Hope

With thanks to COVENTRY special educational needs and disability (SEND) support service

Key Messages for Parents and Carers

- All human beings have psychological and emotional needs for safety, routine and opportunities to make connections with other people. It is understandable that you will be anxious at this time.
- How beginnings and endings are managed is important for our wellbeing and our sense of belonging. Together we will support your children back to school.
- It is important for your children to re-establish relationships with their teachers and friends.
- We can reduce their anxiety by fostering a calm sense of security – at home and at school.
- We can acknowledge what they have learned while out of school. Use specific praise to tell them what you admire about them
- We know that some children with ASN will require a risk assessment, with careful planning that is personalised to their needs.
- Your own emotions will be shaped by your recent and current experiences, your skills and your temperament – just like your child.
- Continue to look after your own emotional needs – you will be supporting the emotional and psychological safety of your child.

Just Ask

This enquiry line is for our parents, carers, children, young people, and those who work with them.

Please call us on:
07785 477686

The phone line is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1pm - 4pm

Staff usually available are:

Dietitians,
Educational Psychologists,
Occupational Therapists,
Physiotherapists,
Primary Mental Health Workers,
Speech and Language Therapists,
School nurses & Pre-school home visiting teachers.