

## COVID-19 transition back to school

### Supporting your child with special educational needs

#### THINK PREPARATION

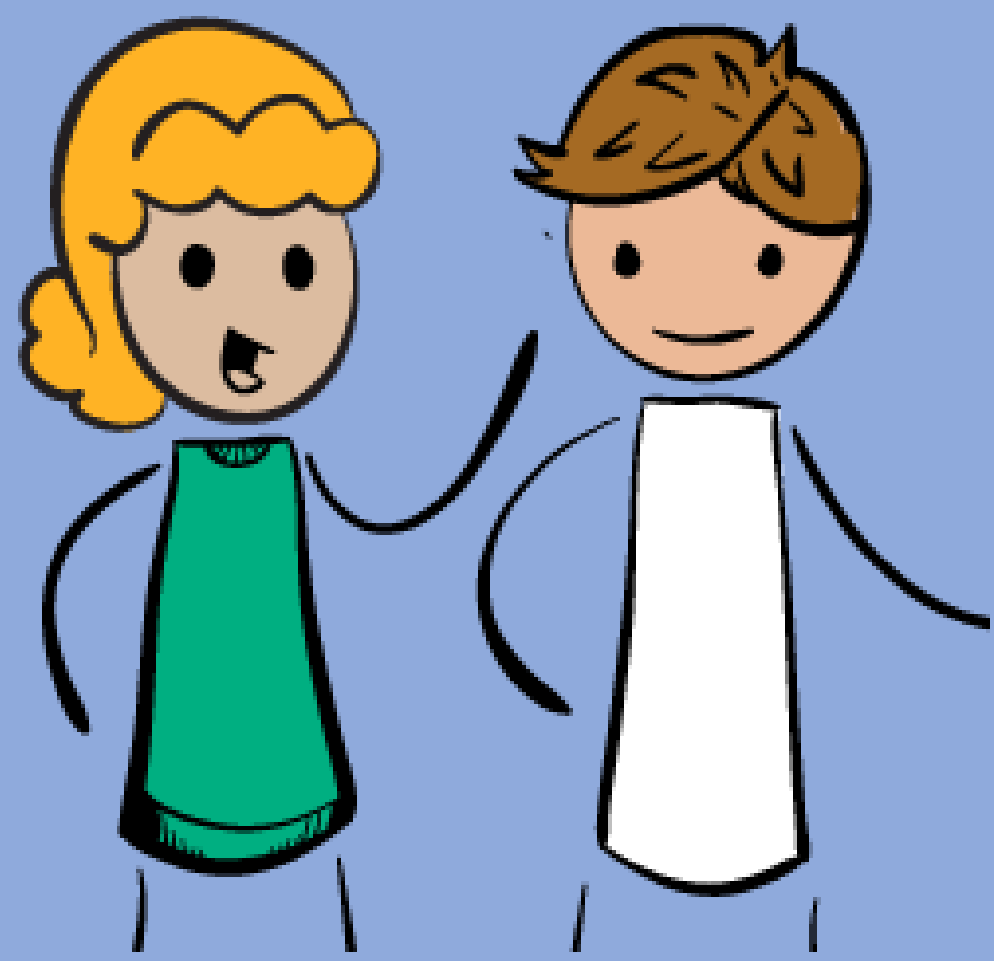
Children with special educational needs often find change difficult and will need time to adjust to going back to school.

- Give them as much notice as possible of changes including how they will be helped
- Talk to and plan with school about what support will be in place
- Use a calendar to mark down the days until they return to school
- Use social stories
- Try to get taster visits to school before other children come back if possible
- Talk to your child about what they may expect when they go back to school and some of the activities they may be doing



#### THINK RELATIONSHIPS

For a child returning to school, having a strong relationship with someone that they feel safe with can be vital, even for children who may struggle with social interaction.

