

Preparing children for starting or returning to school:

Why you should use photos, posters and videos.

Introduction

With schools preparing for their reopening it is important to begin to prepare for the process of welcoming children back and settling them in after the long break. This is probably something that you are already working on but this resource will provide some tips and a reminder of why this preparation is so important.

Why use these types of resources?

Understanding and remembering

During the COVID-19 Restrictions it is not possible for children to visit the classroom before they start school or before they return to school after a break or a period of learning at home.

However even if children were able to visit the classroom, having something that they can continue to view or refer to is very useful.

Spoken words or a visit to a classroom is fleeting and important information may be missed or forgotten. A video, however, can be replayed so that information is more likely to be understood and remembered. A photograph of an activity, classroom or teacher can be stuck on the fridge in order to act as a reminder or spark a conversation. A poster of the class rules or a school bag checklist can be really useful for parents as well as children.

Advance preparation

Teachers do some much day to day preparation for lessons but sometimes, planning a little bit for the time before the start of or return to school can help parents to prepare their children for this big transition.



Some tips for video development

- Prepare your story in advance. Write what you want to say
 - Make sure the setting is quiet
 - Make sure unwanted items are not in the recording
 - Natural lighting can be better than artificial
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- Add the people and places you will see
 - Add commentary or text relevant to your situation
 - Make sure to speak slowly and clearly
 - Add some details if you can
 - Use age appropriate language
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- A video can be used several times with children to increase familiarity
 - Try to keep the tone as positive, calm and upbeat as possible
 - Give parents some tips about how to use the video resources:
 - Present the video in a comfortable environment
 - Don't force the child to watch the video or use it at a time when the child is upset
 - Try role-playing to practice the situations with the child

Video Content Checklist

- The classroom
- The teacher
- The yard
- SNA & other staff that may be around
- PPE and other safety equipment that may be used during school
- The toys
 - arts and crafts
 - sports equipment
- The seating plan
- Add your own ideas

Useful photos to consider sending home

- The classroom
- A photo of the child in the classroom if you have one
- The teacher
- Classmates (but only if the school has permission from all parents)
- Preferred activities
- A photo of the class rules
- A photo of the daily schedule

Other useful resources

We have worksheets and social stories on our website www.autism-toolkit.ie

