

# Transitioning back to schools and settings as lockdown lifts

50+ practical ideas for  
primary schools

Educational Psychology &  
Schools Emotional Wellbeing Service  
June 2020



ENFIELD  
THRIVES TOGETHER



# Welcome!

This practical, activity-based booklet is designed to complement the guidance produced by the Educational Psychology Service 'Transitioning back as lockdown lifts.'

The five principles shared in that document are evidence-informed, drawn from what research can tell us about how to support communities to recover from trauma. Here, we share ideas about how to bring those principles to life in your classrooms, playgrounds, and virtual learning environments. We want this to be supportive, not prescriptive. We know you have a lot to process and plan- take what's helpful, and leave the rest.

Enfield Professional Learning are working closely with the Educational Psychology Service and other services including SWERRL and the Mental Health Support Teams/CAMHS to offer a professional learning program to schools for September. This will bring to life through online twilight sessions, how to understand and embed the recovery curriculum to improving wellbeing and learning. We will be sharing more details soon, in the meantime, please email enquiries to [anna.vaughan@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:anna.vaughan@enfield.gov.uk)

We want to acknowledge that lots of fantastic materials are being generously shared during the pandemic, both by Educational Psychology Services and other services and organisations. Many of the ideas here have been drawn from or influenced by the things that we have read and seen as a service.

If you'd like to share your other ideas, or inspire other schools with how these activities have worked for you on the Enfield Professional Learning virtual learning environment, we'd love to hear from you. Please email [eps-sews@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:eps-sews@enfield.gov.uk) to collaborate on a brief blog post or video.

Thank you for everything you have done and are doing, to ensure the safety, learning and happiness of Enfield's children and young people.

We stand with you.

## Educational Psychology Service

# CREATING A SENSE OF SAFETY

Children, young people and their parents need to know that we are doing everything we can to ensure their physical safety. Running alongside this is a deep need for psychological safety.



## EXPLICITLY DISCUSS THE CHANGES TO YOUR SCHOOL



Make sure that you address explicitly and regularly talk about what is different in school, and why this is happening. We can worry about scaring children, but it is more scary to be left alone in our wondering, than to be explicitly told.

Some children may feel worried that we are not social distancing within bubbles, as it has become their new normal. Talk about this too. There are some excellent social stories freely available online which clearly explain how to stay safe.

## REVISIT AN EXPLANATION OF CORONAVIRUS

While we may feel that children have 'got it' by now, it is striking that a clear explanation of the virus, its risks, its impact and how to stay safe is near the top of children's wishlists. Many excellent resources have been produced, such as the Axel Scheffler book, made freely available by Nosy Crow. Enfield Thrives Together have also produced an information sheet with key facts, available on the Schools Hub.



## CREATE 'SAFE AT SCHOOL' POSTERS

Ask pupils to work- individually or in groups- to create posters with the information about how to keep ourselves and others safe e.g. a handwashing poster; a social distancing poster. These can be displayed around the school, and on the school website, as well as being shared with parents.

## USE THE LANGUAGE OF SAFETY

Talk explicitly about safety, and what you and other adults are doing to keep children safe in school. "In our school, we are keeping children as safe as we can by... [and then list your actions]"

## WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE A SAFETY TOUR OF THE ROOM OR SCHOOL

How would the group allay the worries of a child who has not yet come back to school (or their parents)? You could collaboratively produce a script which explains all the safety features and precautions being taken, and ask the children to record themselves explaining and demonstrating these. You could edit the film together to share with other classes or with the school community.

## DRAW HANDS OF SAFETY

Ask each child to draw around their hand, writing or drawing on each of their five fingers one person who can help to keep them safe, either physically or emotionally (e.g. by helping them with their worries).



## CREATE A SAFE RETREAT

Invite children to create a safe space in their minds, using a guided visualisation. This can be somewhere they have been before, have dreamed about going to, have seen a picture of, or have created in their imaginations.

Talk through a script (freely available online) asking them to imagine every aspect of their safe space. Make space in each day for everyone to visit their safe space in their minds. Children might want to share their safe spaces, by drawing, modelling or discussing them.

## NORMALISE FACE MASKS

As these are becoming compulsory on public transport, it might be helpful to explore and normalise these. You could do this by talking about images of people wearing masks in different contexts (e.g. in an operating theatre; on a train) and putting a mask on a class teddy or doll. Be curious about children's thoughts and feelings about people wearing masks, and about wearing a mask themselves.



## PROVIDE A WORRY BOX

Have a physical or virtual worry box in which children can share any worries they have (e.g. this could be about their safety, or that of a key worker parent or elderly grandparent, or about others not following hygiene practices in school...) and regularly address these with individuals and the group.

## BUILD PARENTS' CONFIDENCE

Regularly share this safety work with parents and carers, so that they feel confident that their children are safe at school. Their explicit and implicit messages will have a huge impact on how safe their children feel.

## READ THE NEWS WITH 'SAFETY GOGGLES'

If children are listening to, watching or reading the news, invite them to put on their imaginary 'safety goggles' to help them spot every action or plan being made to help people stay safe. With younger children, you could do this yourself and feed back to them. Discuss these observations as a group.



# CREATING A SENSE OF CALM

Feeling stressed, unsettled and worried at the moment is very normal. We are all experiencing the pandemic differently and we know that our pupils have huge capacity to adapt, accept and show resilience, and we can create a sense of calm which helps them to tap into these strengths.



## BE PRESENT



Talk children through the 'five things' exercise, to notice five things they can see, four things they can hear, three things they can smell, two things they can touch, and one thing they can taste.

Make handwashing a mindful moment - smell the soap, notice the temperature of the water, feel the touch of your two hands rubbing together, watch the soap forming bubbles and the water pouring.



## TALK ABOUT IT

Set up a way for children to identify and share how they are feeling e.g. a scale which ranges from calm to very anxious. Invite adults to use the scale too, showing children that our emotions come and go throughout the day. **The incredible five point scale** and the **Blob guide to social distancing** (both books for sale) are helpful resources here.



## BREATHE DEEPLY AND OFTEN

Ask children to lie on the floor with a piece of paper or book on their tummies seeing if they can make the object move by breathing deeply in and out. Use slinkies and expanding balls to show children how to breathe in, hold, and breathe out.



## MODEL COPING

Notice your own wide ranging emotions, and speak these out loud saying "I'm feeling calm and hopeful this morning" or "This afternoon I'm feeling a bit stressed and worried." Model taking time to attend to your feelings e.g. by taking a deep breath, having a drink of water, taking a walk at lunchtime, or talking to a friend.

### **DROP AN ANCHOR**

As a group, practise grounding yourselves into the here and now by pushing your feet into the floor, feeling the chair supporting your back, and starting to notice what you can see and hear around you. You can find 'drop the anchor' scripts online to read out to the group.

### **PLAY MUSIC**

Play calming music at a low volume when the class are focusing on play or learning.

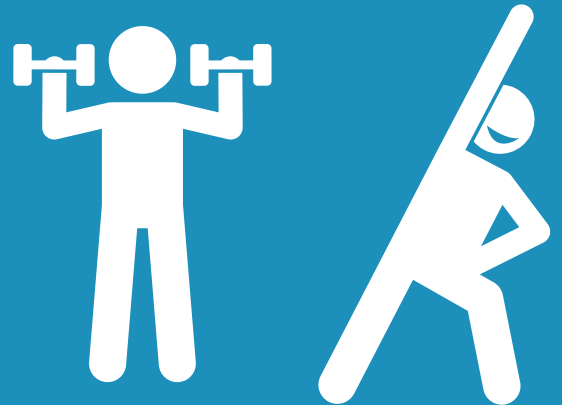


### **YOGA**

Use a free programme such as cosmic yoga for a daily group session involving poses, stretches and relaxation. Try this at a transition point, such as settling back in after break or lunch. If movement is restricted for your group, try seated yoga.

