

Supporting children and young people to return to school.

An increased sense of anxiety: Children and Young People (C&YP) feel anxious and worried in times of:

- uncertainty
- perceived / potential threats.
- a sense of too much responsibility and
- feelings of being out of control.

All of these have been prevalent over the last year before and during the lockdown and school closures.

These factors are likely to continue following the reopening of schools.

A. Supporting children and young people: A recommended approach to listening and responding to a pupil's anxiety.

When? If possible, create a time to listen to a C&YP whenever they share that they are feeling worried or anxious. NB Try and avoid times when you are feeling anxious or distracted

How? Reassure pupils that it is understandable and perfectly natural that they are feeling anxious. Acknowledge and legitimise their fears. Try not to minimise them by saying things like, "It will be alright". We do not know that it will be.

- **Listen carefully** so that you have an accurate understanding of what is making them anxious. Open questions may help them to explore / recognise their own feelings.
- **Gently and carefully correct any misconceptions** that they may have. Ensure that you do this by referring to facts rather than opinions.
- **Recognise simple and practical things that they can do to help themselves manage their anxiety.** Help the C&YP to be able to feel in control where they can – i.e. washing their hands and social distancing.
- **NB Ensure that they do not take on responsibility for things out of their control:** remind them that this is the job of doctors, the school, and the government etc

B. Five Psychological principles of transition

Psychological Principle	Top tips
Sense of belonging and connectedness.	Talk positively about school and the support they have received. Remind pupils of staff that care for them. Encourage child to talk about happy times at school. They may need to be reminded of the fact that you will be there to pick them up or of the arrangements for them to get home.
Sense of calm	Remain calm yourself and resist the temptation to share your anxieties with your child. Reassuring C&YP that everything is in place to ensure their safe return is really important. Avoid talking too much about how much there is to “catch up “on as this may cause additional anxieties.
Sense of safety	Tell your child about all the procedures that have been put in place by the school to ensure that they are safe - physically and emotionally. You may want to look at the school website together to see what will be in place.
Sense of control	C&YP need to know that schools / teachers understand the rules and that they are making sure that things are in place to ensure that pupils are safe. Remind that they can do to help their own safety – washing hands etc
Hopes and plans.	Talk about the vaccination programme and how much safer we will all be as a result of this. Talk about a COVID free future – plans for meeting family, holidays etc. .