

# Returning to school

## Wellbeing

The aim of this document is to support schools consider a range of wellbeing aspects for when re-opening to pupils with signposting to a range of supporting guidance documents and resources. It is hoped that the majority of pupils will settle back into the school routine with support and guidance. It is normal that they will have worries and concerns, but through careful planning for their wellbeing and strong relationships with peers and staff the majority of pupils should re-settle.

Targeted support will be required for a number of pupils who were previously identified as vulnerable, but further pupils may also be identified through ongoing assessment of all pupils wellbeing.

The document contains links to a range of resources and materials that may support in delivering a whole school approach to wellbeing. We are not endorsing any particular resources through listing them in this document.

The questions are based around an assumption that most schools will be operating for some time under a phased return model, with elements of social-distancing, and that a blend of in-school and home learning may need to be considered well into next academic year.

## Parents and carers

Parents and carers may have different views and expectations, and different home situations. For example:

- Those that are keen for their children to be returning and will see this as life going back to normal, which it is not, so how do schools manage these expectations?
- Those that are very anxious about the safety of their children and / or other family members – how does the school reassure parents that all possible measures are in place?

Some children have already been attending school regularly during the lockdown, so parents / carers may assume that the schooling for their children will just continue. (This could be dependent on government guidance and decisions made by the school).

Will some vulnerable families need an identified key member of staff as their consistent contact?

How will the school manage general questions from parents/ carers will there be one member of staff that parents direct questions to (in a larger school, a greater number of staff will be needed) to ensure a consistent approach and message?

There is a need to ensure clear and consistent communication for all parents and carers about the phased return to school.

NYCC information sheet and signposting to [support for parents and children and young people in secondary schools](#) regarding emotional and mental wellbeing

NYCC information sheet and signposting to [support for parents and children in primary schools](#) regarding emotional and mental wellbeing

[Governments Guidance for parents and carers to support mental wellbeing through COVID-19](#)

[NSPCC advice and support for parents and carers through COVID-19](#)

- How can schools effectively use all of their communication systems to ensure all parents/carers are aware of which pupils should be attending school and when?
- It will be important to inform parents/carers of what the expectations are for pupils when they return to school, in relation to the time that will be given to wellbeing, refocusing on school values and the community and allowing pupils time to become familiar with the school structures, including the hygiene routines, expectations and routines of school life, before returning to learning.
- Could a *Frequently Asked Questions* section for parents/carers be on the school website? We are aware of a number of schools who have developed a dedicated wellbeing site.
- Is there clear reassurance that it is okay to have worries and concerns, and that this is normal?
- Is there regular signposting and reminders for parents and carers about support around wellbeing?

## Staff

Staff may feel anxious about working with a greater number of pupils in school.

It will be important to consider staff wellbeing and to ensure that line-management pathways are being used effectively to support staff wellbeing.

- Governors need to ensure that the systems in place to support staff wellbeing, including the headteacher's, are effective.
- Schools could consider having a staff buddy system in school, so staff can check in with each other at various times if needed.
- Staff may need clear reassurance that it is ok to have worries and concerns and that this is normal.
- There should be regular signposting to support around wellbeing, and checking in with staff about their wellbeing.

What will be the *expectations* on staff during the phased return to initially assess the social, emotional and then academic needs of the pupils?

- There will be a need to ensure that all staff are up to date on safeguarding arrangements in school and the pathway of support for pupils.
- Staff should be provided with a consistent approach and message about how to talk to pupils about coronavirus.
- Might the pastoral structure be reinforced, with more staff allocated to specific responsibilities?
- Could the identification and management of mental health issues be a focus of CPD, before and after the return to school?

[NYCC information sheet to support staff in schools regarding emotional and mental wellbeing](#)

[North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership provide a range of supporting guidance's and access to online training including: Domestic abuse awareness online training and suicide prevention e-learning.](#)

### [The Go To Website](#)

North Yorkshire specific website that provides information to help signpost young people, families and [professionals](#) to the right information and services available for mental health and wellbeing across North Yorkshire..