### **TRY INTENSE EXERCISE**

If your group seems very unsettled or restless, try intense exercise to 'reset' everyone. Ask everyone to run on the spot as fast as they can for three minutes, or do 100 jumping jacks together.



### **TRY MUSCLE RELAXATION**

With scripts freely available online, this exercise invites children to tense and then relax the various sets of muscles in their body. Try it together, and then ask them to discuss how it made them feel, both physically and emotionally.

### **KEEP MEMORY IN MIND**

When we are preoccupied and worried, our working memory capacity reduces. Try giving shorter instructions, chunking information, and displaying information visually using drawings, symbols and now and next boards.



# CREATING A SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS AND BELONGING

As lockdown eases, we need to reconnect our pupils into our school communities, and help them to stay connected with their families and friends at a time when previous ways of connecting may not be possible.



## LINK UP YOUR BUBBLES

Similar to the idea of 'twinning' towns, pair your bubble with another bubble which is in school at the same time, or with a neighbouring school with a same-age bubble. Link up via live video for a shared activity such as a story, or send weekly videos with your news and highlights, with the other bubble sending a reply.

## SHARE HUMANITY

Let children know that they are not alone in their feelings and experiences, with a game which invites them to 'touch your head/wave your arms/stand up/lift up one leg' if... "You feel a bit nervous to be back/quite excited to be back' etc. Make sure the adults join in, modelling the whole range of thoughts and feelings.

## SHOW YOUR LOVE

Watch the wonderful video 'While we can't hug' together, and talk as a group about all the ways in which we can share our love with our friends, teachers and family, during this period when physical touch is limited.



## HOLD ONTO THE INVISIBLE STRING

Read the lovely book 'The Invisible String' together, which talks about how we remain connected to people who are not physically present with us. Talk together about how you were still connected (as a class, peer group and school) during school closures, and how children continue to be connected to their families even once back at school. You could use 2m+ lengths of string to bring this idea to life, and then use games, art and stories based on the invisible string.

## PLAY TOGETHER

While usual playground activities may be on pause, there are lots of no-contact games which adults can facilitate:

- **Riverbank** (lay out a long rope, one side of which is the river and the other side of which is the bank. Space children out safely, and ask them to jump to the relevant side as someone calls out 'river' or 'bank')
- **Sausages and soldiers** (Ask children to run in a circle at a safe distance, standing to attention if the adult calls 'soldier', and lying down straight if the adult calls 'sausage')
- **Musical statues** (Ask children to run in a circle at a safe distance, freezing when the music stops playing)

### PLAY TOGETHER CONTINUED...

- **What's the time Mr Wolf?** (Have a 'wolf' who stands ahead of the group. The children ask 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' and the Wolf's reply ("Two o'clock!") indicates the number of steps the children can take forward. The challenge is to reach the wolf before they declare "Dinner time!" and chase the children.)
- **Shadow tag** (Pair children up, and designate a walker and a tagger. Ask the tagger to 'tag' the walker on the signal 'go', by stepping on his or her shadow).
- **Group skipping**
- **Hoola hooping** (spinning the hoop around a waist or arm, threading the hoop over your head and body, and using it to skip)
- **Sleeping lions** (ask children to lie very still, and try to catch them moving)

### SING TOGETHER

Do you have a school song? Or is there a song which captures how you want to feel, and what you want to stand for, as a community? Could you learn this song within your bubbles, and sing it together as a whole school each day? You might not be able to gather together in one room, but could open all the doors and sing at the tops of your voices to try to make sure the other classes can hear you.



### DEVELOP A HANDLESS HANDSHAKE

As a group, come up with a unique series of actions you can use to say hello and goodbye to each other during the school day. Good hellos and goodbyes are especially important at the moment, after the shock of the sudden 'goodbye' in March.