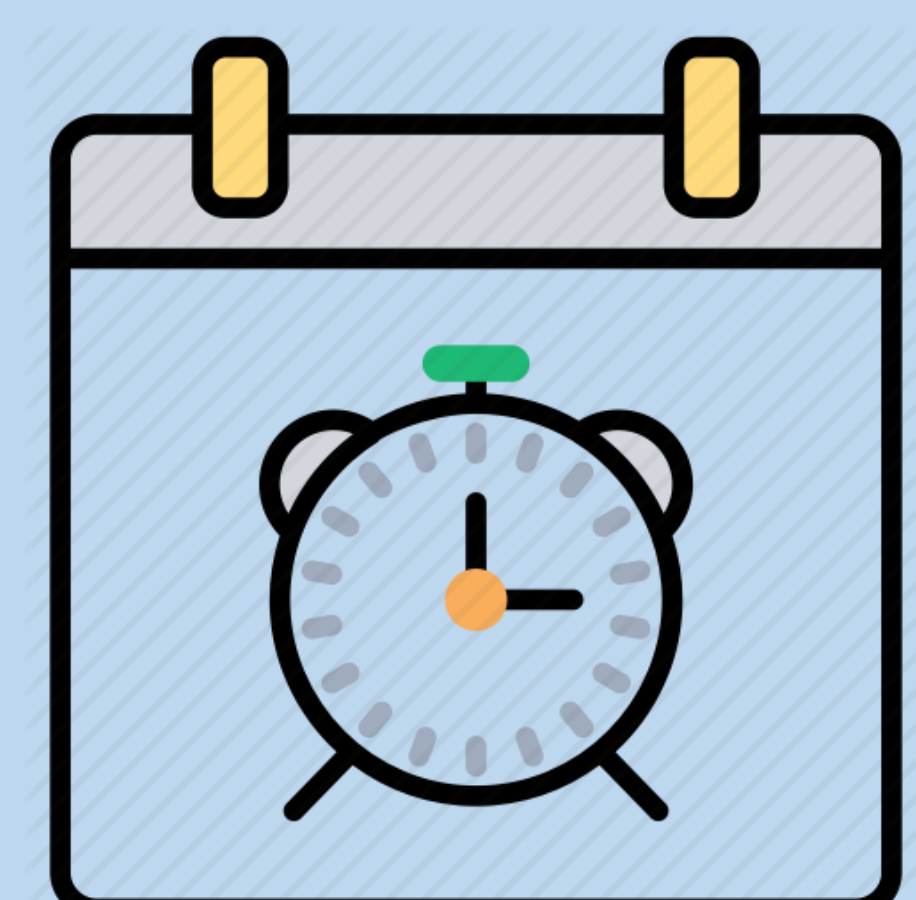


- Try to speak to the child's teacher or key worker before transition
- Talk with your child in terms of what staff members there will be in school to support them (use photos if possible)
- Remind them of friends they will see and activities they will do with them (if appropriate)

#### THINK STRUCTURE

Children with additional needs often thrive on structure, routine and may struggle with the sudden change to their day.

- Have a clear routine for school mornings – practice beforehand!
- Use visual timetables and 'now-and-next' boards
- Go through their school timetable with them beforehand if possible including which days they are going if part time.



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#### THINK SENSORY

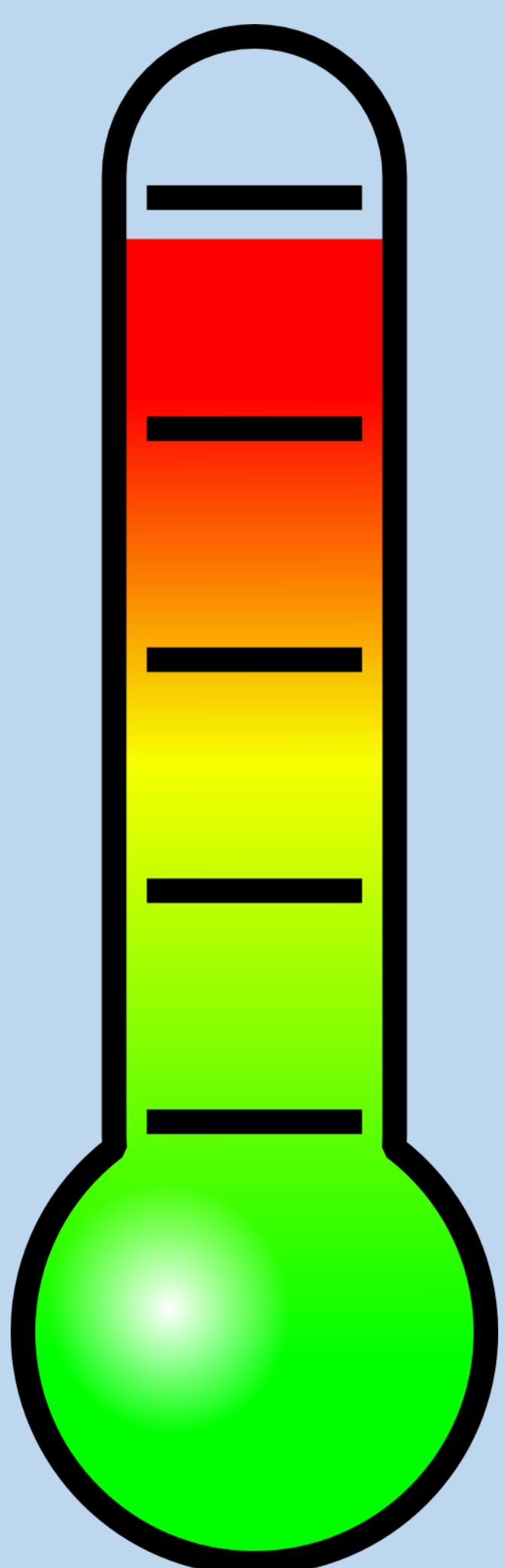
Anxiety will be high during transition back to school and supporting the sensory needs of your child can help reduce this.

- Communicate with school if your child has any specific sensory needs that have changed during lockdown eg. obsessive hand washing, anxiety about the virus
- Use a sensory toy as a transitional object for them to take to school (e.g. a fiddle toy, stress ball)
- Plan with your child what they can do to help with specific sensory difficulties in school



#### THINK EMOTIONS

All children will have many different feelings about going back to school, perhaps also related to worries about COVID-19, or feelings of loss and bereavement.



- Be prepared for emotions to come out in other ways such as changes in behaviour, eating, sleeping
- Talk to them about how they are feeling, help them to name their emotions and to realise that these feelings are 'normal'
- Get them to draw how they feel about going back to school and what they are looking forward to
- Use visual prompts such as feelings thermometers or emotions faces cards to help them put into words how they are feeling
- After the first day reduce stimulation and demands – they may well be overwhelmed and exhausted!

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#### THINK SUCCESS

You have already helped your child with many difficult transitions in the past!



- Think what worked for them in previous transitions back to school (e.g. summer holidays)
- Build on any positives that have come out of being in lockdown
- Talk in terms of what they like in school

#### THINK YOU!

The COVID-19 lockdown has been a difficult process for any parent, especially when your child has additional needs. Looking after yourself means you can be there even more for them.

- Recognise how far you have come and what you have achieved
- Take some time for yourself
- Think of what helps your emotional wellbeing – and reward yourself, you deserve it!



#### Further information

Sheffield Children's Hospital COVID-19 resources:

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/patients-and-parents/coronavirus-resources-for-children-and-families/>

This guide should be read alongside guidance produced for all parents and available on the Sheffield local offer:

<http://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer>