

## **Guidance and Links to Support the Transition back to School for Vulnerable Children and Young People**

The following advice and information has been created by Orkney Islands Council Educational Psychology Service. Acknowledgement and thanks must be given to Highland Psychological Services who shared their documentation and allowed us, as partners in The Northern Alliance, to make use of their guidance, their links and their training materials in the creation of this advice. Thank you also to Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service for sharing their wellbeing website

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## Returning to School

The first weeks back are a critical period in the transition back to school process. When schools re-open, children/young people and families and staff, who may be having trouble in recovering from recent events, could find it hard to readjust to being back to school, even if their experiences have been reasonably positive.

Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) may find the readjustment back to school particularly difficult. Some may have significant issues and even those who were coping well previously may now be experiencing anxiety reactions. Some children may have experienced additional adversity during lockdown or may be experiencing grief and loss and as the new school year progresses staff will need to feel confident in how to support children and young people's social, emotional and learning needs.

As school gets underway, if we continue to monitor how well our pupils readjust to school, we can more readily identify those who are having difficulty. Similarly, senior leaders should be vigilant of staff wellbeing and be ready to offer support. Potential longer-term issues should be identified throughout the coming school session and beyond so that any longer-term negative impact can be reduced.

## The Importance of Transitions

Simply being in lockdown has been a major transition in children's lives. All have been at home. Some have been in school-based hubs. Whether a child is going back to school for the first time in months or coping with the return of classmates after experiencing time in a Hub, they will be faced with yet more change and uncertainty.

Eliciting the views of children about the return to school – by asking them and their caregivers to write a letter, draw a picture or record a video – could help to provide a tailored approach in responding to their needs. Some may be scared to leave their homes or worry about being separated from their parents. Others have previously found school a very challenging or unfulfilling place – they have enjoyed being at home and the prospect of returning may fill them with dread.

Especially for children and young people with significant additional support needs, it will be important to communicate in advance what the children will be going back to. Will they be in the same classroom as before? How many will be in their class? Which staff will be there? Ideally, a visual overview or personalised message could be provided so that these issues can be talked through at home first. Some schools will be able to offer a virtual tour – since classrooms, corridors and communal areas will likely look very different under physical distancing guidelines, the use of photographs and videos of the new environment could help to show pupils with ASN what they can expect.

Education Scotland also have a variety of helpful documents specifically aimed at supporting transitions for children and young people with Additional Support Needs. These are signposting documents with a variety of links to specialist services and advice <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/transitions/#Transitions-ASN> and links to good practice guidance in preparing for, managing and embedding transitions for the full range of ASN in our schools: <https://education.gov.scot/media/4hdphwyf/emerging-practice-asn-transitions.pdf>

In the initial planning for returning to school, as well as the practical processes for the safe return of pupils and staff, thought should be given to how schools can -

- welcome, orient, and positively reconnect pupils with ASN, staff, and families to the school.
- provide outreach to those students and families who are expected but do not return.
- minimise problems during daily transition times (e.g. before school, during breaks, lunch, after school).

- provide supports for those not adjusting well.
- agree the need for flexibility with what is acceptable as pupils may present their upset and distress through behaviour that challenges.
- prepare for possible future disruption due to a second wave of the pandemic later in the year

It will be important to see and practice new routines at the start and end of the day and transitions between classes. We may also need to think of transitional objects which allow the pupil to feel “kept in mind” by a caregiver or key adult when going to and from school. This could be as simple as a photograph, a toy, a key ring or a scented tissue – something personal and comforting. There may need to be consideration of how these can be cleaned or where they can be stored to prevent others from handling them.

A good transition process will adhere to the agreed principles suggested by the Scottish Transitions Forum <https://scottishtransitions.org.uk/about-us/arc-scotland/>:

- has the child at the centre and is personalised to the needs of the individual;
- is timely in planning and delivery;
- is proportionate to the level of need and inter-agency involvement;
- involves the child and parents/carers throughout the process;
- embraces effective communication and information sharing between parents/carers and current and receiving partners; and
- is not a point in time, but a continuous process that is reviewed to take account of changing needs.

## Underpinning Principles of Additional Support

Scottish education is based on the belief that education is a human right and that all children and young people should be supported to reach their fullest potential. Children's rights and entitlements are fundamental to Scotland's approach to inclusive education. It is supported by the legislative framework and key policy drivers. Education Scotland have a helpful CLPL module on *Embedding Inclusion, Equity and Empowerment* for any practitioners wanting to learn more. <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/what-we-do/embedding-inclusion-equity-and-empowerment/>



Scotland's education system is designed to be an inclusive one for all children and young people in Scottish schools, with or without additional support needs.

Additional support is a broad and inclusive term which applies to children or young people who, for whatever reason, require additional support, long or short term, in order to help them make the most of their school education and to be included fully in their learning.

There are a wide range of factors which may lead to some children and young people having a need for additional support. These fall broadly into the four overlapping themes highlighted in this graphic.

A child or young person may be affected by more than one barrier to learning and there can be an overlap between:

- co-occurring additional support needs e.g. particularly able or talented and being a young carer.
- health/disability and social and emotional factors e.g. physical disability and trauma.
- additional support needs and disability e.g. Autism or Dyslexia (when there is a significant impact on day to day living).

All children and young people, their families and practitioners in early years, childcare settings (ELC) and schools will feel the impact of COVID 19 on all four overlapping themes.

The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009) aims to ensure a partnership with parents/carers and collaborative working with professionals from partner services and agencies, to meet the needs of the child or young person and as effective communication and partnership working is crucial to supporting learners who require additional support during this difficult time.

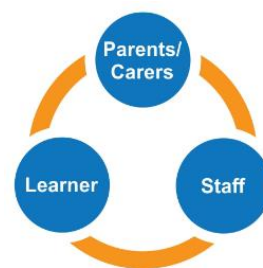
For learners who require additional support it is extremely important to ensure that effective 2-way communication processes are established between school staff, their families and the learner. Families will have valuable information and suggestions to share which can support transitions to be more positive for their child.

Our transition for all pupils should be guided by the Nurture Principle that *transitions are significant in the lives of children*, so staff will share a vision of creating strong, connected relationships with families as the starting point to then enable them to develop positive transition outcomes i.e. that children and young people either start or return to school as prepared as they possibly can be and with as little anxiety as possible.

Reflective activities have been developed by Education Scotland specifically related to transitions for pupils with ASN, <https://education.gov.scot/media/ruxn0vno/reflective-questions-asn-transitions.pdf> to help practitioners, schools and local authorities ensure that their collaborative approaches are supporting effective communication and building relationships.

The themes contained within **HGIOS4 2.6: Transitions** particularly in relation to **Theme 1: arrangements for transition**, can also support the collective knowledge and understanding of staff of firstly what good practice in transition planning for children with additional support needs looks like and secondly their understanding of the impact of the context we currently find ourselves delivering our service in.

We aim for all children, whether they are returning to a school/ELCC setting or joining a new setting, to feel safe, welcomed and ready for their continued learning journey with all staff possessing the knowledge they need about each child and to start from where each individual is developmentally and in their learning.





## Summary of Issues Relating to Transitions for All

In education, we are used to managing transitions. We have skills and an understanding of what works for children and young people. However, there are specific considerations we need to take into account due to the current context and these apply to all children and young people in transitions, including those with Additional Support Needs.