### [Recovery college Online](#)

Has a range of information to support mental health with a dedicated section [for staff in school](#) which provides information on a number of mental health aspects

### [North Yorkshire services and support](#)

Information on the universal, targeted and specialist services and support available in the different districts of

- How can you ensure that during staff meetings there are opportunities to focus on wellbeing of staff, and appropriate opportunities to discuss any pupils of concern?
- Can all staff receive a safeguarding briefing/ update on how to respond to disclosures on return to school?
- Might there be staff updates and / or training on a range of issues, possibly including the following?
  - ◆ Domestic violence
  - ◆ Anxiety
  - ◆ Mental health issues
  - ◆ Grief and loss
  - ◆ Sleep issues
  - ◆ Self-harm and /or suicide
  - ◆ Peer on peer abuse
  - ◆ Bullying (online bullying)

North Yorkshire and access to the North Yorkshire Pathway of support for children and young people with self harming behaviour and/or suicidal ideation

[MindEd](#) is a free educational resource on children and young people's mental health for all adults

[Anti-bullying alliance](#) provides a range of online CPD training modules

[NYCC Bereavement guidance for schools to support during COVID-19 and NYCC General bereavement guidance for schools](#)

[Child bereavement Uk](#) and [Winston Wish](#) has a range of supporting materials to support children who have experienced loss

## Pupils

It will be important that time is given to ensure pupils re-engage with the school community and the shared routine, expectations and school values and a gradual move to learning.

- Schools need to dedicate time to re-creating a safe environment for all pupils, and allow them many regular opportunities to talk about their experiences
- There may be significant differences for children who have and have not been on the school site during the lock down. It would be wrong to assume that those who have been in school are OK.
- The school will need to ensure that children have safe spaces to talk about their experiences during the lockdown. A school will need to ensure that all children have access to trusted adults who will listen them and are ready and trained to respond to them effectively. This could be 1:1, small group sessions and whole class.
- Careful consideration must be given to how the schools will assess pupils initially. It will be more important to value and celebrate what pupils have learnt.
- Teachers could spend time allowing the pupils to 'show and tell' what they have been doing, what they have learned and what their lives have been like over the lockdown (being very aware of the experiences for the known vulnerable pupils, but also the experiences for other pupils who have not previously been identified for any

[NSPCC Learning](#) have provided a briefing with an overview of the main concerns that children and young people have been talking to Childline counsellors about during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

A film uses [PLAYMOBIL](#) to help explain coronavirus in a way that young children can understand what is happening

A free information [book explaining the coronavirus](#) to children, illustrated by Gruffalo illustrator Axel Scheffler for 5 to 9 years olds

[NSPCC guide to coronavirus](#) and supporting tools if children and young people are worried

[Children's Commissioners](#) guide to coronavirus for children and young people

[The Government have shared some case studies](#) about different ways

reasons.) This will help staff to assess pupils' social and emotional wellbeing and then start to consider their academic needs.

- Communicate with all pupils before the start of school to let them know what to expect when returning to school (social distancing, change of routine etc.)
- Give clear reassurance that it is ok to have worries and concerns, and that this is normal.
- Signpost to support around wellbeing.
- Identify vulnerable pupils who will need further support around the return to school.
- Through ongoing assessment, identify further pupils once they have returned to school.
- From a pupil perspective, many will be keen to return if their friends are returning. But will this be possible if it is phased return? How will pupils feel / react if none of their friendship group are attending school?
- How will all pupils react, going from seeing only their family to larger groups of pupils? How will the range of reactions be managed?
- Time and activities will be needed to re-connect with friends and build friendships again in person.
- Some pupils may have been communicating via social media and not all of the communication may not have been positive e.g. increase in online bullying and peer to peer abuse so staff need to be aware of the increased risks
- Will the school talk directly with pupils about the coronavirus as there are a variety of resources to support conversations with pupils but need to be considerate of the variety of experiences pupils will have had / how much information families have shared with their children / any families affected by loss?
- Consider how Year 6, Year 11 and Year 13 pupils can be given the opportunity to say goodbye and to celebrate their time at school.
- Secondary schools will need to consider how to welcome Year 6 pupils into secondary school, perhaps through a visit (fitting into the phased return of pupils), a virtual visit, welcome information / a letter perhaps from a pupil who went to their primary school?
- Should there be a programme of one-to-one meetings between pupils and tutors/class teachers or mentors, to ensure that all pupils feel supported and that their anxieties and feelings are acknowledged?
- Should increased mentoring and support for individuals be put in place?
- There may be a range of 'flash points' for pupils over the coming months. How will staff be supported to manage these aspects? Will there be a member of staff on call? Will pupils be able to have time out in a safe space?

schools have supported wellbeing during COVID-19

If your school is considering setting some PSHE lessons through home learning, especially some activities before the pupils return to school please consider the [PSHE association guidance](#) on suitable activities that can be set for home learning

[BBC bitesize](#) have a range of PSHE lessons for all key stages which could also be offered as home learning which could start to prepare pupils for the return to school

Some secondary schools have developed wellbeing hubs on google classroom (and other platforms) for pupils to access which offer a range of information, support and signposting to ways of looking after their wellbeing.

[Anna Freud](#) have developed some, '[On my Mind pages](#)' to provide information on self-help for secondary aged pupils in relation to mental health.

Your wellbeing worker from Compass Buzz can also offer support and information around mental health and wellbeing <https://www.compass-uk.org/services/north-yorkshire-compass-buzz/>

■ [NHS](#) have produced a list of [apps that support people with their mental health](#) (some are young people focused) to support some self-care techniques

## Routine of the school day

Time will be required to re-establish the basics of school life and routines; focusing on the school's values and rebuilding trust and relationships as part of a reintroduction to school, rather than straight back into academic lessons.

- It will be important to re-create a safe environment, where pupils feel cared for and valued, thus re-creating the ethos and culture of the school.
- How will you support pupils (and staff) with readjusting to school routines, expectations, behaviour processes and work ethic, while possibly still managing their own anxieties around the current situation.
- How will you re-establish behaviour expectations, how everyone speaks to each other, how everyone treats each other and the attitude to being in school.
- How will there be clarity with pupils about the new rules, routines and expectations on the return to school, re social distancing, hand washing, sharing equipment etc. while accepting that for some children, especially younger ones and those with special needs, keeping to a two metre distance is going to be extremely hard to follow, and that children may just 'forget', so regular reminders will need to be given and a routine established for them.
- What will the first day be like for the returning pupils? If the return is phased, how will this be managed as different groups of pupils return to schools at different times?
- On the first day, will there be a series of well planned activities for the pupils to re-integrate into school life? How will pupils be organised for these activities (friendship groups, year groups, classes, tutor groups, teaching groups, house groups?) The activities will need a clear focus and outcome:
  - ◆ Wellbeing of the pupils
  - ◆ Re-building the school community (an activity where everyone contributes to an overall activity this could be a piece of art work / piece of music or other creative outcomes)
  - ◆ Outdoors learning and activities
  - ◆ Activities to focus on the school values and ethos
  - ◆ Strength and challenges
  - ◆ Resilience and motivation
  - ◆ Being good friends
  - ◆ Working as a team / part of a community
  - ◆ Fun activities
  - ◆ Reassurance that different feelings and reactions are normal and ok.
  - ◆ Opportunities for pupils to anonymously feed in any concerns they have which could feed into planned activities during the first week

[Mentally Healthy Schools](#) brings together quality-assured resources to help primary schools promote children's mental health and wellbeing. Many resources would also be suitable for secondary schools. They have resources to support a whole school approach

[Education Endowment Foundation](#) report into Improving social and emotional learning in primary schools (also suitable information for secondary aged pupils)

[Inner world](#) provides a range of resources for primary and secondary schools to support pupils and staff understand fight/ flight/ freeze responses and a range of supporting resources to support a safe school environment



- How will the first few weeks be planned to include a gradual integration into the routine of the school, establishing expectations, building motivation and moving back into learning, whilst continuing to support the wellbeing of the pupils? What flexibility will there be depending on the needs of the pupils?
- For younger pupils, ensure all playing is supervised and scaffolded, at every opportunity reminding children how they play together, compromise, share and work together just as they did before.
- As pupils move to more learning, how will staff alleviate any concerns that pupils may have about a real or perceived view about their experience of home learning e.g. they are behind their peers?
- How will pupils have access to staff if they require further support and care? How will this information be shared with pupils?

