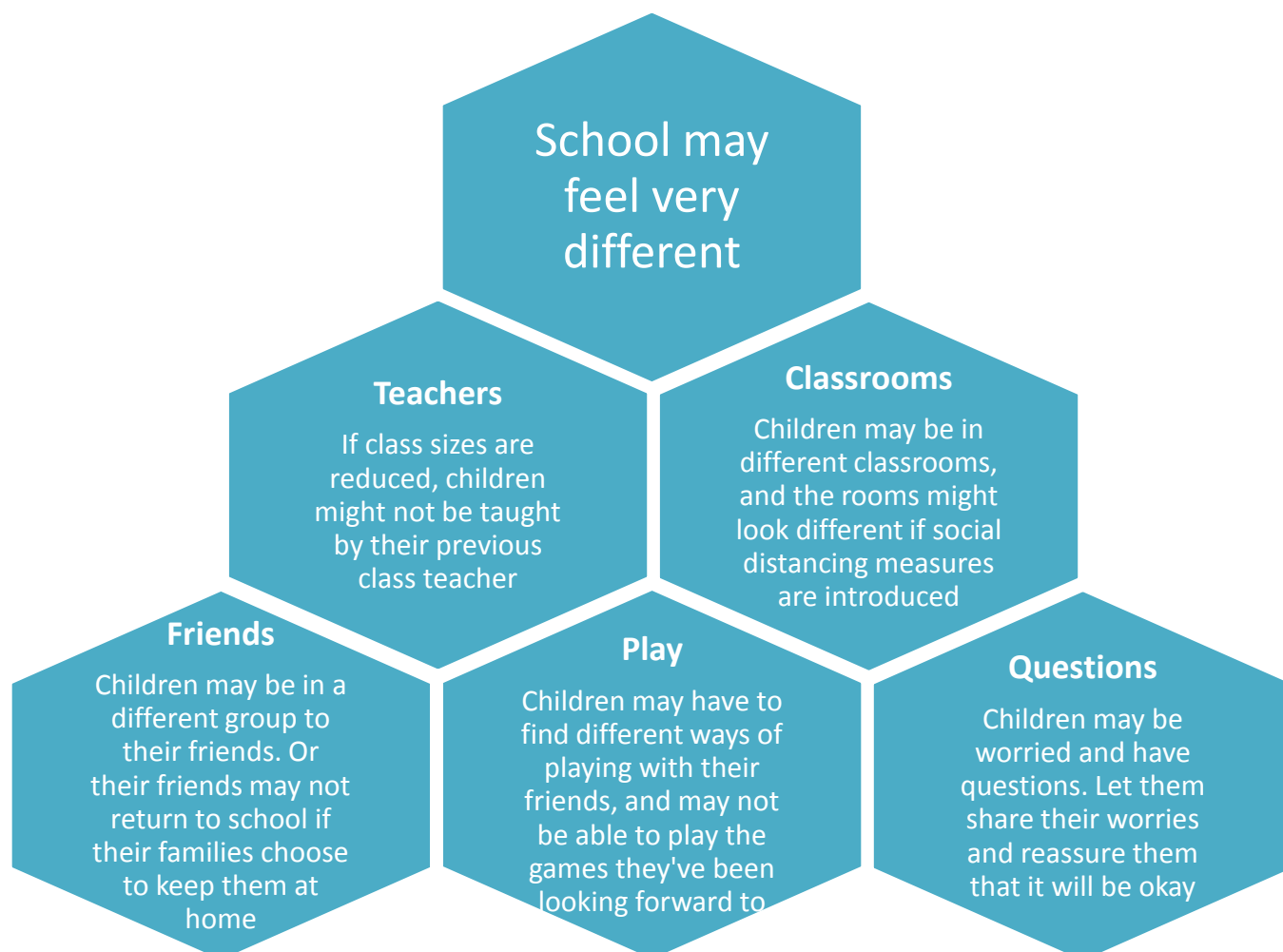




# Supporting Parents and Carers to Prepare Children for Transition

Research and experience has shown time and time again that children (and adults) are resilient. They likely have a number of skills and strengths which will allow them to adapt quickly and effectively to change, with minimal enduring negative impact. What's more, schools are well versed in transition support and are well placed to support students and families during this uncertain time. That said there will be some young people who might find the transition more difficult.