What's different to usual years for ...		What do they need?
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uneven gaps in development &amp; learning – for all but some inequalities widened also</li> <li>• Been out of settings – lost routines &amp; habits</li> <li>• Do not know school or teacher so well</li> <li>• Potential fears – germs, etc</li> <li>• Bigger step from home/parents as safe space</li> <li>• Reduced socialisation in groups</li> <li>• Background family stressors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended time to settle in &amp; establish positive relationships with adults &amp; peers</li> <li>• Support to (re)learn social skills &amp; routines</li> <li>• Developmentally informed approaches to learning &amp; behaviour (play based)</li> <li>• Assessment &amp; work on gaps in learning &amp; development</li> <li>• Virtual or similar transition activities to experience staff, spaces &amp; peers</li> </ul>
Parents & Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher general stresses &amp; hassles</li> <li>• Pressures to get back to normal &amp; back to work</li> <li>• Anxieties about children being safe &amp; healthy away from home</li> <li>• Concerns at children being “behind” or not “ready”</li> <li>• Less knowledge or relationship with school &amp; staff</li> <li>• Worry that children with ASN will not have needs met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance info about what education will look like and why</li> <li>• Low stakes info about how they can prepare children, prioritising what matters</li> <li>• Virtual transition offers, including meeting staff</li> <li>• Involvement in learning – at home and possibly within classroom</li> <li>• Bridging narratives to share with children on how school is both safe &amp; nurturing</li> </ul>

## Creating Emotional and Psychological Safety

### Creating a resilient and well-being focused classroom

As much as returning to school may feel like a relief, or even feel exciting for some children and young people, it is also likely to be a time when many young people feel anxious, particularly those who have underlying health conditions or who live with someone who is shielding. Feeling safe may have come to be associated with 'staying at home', 'physical distancing' and frequent handwashing and so we all need to learn new ways to continue to feel safe whilst connecting with our friends and peers and learning together back in our school setting. Teachers can help to create classroom environments that provide reassurance, for example, how they are following the latest government and scientific guidelines, and make expectations clear about how we can all look after ourselves and each other. This may take time and it is important for us to hold on to the idea of a **transition period** as we develop new ways of learning together rather than rushing or putting unnecessary pressure on ourselves or each other to feel - or get back to - 'normal'.

### Look after your own emotional needs

Many adults within the school community could be experiencing a similar range of reactions and feelings in response to the pandemic and lockdown period as the pupils in our classes. Even though adults have had a longer experience of knowing that adversity can be overcome, there are sometimes occasions when we need to remind ourselves how to look after our own wellbeing. Lots of ideas and resources on how to maintain our own health and wellbeing are contained in the links below;

<https://sites.google.com/millburnacademy.org.uk/highlanddigitalschoolshub/wellbeing-for-all/staff>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/wellbeing-resources/>

### Create a safe classroom and school environment

Much of the communication around COVID-19 has been about the threat it poses and we therefore will need to help children and young people manage this. We will need to ask how our children and young people feel about COVID-19 and the measures in place. We will then need to consider and perhaps change the language we use to communicate safety and hope.

For young people to feel safe, schools and classrooms need to be high in both nurture and structure, and need to be predictable and organised with clearly stated, reasonable expectations. Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as

safe as possible together can be co-constructed with groups and classes, with reviews planned to allow for changes and adaptations in response to new developments.

The organisation of the learning environment is important in containing anxiety. How we use our classrooms, corridors, dinner halls and playgrounds may be very different, both in how they are arranged and managed and how children can use them when they return to school. Making school a secure base will require a pro-active and consistent approach, with relationships at the centre.

Children with language and communication difficulties including those with social communication difficulties may require specific/differentiated approaches. For example whole school Social Stories may be helpful.

Information on how to support children with communication needs can be found on the CALL Scotland website <https://www.callscotland.org.uk/home/>. Symbols for creating social stories can be found here <https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/>. This could be posted/emailed to parents/carers or posted on the school website. School websites could acknowledge how difficult the restrictions have been, welcome the children back to school, show them how things will be different and explain why.

Structure and predictability will be essential. Visual timetabling and scheduling can inform the children of what is happening now and what will happen next. Seating plans will undoubtedly change in order to accommodate physical distancing and these should be communicated in advance and illustrated for those who are particularly sensitive to change. If items and equipment are moved to different places within the classroom, these areas should be clearly labelled.

Decorating a wall with photographs of each child and key staff in the classroom and playground can create a sense of belonging; especially if the children are getting used to a different peer group or different members of staff for the foreseeable future. Reassurance can be provided through positive messages such as *“You are safe here”*, *“We remember you”*, *“You can talk to me any time”* and *“All of your feelings are ok”*.

We may also need to think of identifying areas of the classroom which can be used as places for relaxation and calming sensory input. If soft furnishings are allowed, such an area could have cushions or beanbags for comfort and coloured fabric. Such a space can enable an anxious or stressed child/young person to scan the room from a place of safety. This might also provide a quiet reflective place where a pupil can take time out to regain composure and reduce stimulation. It might be difficult initially to provide a space that others may share but being able to ‘zone out’ with music, spending time in creative arts or a physical activity are all strategies that pupils can find useful. Talk to pupils

about how they can support their own sense of well-being by building positive actions into their daily timetable.

### Help students to regulate their emotions so that they can learn

In addition to having a calm classroom, teaching young people strategies to self-calm is useful and conducive to creating a positive learning atmosphere. Sometimes for there to be calmness there needs to be opportunity for movement and the expenditure of energy. Young people who seem to be particularly jumpy, anxious, nervous or on edge may find that a brief time outside or even being able to get out of their seat and complete a task such as watering the plants, allows them to resettle.

Talking about feelings, having posters around the classroom that provide words for feelings and emotions and cueing children and young people into their feelings are all strategies that develop emotional literacy and help children and young people to understand their own and others' feelings. If a student seems particularly upset, distressed or angry, it is important to first let them calm down - perhaps have some time out of the classroom, before helping them to identify their feelings.

We can support the child in narrating their experiences, keeping to their pace and asking what happened next at different intervals. If they are anxious, our calm brains will help them to connect the dots and allow the fight/flight/freeze response to subside.

We can encourage them to communicate their feelings and consider what to do about them through emojis, short scripts or role-plays – for example, “*I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because*” and “*When I feel \_\_\_\_\_, I can \_\_\_\_\_*”. There should be explicit methods of asking for help. Some children may benefit from a Social Story which they can talk through with a key adult. Others may need a more concrete and discreet method of asking for a break, such as a coded phrase that only their teacher recognises or an exit card on their desk which can be flipped over.

We will also need to think about the language we use. Whether it's a child who is anxious about coming back to school or one who actually preferred being at home, we need to be welcoming and show that they have been thought of fondly. For example: “*I'm so happy to see you again*”, “*I've missed seeing your smile*” and “*When I saw \_\_\_\_\_ on TV, it reminded me of you and made me wonder what you were up to at home*”.

We would generally consider that ‘all behaviour is communication’ as this emphasises the importance of looking underneath a behaviour and asking “*What is the child trying to tell me?*”. In the current context, we need to be open-minded. The child who throws equipment or swipes items off their desk may be anxious about being in proximity to other children and adults; after months of being told to avoid contact as far as possible with the outside world. The child who refuses to follow instructions or comply with new

routines may be feeling hurt or abandoned by a key adult, given the sudden experience of separation and loss when the restrictions were introduced at short notice. Dan Hughes (2012) highlights the need for connection before correction and his formula of PACE can be applied to our work in a post-lockdown world.

- **Playful** interactions with children in the early stages of returning to school will help to create a sense of safety and belonging, reduce stress and defuse situations before they escalate. We might achieve this through personalised greetings in the mornings, being silly, sharing jokes and learning topics through physical action or musical rhythm. We could turn new routines into a game to diminish the strangeness and have fun rehearsals to make them easier to remember.
- **Acceptance** is about being non-judgemental and showing the child that we understand what they are going through. For example, *“I know you’re scared about being here”* or *“It must be hard not to think of your parents at home. You loved spending so much time with them every day and it’s sad to leave them”*.
- **Curiosity** is important in putting aside our own presumptions and eliciting the child’s views by wondering with them – *“I’ve noticed you’ve been quiet since coming back. I think you might be worried about something”*.
- **Empathy** is our way of stepping into the child’s shoes and showing them that “we get it”. We might say *“I know this is really tough for you. The classroom looks so different from the last time you were here”* or *“You are so upset that your friend comes to school on a different day. You miss seeing him every day like you used to”*.

### [Developing Trust, Resilience and Optimism in Children who are emotionally vulnerable](#)

The key to developing trust and engagement in vulnerable learners to increase their resilience is through a nurturing approach. Highland Council Educational Psychology Service have created some excellent training presentations for school staff, including one entitled ‘Nurturing Principles’, which explains how to apply nurture principles in our relationships with vulnerable learners. Here is the link to these training presentations:

<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>

### Redeveloping the Confidence of Vulnerable Learners

The temptation to expect less from young people after frightening events is common. Although their capacity for concentration may be affected it can be re-developed through good teaching strategies, support and time. Continue to make all expectations clear, scaffolding learning as required. For children who have lost confidence in their skills remind them of their previous successes and make use of growth mindset approaches as often as possible

Heather Geddes (2006) provides advice on intervention approaches for children with disrupted attachment. Those who are reluctant at first to engage with staff may need tasks which they can work on independently, so they can develop a gradual tolerance of an adult's presence. Those who are preoccupied with being connected to key adults may require learning tasks to be time-limited, with more regular feedback and reassurance.

Through our relationship with a child, we can promote optimism and resilience for the future. For younger children, parents and carers could be asked to share photos and videos of what their children have been doing at home. These might include rainbow paintings for the NHS, workouts with Joe Wicks, dens made from duvets and pillows, Lego constructions, etc. All of these examples provide immediate conversation starters in which we can praise their creativity and highlight skills that are transferable to the classroom.

Finding ways to provide them with choice and control in a task or routine can help them to feel "held in mind" and promote autonomy. We should also schedule time during the new school day for them to pursue special interests and preferred activities. This could be a great way to help them feel competent and successful. It will be important for us to celebrate their achievements, however small, in order to bolster their self-esteem. We can make this more concrete through personalised books or boxes filled with evidence of their achievements, their effort and tangible feedback from staff. Use solution focused conversations to promote self-awareness of strengths. (Asking with interest, '*what are you good at? What do you enjoy? And what else?*' and if possible, deepening the conversation '*When you are at your best what are you pleased and proud to notice about yourself? What does this tell you about what you might be capable of?*').

Emphasising learning through practice, gaining positive feedback and taking small steps will help to prevent shame. The use of the Incredible 5 Point Scale will also give the opportunity for the pupil to assess how anxious they are and how difficult they perceive a task to be and to discuss what actions might improve the situation

<https://www.5pointscale.com/>

Some young people may experience a loss of trust in the world after something as frightening and unpredictable as a global pandemic; they may believe that because a

terrifying thing has happened, they can no longer dare to hope that life can be happy and safe again. Modelling optimism and encouraging them to see the strengths and coping skills they have and encouraging them to notice acts of courage and kindness will help develop a sense of personal efficacy and future.

Highland Council have created an excellent powerpoint which illustrates the importance of relationship-based approaches in creating confident resilient learners. The powerpoint is entitled 'Promoting Positive Relationships and Emotional Literacy' and you can download it here:

<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>

### Engagement, social connection and trusting relationships built on respect and positive regard

Communities and societies provide resources which are key to facilitating resilience - being part of a social group is protective and can help people overcome adverse events. School provides a community of care for children and young people and it is through the relationships that they have with friends and teachers that children can begin to recover from and make sense of the current and previous events.

Some children and young people (and staff) will want to come to school for 'normality'. They may not want to have to talk or think about what's happened as a result of the pandemic but would rather have as normal as possible a school day of learning and play. Being sad and dealing with the emotions and consequences takes a lot of energy and head space. Not talking about what happened doesn't mean that the child or young person isn't thinking about it or is being unusually avoidant. It's important to take our cues from the child or young person and for them to know there is no one right reaction. It's okay to ask them quietly what their preference is.

For many young people, the supportive adults in school are people in whom they can confide and ask difficult questions. Many young people don't want to upset their parents or further stress them by asking questions or saying that they are struggling. Being open and having a trusted relationship with pupils will allow the young person to gain the help and support they need.



## Some Suggested Activities to Support the HWB Curriculum

Guidelines for supporting children and young people during learning activities:

- Acknowledge losses, fears and other emotions when present.
- Provide reassurance that their thoughts, feelings and reactions are a normal part of recovering from the losses associated with the pandemic, even though they may be upsetting, and that they will lessen in intensity over time.
- Help children and young people to feel safe in their contributions.
- Celebrate strengths and progress.
- Have supportive and trusted adults available to help in case children and young people become overwhelmed by their feelings and reactions.
- Remind children and young people of their coping strategies through your genuine observations and knowledge of them.

Create a team flag made up of smaller flags. Each one should share a value that pupils feel is important. This will remind each pupil that they are part of something bigger than themselves and that they belong. The simple act of discussing it again will help pupils to reconnect to one another with something familiar to them all.

Make time to talk eg. If a pupil suddenly mentions their sick grandparent or worries about their relatives, make time to talk about it – some of them may not have had the opportunity to have such conversations at home.

Breathing exercises to relax students. It's important to do these regularly so children are familiar with them in times of need.

Regular brain breaks in between lessons, or during them, as needed. These could be simple yoga stretches or a burst of star jumps; there are a number of dances and relaxation activities on [www.GoNoodle.com](http://www.GoNoodle.com).

Gratitude journals and shared “what went well” moments. Fostering positive emotion helps to refocus away from negative thoughts. This is particularly important at a time when pupils could have been overexposed to the news or dealing with difficult family situations such as bereavement or job losses.

Teach students to name and label their feelings (emotion coaching). People who can label their feelings using rich vocabulary are less verbally and physically aggressive than those who find it difficult to work out and express how they feel. See Highland Council Psychological Service's ppts on nurture and promoting emotional literacy through positive relationships.

<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>

Both of these illustrate how emotion coaching can support resilience.



For older children and young people team projects can develop a sense of shared experience and togetherness. Activities can focus on the positive gains made and the sharing of strategies and approaches that really helped when things have felt tough. This could include mindfulness for example or sharing stories about social activities that stand out for them.

Here is a link to a number of wellbeing ideas and approaches (including mindfulness resources) shared by Aberdeenshire EP Service

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/wellbeing-resources/>

Other ideas for pupils with significant ASN can be found at

<https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/> and

<http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/transitions>

Orkney E P Service and members of the Pupil Support Team can offer training on the above materials

### **Specific Issues for Pupils with Additional Support Needs**

Pupils with additional needs will require further planning and preparation for the return to the school building. This transition should be prepared for and communicated thoroughly between the school and families. The Education Scotland resources provide signposts to a number of helpful practice examples that could support schools in planning their transitions for children and young people with ASN

<https://education.gov.scot/media/0hucxxbd/practitioners-support-asn-transitions.pdf>

#### **Before the transition begins:**

##### ***Prepare for change and communicate this well to children and families***

Once the school has a clear idea of what is happening and when, they should share this with families and work together with them to plan for a successful transition back for their pupils. Planning should be tailored to the pupils needs and take into account known areas of difficulty. Some pupils will need a social story to reassure them that it is safe to return to school, and what to expect when they are there. As far as possible, there should be a plan for where in the building they will be based and who will be working with them. Information should be communicated in small, manageable chunks and pupils should be given time to process this.

***Prepare visual supports around handwashing and physical distancing and display them appropriately around the building***

Schools can plan ahead to have these ready for the school building reopening and can show the pupils them as part of their transition back. They could also share these visuals on their websites and other online platforms, so pupils have the opportunity to see them before they go back into the school building.

