

Year 6 Transition for children with Speech, Language, Communication Needs and Autism

The different lockdown experiences children have faced:

- Lack of access to IT equipment to support learning.
- Parents who are key workers and have continued to work throughout – may cause anxiety for children who fear for their safety.
- Parents who have been balancing working from home and home schooling.
- Children who have continued to attend school.
- Children who are fearful of leaving home due to concerns about the virus.
- Some children have siblings at home while others are only-children. How has this affected their lockdown experience in terms of play, interaction, communication, etc?
- Bereaved families.
- Members of the household having been ill and possibly hospitalised, causing anxiety within the home.
- Families where one child is returning to school while another is still at home.

Changes in the school routine

- Fewer children attending school.
- Changes in start, finish, break and lunchtimes.
- Changes in classrooms, classes split.
- Changes in the way children move around school, one-way systems.

Issues that may arise:

Social Communication and Interaction

- Some children may have withdrawn during the lock down period whereas others may have become more communicative. Returning to school will place greater demands on them and therefore may lead to increased anxiety.
- Consider how individual support is given, following social distancing guidelines.
- Friendship groups will be re-established, which may lead to children feeling isolated.
- There may need to be greater focus on recalling and practicing social skills.

Emotional and sensory regulation

- Children have been in a quieter environment and may struggle with sensory overload when facing a different environment.
- School uniform may feel uncomfortable or may be too small.
- Learning is likely to have been in shorter bursts and punctuated with frequent child led movement breaks or sensory circuits. Children may need more support to access movement breaks in class.

- Children may need to return to support strategies that haven't been in place for a while.
- There will be children who struggle with the anxiety of separation from their family. There will be children who do not want to come back to school or those that either had or may develop school-based anxiety.
- Children maybe dealing with other changes such as the onset of puberty.
- Sleeping patterns may have been disrupted or changed significantly and will take time to adjust, meaning that children may be tired in school.
- Access to food, drink and snacks may have been readily available. Children may be hungry at different times of the day.
- Some children will have found that whilst at home, their anxieties were reduced, and they felt calmer and more able to self-regulate. Some may be reluctant to return to school.

Suggested actions:

✓	<i>Detail</i>	Notes
	<p>Prior to schools opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with parents about lockdown experience and discuss staggered starts and timetabling. • A one-page profile / All About Me sheet should be filled in either with or by the parent, including the child's interests, sensory needs, methods of communication and strategies that work at home. See guidance and examples provided. • Ensure changes to the usual routine and the environment and new expectations are shared with the pupil through photographs or social story. This may include photographs of classroom layout and new signage, photographs of where pupils may line up or enter the school building, new markings on the playground or outside, as well as changes to break time and lunchtime arrangements. • Prepare a parent handout, enabling them to explain the lockdown experience their child has had (see example provided). • Ensure visuals are in place, including access to timetables. • Ensure resources are available as per support strategies. • Facilitate access to movement breaks. 	

- Look at how social distancing can work for the child. Consider visual makers, physical supports (tape on floor, carpet spots, use of hoops, arrangement of furniture)
- Prepare social stories to support understanding of e.g. wearing masks, social distancing.
- Ensure staff are aware of the needs of the children and are familiar with strategies.

When schools reopen:

- Be aware of the range of lockdown experiences (see above)
- Focus on recognising the supporting and re-establishing routines, support with visual timetables and where helpful, social stories.
- Practice new rules, for example moving around school, entering and leaving the classroom, moving around the classroom.
- Where possible, keep seating and safe places consistent and familiar
- Plan what will happen around the freer parts of the day - child-initiated play, break times, lunch times.
- Allow for quiet breaks. Create a sensory safe place before the child returns and then make sure the child knows where this place is. If class numbers are limited this may provide a safer space straight away but then allow for when normality eventually returns.
- Be consistent with strategies.

What can parents do?

- Re-establish routines at home and explain changes in routine at school, support with a social story if necessary.
- Share experiences of lockdown, any changes in behaviour and sensory processing difficulties, motivators and anxieties.
- Communicate with the school throughout the return/transition process. Behaviours at home will give clues as to how the child is coping with the return to school.