This document aims to provide some brief guidance and reassurance to help in your thinking about children's initial return to school. Before children return, it will be important to prepare them for any major changes to their school and usual routines. We should provide our young people with some information around what they should expect when returning to school, and support parents and carers having these conversations. Some topics to consider may be:



# Whole School Transition

Research has suggested five key principles that support recovery after a serious incident (Hobfoll et al., 2007)

- **A sense of safety** – children and staff should feel safe returning to school
- **A sense of calm** – difficult feelings should be normalized, and support provided
- **A sense of self- and collective- efficacy** – children and staff should feel some control over what is happening to them, feel as if they belong to a group, and that there will be positive outcomes
- **Social connectedness** – children and staff should feel they belong to a social network which can support them
- **Promoting hope** – children and staff should feel that whilst things may be difficult currently, it will improve in the future

Once again, we believe that schools are best placed for knowing how to support their school and community. Below are some areas for you to think about in your planning. For more information, click on the links to watch a related video.

## Routines

Routines provide a sense of **safety** and **calm**, but these will need to be rebuilt after a period of absence. It may take some children longer than others to establish this and there may be an increase in lateness.

**How can routines be re-established and amended to build in new hygiene measures?**

**How can accommodations be made for routine slip-ups?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Community and belonging

There may be a discrepancy between children who continued attending school and those who were at home. It's important for both groups of children to develop **social connectedness** and **collective-efficacy** together.

**How can the school community be rebuilt for all students?**

**How can the return to school be marked to incorporate everyone's unique experiences of the closure?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Staff anxiety

There may be a lot of anxiety felt by staff in regards to returning or and/due to their own personal experiences and circumstances. Some staff members may feel as if they have no control over what is happening to them, losing their **sense of self-efficacy**. Staff ability to support children will depend upon their own feelings of safety and calm, so it will be important to ensure that they are well supported. Children will mirror the emotions felt by staff, so it will be key to **promote hope** within the whole school community.

**How can you acknowledge that anxiety is normal? What approaches do you already use that could be implemented school wide?**

**How can you support the anxiety within your staff and how their circumstances might differ?**

**What are the support systems already in place that you can capitalise on?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Feelings of Loss

Some staff and children may have experienced bereavements due to COVID-19. There may also be experiences of loss due to daily reporting of death counts and/or fear of possible bereavements. Feelings of loss can also be experienced outside of bereavement. Staff and children may be grieving lost experiences and expectations e.g. their last year of primary school.

It will be important to acknowledge these feelings to foster **social connectedness** and **collective-efficacy**.

**How can these experiences be acknowledged and marked as a community?**

**How can fears be recognised and mediated?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Implementing social distancing and hygiene

Social distancing and hygiene practices will need to be built into the school routine for it to become habit and provide a **sense of safety** and **calm**.

Children will need support to adhere to these rules and be taught the skills needed to do so (e.g. how to play with others whilst maintaining distance). Introducing these policies will need to be done positively, focusing on what they need to do, rather than what not to do.

**How can children be encouraged to follow the rules without using sanctions?**

**What skills will need to be explicitly taught?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Children who will need to continue learning at home

There will be various reasons why some children may not return to school at the same times as their peers.

These children may lose their **sense of collective-efficacy** and **social connectedness** as they stay at home.

With teachers being back in classrooms, there may be fewer resources available to be sent home to these children.

**How can these children be kept in mind and continue to feel part of the school community?**

**How can children at home continue to access resources and learning?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Assessing home learning

It may be important to assess pupils' learning for future planning. Children may be worried about their missed learning and may have difficulty recognising and appreciating the non-academic learning they have had.

It will be important to recognise and celebrate the learning of all children without placing different values on their experiences.

**How can learning be assessed informally without the need for 'testing'?**

**How can you celebrate the non-traditional learning children have completed at home?**

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## Support that can be provided by your link EP

- **Consultation** – this can be provided at an individual, group or whole school level. Your EP can help you think about some of the topics described above, or any other issues pertinent to your school.
- **Training** – your EP can provide training on whole school approaches such as trauma-informed practice
- **Supervision / reflective practice** – your EP can run a supportive group for staff to give them a space to think about their work.

*With grateful thanks to Educational Psychology Services across the UK for their generosity in sharing material.*