***If PPE such as masks are to be used, pupils should be prepared for this***

At present the recommendation is that school staff DO NOT wear masks. However, if this changes over time pupils should be prepared for it. This could be done as a social story or as part of a group session. This can also be communicated to families before the school building re-opens. Photographs of staff members with and without a mask on could support pupils in their understanding of how the adults supporting them may look. It will also be unsettling for some pupils to not have the proximity to familiar people that they were used to, and some pupils may need extra preparation for this.

***Use online learning communities such as websites and online learning platforms***

Where possible, this could include videos inside the school, social stories and photos to re-familiarise pupils with the school setting. The focus could be on what is the same and what will be different. It would also be helpful for some pupils to have the opportunity to have 1:1 video or phone calls with familiar staff members, and the option to ask questions and discuss worries. This should be facilitated on an individual basis to meet the needs of that young person.

***Consider alternative arrangements for travelling to school to ensure physical distancing rules are observed***

This may involve a change of route or staff and so pupils should be prepared with social stories and photos of staff in advance. Pupils who travel on public transport to school may need to wear a face covering and this should also be taken into account in preparing the return to school for individual pupils.

**During and following the transition:**

***Focus on rebuilding relationships and routines, and preparing for and understanding the changes***

As with the start of any school year (or term), expectations should be outlined and consistent. Knowing what is going to happen and when is very important to a successful transition back into the school building. Ideally, the first few weeks should be used as a transition period in order to focus on familiarity, reassurance, resilience, re-establishing routines and planning for changes. Initially, try to minimise the number of

changes the young person has to cope with, for example try to keep them in familiar rooms with familiar staff and peers where possible.

**Other points to consider:**

- Every pupil will have had a different lockdown experience.
- With so long away from school (and other people) it is possible that that sensory issues will be challenging for a lot of pupils. They may have anxiety about being around others, be more sensitive to noise/smells/light and find it hard to adapt to being back in the school environment. All of this may affect their engagement or behaviour.
- Consider exploring training material on Neurodevelopmental Needs, to plan for meeting the sensory, language and cognitive needs of pupils with ASN The following is a useful link to training material which Highland Council Educational Psychology Services has kindly shared with us  
<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>.  
The Orkney EP team can arrange to present this material so that all staff get maximum gain.
- Some children may need more frequent breaks and access to their familiar belongings to make them feel more secure while staff work to reestablish routines.
- In order to meet all learning needs fully after the interruptions in learning experienced by many young people staff may need to make additional adjustments to targets in Child's Plans, teaching activities and length of lessons. All of this should be assessed through observation and discussion with core groups surrounding that young person, and effective communication between schools and families
- Some pupils will find it hard to adjust back into a timetabled day. Ordinary sleeping and waking times may be difficult, especially if this is supported by medication.
- Some pupils will have experienced more rules/fewer rules at home. Parents may have found it easier to accept some behaviours that would not be acceptable in school, due to other pressures within the family.
- Some pupils may be moving into specialist placements for the first time after summer so will not have had any contact with a class peer group.
- If physio/medical routines have changed and are differently administered at home, this will have to be updated on child's plans and protocols.
- Some children will be fearful to meet up with people who cause them alarm, or who previously intimidated them, and whom they have not encountered since lockdown.

- Some pupils will have reverted back to their first (home) language or might not have had as much input with learning sign, etc. to support a speech and communication difficulty.
- Some will return, silently carrying the burden of incidents, domestic abuse, etc during lockdown. There has been a significant spike in the numbers of [calls to domestic abuse](#) helplines since lockdown began. The [UK government has published advice](#). Access to a trusted adult for support is always important.
- For some children in the Hubs, school has been their safe place. As others return to school, they may be seen to be intruding on this.
- The children of key workers may have experienced family separation as a move to protect the family. They will have known that their parents were putting themselves at risk and may not have been able to hug parents when they returned from work. This will have been huge for many children. These children will need additional support as we begin the return to 'normal.'
- Some children may have over-generalised the messages about the dangers of the virus and think that anyone getting ill could die. This may need to be explained and put in perspective when a family member becomes unwell for other reasons.

We will need to allow a period of adjustment and to be aware of the impact of trying to re-establish these routines for staff, parents and children. We will need to re-learn the rhythm of the school. It will take time to re-establish and re-learn the expectations of school behaviour and learning. We know that much of learning is based on practice and we will all be out of practice with this.

It will be useful to take a Solution Oriented approach and try to maintain and build on what worked well for children and young people in the lockdown period, e.g. online learning in a low stimulus learning context with minimal social demand.

## Additional considerations for Pupils with Disability and/or who have Complex ASN

Further links to support strategies and agencies can be found here:

<https://education.gov.scot/media/0hucxxbd/practitioners-support-asn-transitions.pdf>

Possible issues:

- Strain on or breakdown of relationships at home due to complex care needs.
- Strain due to financial/employment instability of primary carer.
- Reduced contact with services to support care routines, moving and handling and/or postural management.
- Health and/or wellbeing concerns due to prolonged or reduced access to specialist equipment or support.
- Lack of appropriate resources for learning at home and to explain and support the child/young person's transition, for example, sensory based resources
- Lack of appropriately differentiated accessible resources.
- Pupils may have 'lost' skills while being at home and in addition to a planned approach to the academic curriculum, may also need more intensive support on their return, to plan and develop skills in language and communication, intimate care (toileting), making independent journeys, etc.

Suggested Strategies:

- Ensure effective communication processes are established between staff, parents/carers and learners (where appropriate).
- Ensure the pupils are supported to understand the changes.
- For pupils who have attended a Hub, ensure they understand that things are changing again and expectations may be different when they attend school after the summer.
- Ensure activities/learning and teaching resources are appropriately differentiated. A number of resources have been created or collated by staff at East Park School, Inverness, that may be helpful to some pupils if they are continuing with a blended learning approach. <https://www.eastpark.org.uk/covid-19/>  
Also helpful are these resources created by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board  
<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1143/Supporting%20Children%20with%20LD%20&%20ASD%20with%20COVID%20Isolation.pdf>
- Ensure activities are shared with families which support their child to prepare for a return to school.
- Ensure all school communication and learning and teaching resources are in accessible formats.

- Ensure learners have the appropriate IT supports to help them access information and their learning.
- Customising resources for return to school. For example, some learners may need verbal/visual resources which explain what staff will be wearing (possible PPE) and distancing protocols.
- Plans and risk assessments will need updated to take account of where the children are at NOW and these will need to be constructed with input from families themselves and the wider multi-agency team around the child – some of whom may not have had contact with the family for some time
- Risk assessments and protocols will need to be in place to support the safe use and cleaning of specialist equipment eg standing frames, walkers, adapted classroom equipment, switches, sensory equipment, outdoor play equipment, etc.
- Some children will need hand under hand learning/instruction and/or will make use of body signs (hand over hand being no longer recommended as an approach). For more info see <https://www.learnplaythrive.com/single-post/rethinking-hand-over-hand> and <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/language-and-communication/sign-language/tactile-signing/> These can continue to be used, with staff taking the advised precautions relating to PPE and handwashing.

A range of helpful resources and symbols specifically relating to COVID-19 can be found here. <https://www.reachoutasc.com/>.

### **Additional Considerations for Pupils with a Visual Impairment**

Possible Issues:

- Lack of accessible information
- Lack of advice around safe sight guiding and physical distancing
- Reduced access to physical activity
- Reduced access to accessible learning resources (including books)
- Parents overwhelmed by, or lack confidence with home learning, for example using online resources or braille

Especially where pupils are moving school or changing to a different classroom, even on the same site, staff will want to arrange time for a pupil with a visual impairment to become familiar with the new surroundings. In addition, changes may be required in technological supports or tools to prepare for the new school session and so the following aspects should be considered:

- Environmental Audit of school site internally and externally, ensuring that all steps, drop – offs, pillars and trip hazards are highlighted in yellow, best seating position in classrooms in relation to board access and glare, etc.
- All floor or wall markings relating to physical distancing should be in contrasting colours to make them visually accessible as far as possible.
- Adaptation / modification in lessons with health and safety issues, e.g. machinery in Technology
- Orientation with child around school site, using enlarged and highlighted map, looking at routes to key parts of school, e.g. dining hall, gymnasium, toilets, classrooms.
- Provide pupil with an enlarged timetable, school booklet and map of school
- Peer support – look at pairing pupil with another pupil
- Ascertain best location for specialist equipment, e.g. CCTV in English for texts, Geography for maps

Training should be considered for all new members to the school and for staff in a receiving school if the pupil is transferring to a new environment after the summer.

- Whole staff or key staff INSET around child's visual needs and strategies to enable good, visual access and ensuring all teachers have summary of visual needs and strategies or copy of functional vision assessment report with recommendations
- SfLA training to look at in-class support, monitoring use of specialist equipment and adaptation of learning materials, etc.

#### Visual Access in Lessons

- Ascertain what core textbooks are being used and have these adapted in large print well beforehand.
- Look at best seating position in classes for pupil in relation to board work, sunlight and reflected glare.
- Look at ICT solutions to access lessons - teaching and learning materials on screen using tablet, iPad, laptop and other specialist equipment, etc; use of TEAMS or Google Classroom; and use of teacher's laptop screen mirroring software.
- Targeted SfLA Support – look at subjects / lessons where most SfLA support needed, quantity of support required, and - specifically - what support will be necessary

## Additional Considerations for Pupils who are Deaf/hearing impaired pupils

Possible Issues:

- Limited access to information and online learning suitable for deaf learners
- Lack of targeted information in BSL

Every child and school environment is different, but it is important that staff are aware of the particular challenges deaf children will face and the additional anxiety and fatigue these challenges may cause. Physical distancing regulations mean that deaf pupils will be operating outwith the optimal range for their hearing aids and implants. **Although they may hear something is being said, they may not understand what is being said.** The use of solid face masks and coverings make it impossible to lip-read or accurately gauge facial expression, thus isolating the deaf child further. Deaf friendly face masks should be used.

The return to school for a deaf pupil will be helped by:

- Returning to a familiar classroom with at least one familiar adult
- Using quieter classrooms away from external noise sources preferably with carpeted areas, working blinds
- Seating as far as possible from internal sound sources.
- Using a visual timetable – especially for new routines
- Many radio systems have been at home during the school closure period. Some may be damaged and require attention. Passing a radio aid transmitter between users represents an infection risk. Lanyards should be wiped down with hand sanitiser or disinfectant wipes between users. Contact HDES for specific cleaning advice.
- Treating it like a starting school transition – give parents as much information as possible about what school will be like and ask them to talk it through with the child so they aren't expecting it to be the same as school usually is.
- Having a video / virtual tour of the classroom in advance of the child returning.
- Positioning the deaf child to maximise hearing
- Explaining routines in advance. If there are changes, check the deaf child has understood.
- Ensuring that the adults are aware of the pupil's needs.
- Recording key information on the board in written, pictorial or diagrammatic form.
- Repeating key learning points and instructions and checking regularly that the deaf child has understood by asking an open question.
- Reassuring the pupil and encouraging them to alert you if they can't hear or understand



Follow this link for a short infographic:

<https://www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK/videos/3087775494640238/?v=3087775494640238>

## **GENERAL ADVICE**

Communication: The optimum distance for listening with any type of hearing device is 2m indoors in a quiet environment– so physical distancing and outdoor learning creates huge listening challenges for a deaf child. Physical distancing means that routines that deaf children rely on to reduce their listening load will change. Children will not be close enough to adults or peers to gain a clear view of facial expressions, lip reading cues or visual support materials. The combined effect of struggling to hear over increased distance and learning new routines will lead to an increase in fatigue.

To help with these challenges:

- Use quieter classrooms away from external noise sources (eg roads)
- Reduce background noise
- Consider using a horseshoe arrangement of tables to allow deaf pupils to see others.
- Sit the pupil as near to you as physical distancing allows
- Ensure the pupil can see your face (for lip reading and facial expression)
- Ensure their hearing/aids/ cochlear implants are on and working
- Microphones point forward - they do not pick up sound from behind
- Use a radio aid/FM system if available
- Pupils should carry their own battery supplies
- Attract the child's attention before speaking
- Face the pupil, speak clearly and speak at a normal pace
- Use short phrases and simple language
- Use facial expression and gesture
- Use visual supports - visual support reduces anxiety in a deaf child
- Write new vocabulary on the board
- Check for understanding using open ended questions
- Repeat answers/ comments by other pupils
- Outdoors, a deaf child is unlikely to hear a shouted warning or instruction
- Be aware that cartoons have distorted lip patterns
- Speech to text apps like Otter.ai can be used with older pupils

Please contact Orkney Hearing Impairment Education Service for:

- Pupil specific advice – especially pupils in a new placement.
- Support with a sign dependent pupil
- Advice on cleaning radio aid/FM systems and lanyards

## Additional Considerations for Pupils with Autism and Neurodevelopmental Conditions

Make time to have a conversation with parents and with the pupil too if possible. As with all children, experiences will be mixed and some children will have been highly anxious over the past few months, while some will have been more settled at home.

Some children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other neurodevelopmental conditions may have found it easier to learn from home, as their social anxiety will have reduced considerably. Some parents may therefore be considering continuing to home-school. If this is the case, it would be helpful to have a conversation about the pros and cons to this and to reassure them of the things you can put in place to support their child and the longer term benefits of managing social anxiety with support at this time in their lives. It will be helpful to explore with them what worked well during the lockdown period and how these elements can be maintained/made use of moving forward.

### Possible Issues and Suggested Strategies:

- Because the experience for all children will be different, plans and protocols should be reviewed to take account of the changed needs for each child/young person. Assessment of their needs should be considered within the 6 part model within the Neurodevelopmental Needs training, shared by Highland. Orkney EP Service can support the local delivery of the Neurodevelopmental Needs training material within the following link <https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>
- All children communicate well, if we are tuned into them. Some will, however, have had a narrower communication experience while at home.
- Returning to school may feel overwhelming and some children will seem to have 'lost skills' they had before schools closed.
- Pupils will benefit from the use of social stories, with precise sentences giving clarity about what is happening and why. A number of prepared social stories for physical distancing, hand washing, etc can be found here <https://www.reachoutasc.com/resources/transition-to-new-class>
- Be factual. Do not use ambiguous language.
- For some, on-line communication may have opened up different ways to communicate and we need to build on these skills.
- Some pupils who find it difficult to be in a class with their peers, may be able to join the class virtually from another room in the school as a step towards returning to the classroom.

- For some, the smaller classes proposed in many schools initially, might offer that stepping stone to return to the classroom.
- If children are to be taught in ‘bubbles’ this term will need to be explained explicitly through a social story  
<https://www.reachoutasc.com/attachments/article/13/School%20Bubble%20SS%20.pdf>
- Sitting and listening for prolonged periods of time again will be difficult for many. We may need to ease some children back more slowly into the structure and the use of visual strategies, social stories and symbols will be helpful for this  
<https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/>
- Children may initially need more thinking time, more breaks and space for processing sensory, emotional and communication overload.
- Be prepared for some children masking how difficult the return to school is for them. This may cause more difficulties at home for a time.
- Some pupils will have put lots of effort into building friendships and will find it difficult to go back to the start with this. Don’t expect that they will be able to pick up socially where they left off. They have changed, as have their peers. Some will be taller, more mature, have acquired different interests, have different hairstyles etc and for a child with ASD, these changes will be significant.
- Some children will have ‘forgotten’ the social niceties – how to engage socially with others. This will need practice.
- The message about keeping safe may be over-generalised, so if someone coughs the pupil may become distressed. They may also be extremely concerned if anyone at home or in class becomes ill, as they may be concerned they will die. They will need reassurance about this.
- Some pupils who are more anxious when overwhelmed may have started to ‘stim’ (flap, rock, pick, fiddle, etc) as their brain is trying to focus in on just one sensory input. This can help them self-regulate, but it may not be appropriate or safe behaviour to engage in. Alternative sensory activities that calm, can be helpful in such situations.
- The routine at home may need clear visual cues to support the return to school – self-checking visuals for getting up on time, getting dressed, etc.
- A countdown calendar, building up to the start of school will also be helpful.

Below is an online course with short video clips outlining the main issues with pupils returning to school

<https://www.schudio.tv/courses/take/preparing-autistic-send-children-for-going-back-to-school/lessons/12474279-finding-hope-in-the-familiar>

Please contact Jeanne Kocemba Support Teacher (Language and Communication Service). She is a member the Pupil Support Team and is happy to be consulted through email or VC on any aspect of communication support.

Jeanne is happy to support schools with the preparation of the following support materials

- social stories
- countdown to new school term starting
- visual timetables for the first day back (preparation is key)
- visuals to support transitions such as playtime, start/end of day
- visuals to support handwashing and physical distancing
- templates for information about how the setting will look at the beginning of term
- bespoke home learning packs for blended approach
- information on creating work stations for independent learning

## Additional Considerations for Pupils with Mental Health Issues

For many schools one of the key challenges will be working out how to keep children and young people psychologically safe during any transition period following lockdown; particularly for those students who are vulnerable and may have experienced lockdown as a frightening and distressing time.

The loss of routine and structure will have been traumatic for some. Over 80% of young people with pre-existing mental health issues responding to a survey, reported that the current crisis impacted negatively on their mental health. This national report also provided evidence of the increased incidence of self-harm (Young Minds, 2020). Children can find it alarming that the structure of their week has been so dramatically changed, however logical the reason. The suddenness of it all may induce panic attacks and/or a loss of self-control, as the child feels their own intellect no longer informs their personal judgements accurately.

Anxiety is a cruel companion. It eats away at the positive mental health of the child and can cause a deterioration in their overall well-being. The anxious child is not a learning child. Mood swings may prevail; they can become irrational and illogical. There can be a loss of sleep; the cumulative tiredness can diminish the child's coping mechanisms.

For some pupils who had experienced bullying while in school previously, the return to the school building and their peer group might be a significant stressor. Trying to reassure them without a clear idea of what school will actually be like on 11<sup>th</sup> August may be difficult. These pupils will need space to share their concerns as the anticipatory anxiety they are feeling will be very high. In addition, their parents will also be anxious and so not as able to provide reassurance and contain their distress.

We know that when the adults cope and are able to hold some of the pain and distress the pupils may bring, the pupils can manage their feelings more easily. Sometimes just being able to BE WITH the emotions of another person is containing and so staff shouldn't feel that they have to be therapists or provide any specific interventions to support children and young people.

Consistent boundaries and reinforcing the core message that 'you matter' and 'I am here to listen when you need to talk' can help students feel safer. These messages can help school feel as predictable a place as it can be, after experiencing something that has been so unpredictable. However, knowing how to balance this with the need, for some students, to access more intensive support can feel challenging.

Young people respond to adversity in a range of ways, including changes in their capacity for learning and physical and psychological wellbeing. These behavioural changes may indicate confusion and uncertainty, or underlying, ongoing distress.

Some young people might display observable and active 'acting out' behaviours that communicate a clear emotional need. Others might become withdrawn or appear unusually needy. We can try to notice our tendency to make judgements around behaviour and remind ourselves to view all behaviour as an indicator of emotions to which we can respond in an empathic and caring manner. This can be particularly hard to do when a young person acts in a way that hurts or frightens others.

Some groups to be especially aware of are:

- Pupils who have experienced significant loss or bereavement.
- Pupils who have been shielding during the pandemic as a result of underlying health conditions, and siblings of those who have been shielding, whose experience of lockdown will have been even more restricted.
- Pupils who may have identified as LGBTI but in families where parents have not yet acknowledged or fully accepted their identity.
- Pupils with existing social, emotional and mental health needs (some might have previously been receiving more intensive support from a Social Worker, Counsellor or CAMHS).
- Pupils with other known additional needs or disabilities.
- Pupils who had experienced other traumatic events prior to lockdown e.g. a car accident, house fire, etc.
- Pupils who are Looked After or subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Syrian New Scots or others who may have previous experiences of trauma in other countries.

For these students, the last few months may have created additional pressure and stresses that could be leading to greater psychological distress or anxiety. On transition, approaches that focus mainly on behaviour can have further negative effects and may provide further rejection or feelings of shame. Behavioural approaches based on rewards and sanctions will not provide opportunities for young people to learn to express their emotions in a more socially acceptable way.

### ***What might help?***

- Provide opportunities for sharing thoughts and feelings and time to talk. Be sensitive to the needs of the young person and ask them what you might do to help.
- Consult with your link Educational Psychologist or in school counsellor, for ideas on what else might be helpful right now. If these services are already directly involved, they will have continued their contact over the past few months and may have further information to help advise you.

- The general principle of providing a safe environment, high in nurture and structure, with adults responding in a consistent manner, maintaining clear boundaries and expectations is still important, most particularly when other areas of a student's life may not feel as structured.
- Trust your instincts in knowing when ignoring low level behaviour is needed. Reflecting on whether students would typically exhibit these types of behaviours, or whether it is "out of character" will help to make informed judgements. Hold on to the importance of **flexibility** for these students.
- Discuss the relationship between behaviour, thoughts and feelings with students, and how we often use our behaviour to communicate our feelings, particularly when we are unable to label the emotion.
- The use of an '**authoritative**' versus '**authoritarian**' approach where adults are 'in control' versus 'controlling' can be very powerful. We know that fostering **connection, inclusion, respect and value** for all members of the school community supports students to feel a sense of belonging, being heard, understood and cared about.

## Additional Considerations for Looked After (Care Experienced) Children and Young People

Specific information on Care Experienced children and young people can be found here: <https://www.celcis.org/> This website has information about the general support for a child who is looked after by the local authority and this advice is still pertinent as we consider transitions.

Some children and young people who are 'Looked After' by the local authority are living at home, or with extended family or in residential accommodation. Some children will have come into the care of the local authority during the last few months due to difficult circumstances at home and some will have managed well with the support of social care staff working in the community. The designated manager for LAC in each school will need to update appropriate members of staff on the current situation for each care experienced pupil.

As our care experienced children and young people prepare to return from residential units or from home or kinship placements, particular account should be taken of their mental health needs during the crisis. Here are some points to consider:

- Some care experienced children will already have experienced loss and significant changes in their lives and many will have also experienced a number of close bereavements and trauma in the past. Added to this, the more recent losses of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom, could trigger the emergence emotionally of anxiety, trauma and bereavement in them. The overall effect could be a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of many of our looked after children and young people.
- Listen and acknowledge: Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- Provide clear information about the situation: The best way to help children feel safe is by talking openly about what is happening and providing honest answers to any questions they have.
- Acknowledge the situation: Recognise the changes that may have happened since schools closed, but reassure them they are welcome in the school, they have been missed and they are a vital part of the school community.
- Be aware of your own reactions: Remember that children and young people often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives.