### CREATE A GROUP ART INSTALLATION

Ask each child to decorate a hand print/body outline/stone. You could include children who aren't currently in school. Create a group display from the art in the school entrance or corridors, or install the rocks in the playground. Use chalks in the playground to create rainbows or spirals which other class bubbles can add to. Talk to children about how together we are more than the sum of our parts.

### COLLABORATE IN LEARNING AND PLAY

Look for opportunities for group activities and projects, such as group reading sessions, or working together on an online project. Make a whole school video, by editing together contributions from each class bubble.

### SHOW AND TELL VIRTUALLY

Connect together children's home and school experiences by inviting parents to email or text a photograph from their child's week (Year 6 children may be able to do this independently). Display the photos on the class screen for a 'virtual' show and tell.



## PLAY COOPERATIVE GAMES

Try collaborative story building, where each pupil contributes an idea. Introduce the improvisation principle of adapting to each person's contribution, with a 'yes, and' mindset, however ridiculous the story becomes! The book *Developmentally Appropriate Games* has good ideas for cooperative games.

### LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Create paper chains with each child writing their name on and decorating one link in the chain. Children might like to include family members and friends, and you can include links for children who are not currently in school, to show them they are being held in mind.



### SHOW YOU CARE

You could link up with a local care home to share story time or songs via video link, or to send letters and drawings to be safely displayed in the home.



### DON'T DROP THE BALL

Create a "pass the ball" video, with film of each person catching and then throwing a ball, then edit the clips together to include the whole bubble or school. You could invite pupils not currently attending school to send film in too. Tiktok has lots of similar ideas.



### SHINE YOUR LIGHTS

All children to have a torch (maybe bring from home) and show how connecting their lights together makes them stronger. You could experiment with covering the lights with different coloured tissue paper, and see how the lights combine to form new colours.



### SHARE YOUR NEWS

Plan as a bubble to stay linked up with parents by producing an email, video or paper copy of weekly or monthly news.



### CENTRE CIRCLE TIME

Take time each day to check in and connect as a group. Invite children to share something they like or admire about the person next to them, or something they have enjoyed doing with them. Sing 'call and response' songs to create an experience of collaboration and unity.

# PROMOTING A SENSE OF CONTROL



At a time when so much is beyond our control, our children and young people need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them, and believe that their actions and those of the groups they belong to (family, class and school) will lead to positive outcomes.

## OFFER CHOICES



Ask the class to make decisions about which resources you'll use, or how you'll do an activity. Offer individual pupils choices about how they do things, or the order in which they do things.

## LISTEN TO PUPILS VOICES

If you have a pupil council, connect them together remotely for regular meetings. Support them to think of ways to ask other pupils (including those still at home) how they are feeling and what their priorities are. Meet more frequently with your council to hear their views, and include them in planning. Support them to feed back their involvement and decisions to their peers.

## COLLABORATE ON YOUR TIMETABLE

Invite pupils to shape their week by having a postbox (or virtual equivalent) where they can suggest things they'd like to do (e.g. particular games or stories they enjoy). Pick one at random each day or week, and incorporate this into your timetable. Even if the pupils' actual wishes (e.g. 'see my grandma!') can't be implemented, you could creatively follow the spirit of the wish (e.g. writing postcards).



## GIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Delegate jobs as much as you can do within the public health guidance. This could include some of the additional responsibilities relating to hygiene and cleanliness (with supervision to ensure they are carried out).

## APPEAL TO THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Think together about what a difference it makes if everyone at school follows the hygiene and social distancing rules. You could create a school emblem such as a 'school superhero' and detail how they carry out their superpowers (e.g. effective handwashing and keeping a 2m distance where possible). Explore together the resource which frames coronavirus as a supervillain, whose weaknesses are soap and solidarity.

