

## INSIGHTS

### Helping kids settle back into school



The start of the new school year brings a variety of challenges – from teacher and class changes, through to the transition from holiday mode back into the routine of school. This can make settling back into school difficult for some children and young people, especially after the extended summer break.

Naturally, as a parent you want to help your child settle back into school as seamlessly as possible, but it can often be hard to know where to start. So, we've asked the experts- primary and secondary school teachers – for their top tips.

#### Get kids involved in the organisation process

Being organised for school isn't a parent-only activity. Involve your kids as fully as practical in the process. By doing this, you will be encouraging them to take responsibility for and ownership of their schooling, not to mention reducing your workload.

Specific tasks include:

- preparing their uniform for each day
- packing their school bag
- helping organise their lunch
- ensuring they have the correct school resources for each day

#### Use positive language

It's critical to use positive language when discussing school because children who hear their parents discuss education in a negative way typically model that behaviour. This is especially important in the first few weeks back. Sharing your own positive school memories is an authentic and relatable way to do this.

#### Add a personal touch

If your child is struggling being away from you, consider giving them a bit of you to take with them can help the transition. Whether it's a personal item of yours that they carry with them, or even a positive note that you leave in their lunchbox, a personal touch is a helpful way for your child to stay connected with you throughout the school day. It's a great reminder that it will be okay.

#### Trust and communicate with your child's teacher

Trust your child's teachers as they have their best interest at heart and know children well! Couple this trust with regular communication, which is particularly helpful at the start of the year when back to school worries are identified and addressed. Continue this communication throughout the years, especially if any issues or concerns arise.

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It may be beneficial to arrange a meeting between you, the previous teacher and the current teacher to enable a smooth transition, particularly if problems emerge. It's a team effort, so working together is key.

## Talk about how they are feeling

It is important to discuss with your child how they are feeling about being back at school. So be prepared to listen and be guided by your child's responses.

Avoid shutting them down if they are feeling unsettled, nervous or scared and validate their emotions and work through them. This is especially important with the added complexity of the pandemic. Ensure you offer problem solving advice about what they can control, such as washing their hands regularly, or wearing a mask if this is a school requirement. Provide some time after school for your kids to talk with you about their day. This also provides an opportunity for them to decompress.

## Maintain a consistent routine at home

Moving from holiday mode into a more structured school mode is one of the biggest struggles for many kids. One way to reduce the impact of this transition is the maintenance of consistent routines at home over the weekends, especially in the first term.

Some specific ways include:

- Regular reading
- Limiting screen time
- Keeping mealtimes and bedtimes consistent

Using a visual 'back to school' schedule board or weekly planner can also assist in reminding kids what is coming up each week.

## Limit after school activities in Term 1

As kids readjust to being back at school, they will probably be tired. So, limiting after school activities such as sport and music, at least in the first term, helps them maintain a sense of balance.

Avoid overloading the weekends with activities so they can really use that time to relax and prepare for the week ahead.

## In closing

It is normal for every child to settle back into school differently. Some kids will be excited, and some may feel unmotivated or even anxious.

As parents, there is a variety of ways you can support your child as they transition back into the school routine. A critical first step is to work with your child and their teachers as a team and to keep those lines of communication open. This will also be beneficial throughout the school year as well, especially if any issues arise.



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