- It may have been difficult for children and young people to maintain contact with their friends and families during this period. As we return to a blended learning approach, school staff should continue to encourage contact via media platforms and find creative ways for children to keep in touch.
- Many of the plans to increase time at home for some children/young people who were in Foster Care or in residential units will have been put on hold and face to face contact with family members will have been limited. This will have caused some emotional distress for those children/young people affected.
- Formal reviews and legal processes may have been delayed during the lockdown period and so plans and paperwork may need to be updated and amended in preparation for hearings or reviews.

Some young people have reported that they are feeling less anxious about not going into school and more relaxed and less pressured learning within their unit or at home. This may cause some challenges when schools re-open and they have to prepare to return. As a result, this transition back may be harder and require more support.

## **Additional Considerations for Pupils who are Young Carers**

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps to look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. Many look after a parent or care for a brother or sister.

They often do extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning or helping someone get dressed and move around.

They may also give a lot of physical help to a brother, sister or parent who is disabled or ill.

During the past few months, young carers may have had the additional pressure of care, with siblings being at home full time and education being provided in the home. They may have taken on the responsibility for the education of their brothers and sister, as well as for themselves, if their parent(s) have not been well enough or physically able to help.

Some children and young people in Orkney will have found themselves taking on even more responsibility for shopping, picking up medicines, etc, as their parents have had to be shielded as a result of Covid-19. For many young carers, school is a safe haven, a place to go to get some respite and 'normality' away from their caring responsibilities and this will have been greatly reduced, possibly leading to greater stress and impacting on their own mental health and wellbeing.

Some will have been increasingly worried for the health of their parents and/or siblings and as they look towards the opening of schools, they may have mixed feelings, being anxious to leave their parents at home but also keen to return to school and reconnect with friends and staff with whom they may have positive relationships.

It will be important to be aware that the combination of general and specific anxiety about the pandemic and its possible (or actual) effect on their family, along with a weight of responsibility from their physical and emotional caring duties, may have made academic learning feel inconsequential.

Further information about the needs of young carers can be accessed here:

<https://www.connectingyoungcarers.org/>

## **Additional Considerations for Pupils affected by Bereavement**

There is no formula for grieving. People vary in their response to loss. Similarly, there are no prescribed time scales for grief, although most achieve some degree of resolution and acceptance eventually.

When someone close to us dies we experience grief and go through a process of mourning. The experience is both emotional and physical.

The way children grieve is often described as 'puddle-jumping': moving rapidly from great distress to physical activity, for example. This is normal.

In our current circumstances however, the usual rituals and supports that we use to guide us through our grief are not available and there may be many additional emotional overlays, regrets and worries that further add to the grieving process for anyone who has faced the death of a loved one over the past few months.

We know that children generally take their cues from the adults around them and so will have been affected both by their own feelings of loss and the additional emotions felt by the adults around them too.

Training material, shared by Highland EP Services, on supporting children and young people with loss and grief can be accessed here:

<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>

Orkney's Educational Psychology team can support you to present these materials at a whole school level

Staff may want to familiarise themselves with Child Bereavement UK's 'Managing Bereavement – A Guide for Schools'

(<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb>), which contains both information and guidance on how to support children, families and the wider school community, when someone within the community dies. The Child Bereavement UK website contains many additional resources focused on supporting children with bereavement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

OIC EP Service and other local counselling services and bereavement support agencies can be accessed for further advice and support .

Possible Issues:

- Impact of grief or loss on a child or young person (this could be death of a family member, a friend, or a member of staff from their school)
- Impact of grief on a parent which is having an impact on their capacity to support their child or family
- Not being able to properly say goodbye to deceased due to restrictions around lockdown

Things to consider:

- Ensure child or parent knows they can talk about their feelings if they want to do so.
- Ensure that the people that they are most comfortable with are available to talk with them.
- Keep them as informed as possible about 'changes' at school to minimise extra worries.
- Explore whether they want staff or the class to know about their loss.
- Find opportunities to give extra support and encouragement.
- Make a personal plan or prompts to keep with them when they return to school which they can check when they aren't coping as well.
- In all situations, when there has been a bereavement within the school community, ask the family how they would like this to be acknowledged and marked. They may not want it to be shared with others. This is a personal and private issue and we must be guided by the wishes of the family.

Child Bereavement UK Website

Advice and support on childhood bereavement <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

## Additional Considerations for Pupils with Assistive Technology Needs

As pupils return to school, it will be important to assess their equipment needs and their current use of assistive technology. Some pupils will have found it difficult to access appropriate education and activities because the specialist equipment, apps and programmes that they would normally use at school, were not able to be replicated for them at home. They may have lost skills they previously had learned, or may now be out of practice with the use of some of the equipment and programmes they were more familiar with previously in school. They may need to return to an earlier level of development and have a period of re-familiarisation.

Some pupils, out of necessity, may have enhanced their IT skills and be more proficient in the use of specific programmes, shortcuts, etc to support their learning and have found creative ways to overcome or manage their additional needs, e.g. using more accessible programmes to support dyslexia.

For all children, a discussion with them or their parents/carers about how they have managed with the use of IT while being at home will be important to update the child's plan and to plan the next steps.

Where specialist assistive technology is used by a pupil in school, protocols will have to be in place for cleaning the equipment daily (if it remains in school) and/or cleaning it on arrival from home and at the end of the day if it is equipment that travels with the child/young person. Only one pupil should have access to specialist equipment, computers, switches, etc, on any one day if possible, so that cleaning between use is able to be undertaken.

For all pupils, the following guidelines are helpful in ensuring accessibility when using Chromebooks and other devices in school:

- Many children manage better with a mouse than using a track pad. This makes it easier to see the cursor and control movement. Always offer the use of a mouse.
- Clear, accessible text should be used wherever possible. Improve on the default settings throughout GSuite - including Google Classroom.
- Keep instructions concise - especially where text readability is poor. e.g. Google Classroom Stream & Classwork/Assignment area.
- A 'Directions page' in the Google Stream helps to reduce clutter and mitigate the lack of text formatting options. [EY Sample here](#).

- Embed hyperlinks where possible to improve overall readability and to better signpost pupils to resources.
- Provide and encourage the use of a text-to-speech support tool such as ClaroRead (see below).
- Always try to include an answer sheet for pupils in the Assignment area - even if nearly blank - always try to make it clear where to put answers or what kind of file/doc/app to use.
- Try to reduce the number of steps in accessing, carrying out, and handing in the task.
- Avoid posting old Word/Publisher documents that were designed to be used in print if they're to be used digitally - repurpose them in a workable format.
- PDFs of the right sort are OK for reading but can't be edited or written upon - get KAMI installed on pupil devices to allow for annotation.
- Utilise Google Drawings/Slides for variation of/more age appropriate writing spaces.

Encourage users to learn relevant, quick keyboard shortcuts for improving readability (size):

Ctrl & +	Zoom in
Ctrl & -	Zoom out
Ctrl & 0 (zero)	Reset zoom

Consider changing your, and your pupils', default settings in Google Docs. (Video). If using YouTube videos, make use of subtitles/closed captioning and investigate the settings to maximise the readability. (cc font sizes and colours, etc. video playback speed)

Links and additional information about the Extensions mentioned can be found below:

ClaroRead for Chrome & some notes from the ATSS blog here.

KAMI - PDF Annotation

Reader View

Book on Accessible Text

For further advice and training consider joining the Assistive Technology/ASN Google Classroom Community and stay connected to new tools and ideas. Join code: reizokq

## Appendices

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Appendix 1	References
Appendix 2	Web Links
Appendix 3	SHANARRI checklist
Appendix 4	Examples of visual supports (to be added)



## Key References

**Alston, S. (2020)** *The many problems of returning to school*

<https://www.seainclusion.co.uk/post/the-many-problems-of-returning-to-school>

**Bennathan, M. & Boxall, M. (2018).** *Boxall Profile Handbook (Revised): A guide to effective intervention in the education and care of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.* London: The Nurture Group Network.