### In secondary schools...

- Where will pupils first report to when arriving at school?
- Will it be the form tutor as some schools don't start the day with form time?
- If tutor groups are organised vertically, there may not be many pupils present with a phased return, so will some pupils have a continued feeling of 'isolation' at not seeing more pupils in their tutor group and more of the friends? On the other hand, some pupils may benefit from seeing smaller groups of pupils.

## Wellbeing / PSHE curriculum to support a return to schools

Pupils will be feeling a mixture of emotions and will have had a variety of different experiences whilst at home. There are a range of aspects that could be considered around wellbeing.

- For older pupils especially, this period may have had a profound effect on their awareness of the world. They may have become much more aware of current affairs and news – political, medical, emotional, social, economic. And they may have gained a new sense of their personal relation to world events.
- In some ways, helping pupils to share and process this experience and these new understandings will present challenges; in other ways, it will present opportunities.
- Different aspects schools may like to consider in relation to wellbeing for the whole school community:
  - ◆ The 5 ways to wellbeing
  - ◆ Mental wellbeing
  - ◆ Feeling safe
  - ◆ Managing feelings and different strategies
  - ◆ Resilience

[The PSHE association](#) has a range of supporting information about delivering effective PSHE

[NYCC PSHE guidance for schools](#) which includes the PSHE entitlement framework and signposting to a range of supporting resources is freely accessible for all schools

[Education Endowment Foundation Improving social and emotional learning in primary schools](#) has good information about specific social and emotional skills what they mean and how they can be developed (also suitable information for secondary aged pupils)

- ◆ Strength and challenges
  - ◆ Motivation
  - ◆ Working as a team / part of a community
  - ◆ The importance of sleep
  - ◆ Anxiety
  - ◆ Grief and loss
  - ◆ Friendships – being a good friend
  - ◆ Healthy relationships
  - ◆ Anti-bullying
- Could this be an explicit focus for subject learning, especially in English, PSHE, citizenship, economics, the expressive arts and the humanities?
  - How might whole school projects and events deal with pupils' shared experience of the crisis?
  - How might open spaces and learning in other spaces be utilised?

[The PSHE associations guide to teaching about emotional and mental health](#) and supporting lesson plans for key stage 1-4

[Mentally healthy school's website](#) provides a wide range of resources and activities that can be used with pupils (the website is aimed at primary schools but many activities would also be suitable for secondary schools)

[ELSA](#) provides a range of resources to support emotional and mental wellbeing activities (there can be a small cost for some resources)

[Public Health England Rise above lessons for KS2-4](#), lessons of particular interests might be the lesson on sleep, managing change, healthy friendships / relationships and transition to secondary school

[BBC Mental Health and Wellbeing - Teaching Resources for KS2-4](#)  
[BBC bitesize](#) have a range of PSHE lessons for all Key stages which could also be offered as home learning as well as in school and could start to bridge the gap between the two environments

[BoingBoing](#) have developed a range of resources based on the [academic resilience framework](#) with a strength based approach to resilience. This includes practical ideas from the [resilient classroom toolkit](#)

[Anna Freud](#) has a range of resources to support a whole school approach to mental health and resources aimed at pupils to explore what mental health is

[NSPCC resources](#) for KS 2-4 on healthy relationships

[NHS Information](#) on the evidence base 5 ways to wellbeing

[Anti-bullying alliance](#) has a range of supporting materials

[Samaritans have developed a range of lesson plans](#) for KS3-4 to support the following issues: emotional health, coping strategies, dealing with feelings and connecting with others.

Books and resources to support work on grief and loss from [Child Bereavement Uk](#) and from [Winstons Wish](#) . Winstons Wish have also produced a [short film to help explain grief to pupils](#)

Outdoor learning  
[Council for Learning Outside the Classroom](#)  
■ [Outdoor Education Advisers Panel National Guidance of best practice](#) -