



This leaflet, funded by the Department for Education, is intended to help build partnership between families and the school. The intention is to equip families with questions to ask of schools to make the return to school from a period of absence as successful as possible. The questions can be used by families and by young people to support self-advocacy. Effective partnerships can help to reduce misunderstandings and help secure the most successful return to school. In this leaflet, developed by families, in partnership with NHS England and Improvement's Ask Listen Do project, we have identified a range of questions that families may want to ask those who support their children at school, within the context of supporting their return. This is intended to enable families to ask effective questions in order to find out more about what schools are doing, how it is evaluated and what impact it is likely to have on supporting a successful return. By supporting families and schools to work together, the aim is to reduce conflict and improve outcomes for children and young people. One way of achieving this is by communicating honestly, openly and often. The questions below and overleaf are examples of the types of questions you may wish to ask to support planning for a child / young person's return to school.

### Preparing for return

- How can we, as the family, share with you our knowledge about what is needed and what will work most effectively?
- How will children / young people be involved in shaping their own return and evaluating the extent to which it is successful and sustainable?
- How does the school support its staff in order to secure a successful return to school for children / young people?
- How will changes within the school, that have occurred during the period of absence, be communicated to children / young people in order to support their return?
- How will the school ensure that both families and children / young people know who to contact in order to raise any concerns?
- How will the school ensure that a flexible approach is woven into the return to school and how will it be monitored in order to ensure that adjustments are made proactively in order to reduce the risk of placement breakdown?
- What is your process for planning a return to school? Who can be involved and who will coordinate that within school?

### Supporting the return

- What services or expertise can the school access with regards to supporting the emotional wellbeing of children / young people both prior to and following their return to school?
- Where necessary, how will blended learning, accommodating both on site and home education, be facilitated in order to meet the educational, social and emotional requirements of children / young people?
- Where necessary, how will children / young people be supported to have a programme of variable attendance, and how will they and their families be involved in making decisions regarding what is required?
- What support will be provided for peer groups associated with the child / young person as part of the planning and preparation for a return to school?
- How does the school make use of multiagency approaches to ensure that a return to school is successful?
- What supportive resources are available in order to support a successful return to school?
- What emotional support is available to children / young people and their families, before, during and after the return to school, in order to help secure a successful outcome?

- How will assessment be used in order to ensure that work is pitched at the correct developmental level following a period of sustained absence?
- What support will be put in place, either by the school or in partnership with other agencies, to support children / young people and their families during the process of a return to school?

### **Making adjustments for the return**

- How does the school evaluate what has worked well previously, or has not worked well, in order to inform effective practice and support the successful return to school?
- How do you evaluate your policies, including those for behaviour, in order to support a successful return to school and how are any reasonable adjustments to those policies decided?
- How will you determine what reasonable adjustments need to be made to facilitate a successful return of children / young people with a disability to school?
- How has the school risk assessed the return to school and what reasonable adjustments have been put in place in order to maximise the possibility of success?
- How will the school evaluate the relative importance of educational development and wellbeing, on an individual basis and use this information as part of the planning process for return?

- Has the school assessed the EHCP, where the child / young person has one, in order to ensure that the entitlements set out within it are available upon their return?

We hope that these example questions are a useful starting point for discussion, but should you be in need of any further support then the following organisations may be useful:

- [Association for Educational Psychologists](#)
- Contact [info@wholeschoolsend.com](mailto:info@wholeschoolsend.com)
- Twitter [@wholeschoolsend](#)

National or local charities specialising in supporting the needs of children with particular conditions may also be able to offer advice. Please also consider contacting your local Parent Carer Forum [nnpcof.org.uk](http://nnpcof.org.uk) in order to develop links with other parents. Sharing your experiences has the potential to help all families of children with SEND.

Additional information is also available from The Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/returning-school-after-lockdown>



# Returning to school after a period of absence

Questions to help the process for children, young people and their families

*in partnership with*

**Ask Listen Do**  
 Making conversations count  
 in health, social care and education