**Bi-Borough EPCS (April 2020)** *Transition, Recovery and Learning in the aftermath*

**Bomber, L.M. & Hughes, D.A. (2013).** *Settling to Learn. Settling Troubled Pupils to Learn: Why Relationships Matter in School.* London: Worth Publishing Ltd.

**Carpenter B, and Carpenter, M. (2020)** *A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and Life for our children and schools post pandemic.*

**Education Scotland,** *How good is our school?* 4<sup>th</sup> edition with specific reference to QI 2.6 Transitions and the Themes of: Arrangements to support learners and their families, Collaborative planning and delivery and Continuity and progression in learning:

[https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks\\_selfevaluation/frwk2\\_nihedithgjos/frwk2\\_hgios4.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks_selfevaluation/frwk2_nihedithgjos/frwk2_hgios4.pdf)

**Education Scotland** *'The Compassionate and Connected Classroom and Community' consists of a curricular and professional learning resource. This suite of resources aims to raise awareness of the potential impact of adversity and trauma in shaping outcomes for children and young people and provide support that can help mitigate the impact of these experiences.*

- <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/compassionate-and-connected-classroom>
- <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/applying-nurture-as-a-whole-school-approach-a-framework-to-support-self-evaluation/>

**Epinsight (2020)** *Supporting post lockdown education using the 6 principles of nurture*

[https://www.epinsight.com/post/supporting-post-lockdown-education-using-the-6-principles-of-nurture?fbclid=IwAROLTuJ8BqofEh02q6LoHtRJ\\_NwOpLb0Cbnmz4GY5ZiJ3sT08UfNAJISPOw](https://www.epinsight.com/post/supporting-post-lockdown-education-using-the-6-principles-of-nurture?fbclid=IwAROLTuJ8BqofEh02q6LoHtRJ_NwOpLb0Cbnmz4GY5ZiJ3sT08UfNAJISPOw)

**Geddes, H. (2006),** *Attachment in the Classroom*

[www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/231/joint\\_transition\\_protocol.doc](http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/231/joint_transition_protocol.doc)

**Highland Council,** *Highland Practice Model (HPM):* <http://forhighlandschildren.org/5-practiceguidance/>

**Siegel, D.J. & Bryson, T.P. (2012).** *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 proven strategies to nurture your child's developing mind.* London: Robinson.

**Young Minds (2020)** <https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/reports/coronavirus-impact-on-young-people-with-mental-health-needs/>

## Appendix 2: Web Links

### Web Links

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/transitions/#Transitions-ASN>

<https://education.gov.scot/media/4hdphwyf/emerging-practice-asn-transitions.pdf>

<https://scottishtransitions.org.uk/about-us/arc-scotland>

<https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/what-we-do/embedding-inclusion-equity-and-empowerment/>

<https://education.gov.scot/media/ruxn0vno/reflective-questions-asn-transitions.pdf>

<https://sites.google.com/millburnacademy.org.uk/highlanddigitalschoolshub/wellbeing-for-all/staff>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/wellbeing-resources/>

<https://www.callscotland.org.uk/home>

<https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/>

<https://highlandcouncilpsychologicalservice.wordpress.com/covid-19-information-and-resources/>

<https://www.5pointscale.com>

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/wellbeing-resources/>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/compassionate-and-connected-classroom>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/applying-nurture-as-a-whole-school-approach-a-framework-to-support-self-evaluation/>

<https://education.gov.scot/media/0hucxxbd/practitioners-support-asn-transitions.pdf>

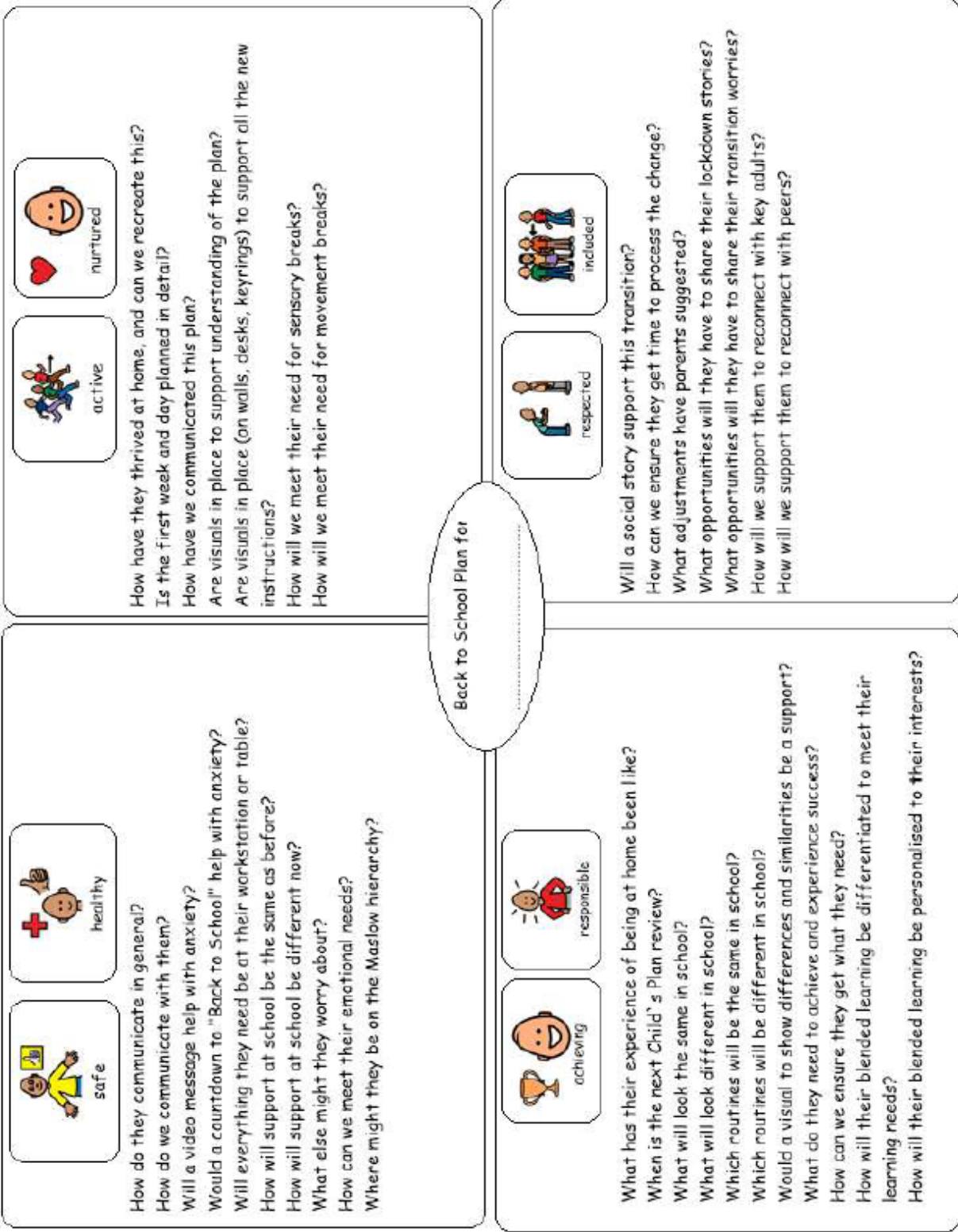
<https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/>

<http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/transitions>

Appendix 3: SHANARRI Checklist

**SHANARRI Checklist**

See Overleaf.



## Appendix 4: Examples of Visual Supports

### **Examples of Visual Supports**

(see accompanying zip file)

Social Story about coming back to school

COVID 19 specific information e.g. handwashing, physical distancing

New Rules and Routines

Countdown to Coming Back to School

Timetable for first day

Timetable for first week

School Day transitions (playtime, start/end of day)

Templates showing how the setting will look at the beginning of term

Positive Messages displays