## USING PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING

Teach children to plan their projects and free time, and to set goals for their days and weeks. Support them to follow through with taking action to work towards their goals. Help them to record these goals so that they get a sense of achievement and control from ticking off the items on their plan or list.



## CHOOSE A CAUSE

Talk together about causes which really matter to pupils at the moment. The Black Lives Matter movement and the climate change campaigns are both especially relevant. Think together as a group about how we can influence our local, national and international communities, and plan concrete action. This might include starting or signing a petition, starting a conversation about these issues with a peer or adult, or writing to an adult in power about the action we'd like them to take. Talk about how together, our actions can give us power to change things.



## CELEBRATE ACTION

Notice when children take action, and explicitly give them feedback which links their actions to the consequences e.g. "I saw you pick up those scraps of paper and put them in the bin. Thank you. It's actions like that which will mean that we can all enjoy our spaces without litter."



## GET ORGANISED

Use visual resources and written lists to help pupils to continue to develop their independence and organisational skills. We all feel more in control when we're confident that we have everything we need for our day.



# CREATING A SENSE OF HOPE

Whilst life may feel difficult now for some people, it is important that adults, children and young people think that things will get better and work out in the future.



## CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Celebrate the reopening of your school, and the formation of your class bubble. Reunite with pupils you were already connected to, and welcome those who are new to your bubble. Plan time each day and week for celebrating strengths and progress, both individually and within the community, country and world.

## EXPRESS GRATITUDE

Write messages, cards, or letters, or make videos to thank people who have looked after us and kept us safe. This could be to parents and carers, school staff, or key workers in the community such as in health settings or local shops. Contribute to local or national campaigns to recognise services and individuals whose actions have been extraordinary.

## CREATE A TIME CAPSULE

Put together a capsule for children to find in the future. How would pupils explain this very unusual time, and what life has been like for them? How would they capture what they have learnt that will help them in the future?

## FIND THE TREASURE

Think together about what has been the hidden treasure in the midst of this difficult time. More time to play at home? Getting to stay up late on Thursdays to clap for carers? More TV?! There may also be 'collective' treasure, such as all the people in Enfield who volunteered to help the vulnerable, and acts of kindness, generosity and bravery. Notice and celebrate these together.

## CHASE RAINBOWS...

Children could draw or create rainbows using mixed media or IT, and display these with messages of hope e.g. on the school website or around the school.

You could hold a rainbow day of hope where each person or 'bubble' wears an item of a particular colour, to make a rainbow photograph.

Talking together about how rainbows occur, and reading stories of rainbows, with the message that rainbows need both rainfall and sunshine. What is the rainfall and sunshine in your pupils' lives at the moment?



## KEEP AN 'AFTER THE VIRUS' WISHLIST

Keep a running list of activities, events and moments which you and your pupils are looking forward to experiencing once the virus no longer restricts us. This could be done individually or with a class 'jar' or list kept on the computer. This is a good way to reframe sadness and regret ("Yes, it is really sad that we can't have sports day. Shall we add that to our list of things we're looking forward to once we're back to normal?")

### BREATHE WITH THE PLANET



Learn together about the impact on the planet of reduced travel and production, in terms of air quality, wildlife, and other effects. Bring this to life using videos, art and science. Talk together about what we can do, individually and collectively, to ensure that we maintain this progress as time goes on. What changes can we each make in our own lives?

### WATCH SOMETHING GROW

Within safe limits, think about how each pupil or class bubble can plant and tend to a plant. Watch it grow each day and each week, thinking about the conditions it needs to thrive, and how great things come from tiny seeds.



### FIND GOOD NEWS

Ask pupils to find (or share with them, depending on their developmental stage) the good news stories locally, nationally, and internationally. Talk about these together. Depending on children's ages and abilities, you could think critically together about press and the news cycle (e.g. the news cycle relying on anxiety and repeated checking; ownership and freedom of speech; what drives people to consume news, and what kinds of news they seek).



### HOOK INTO HISTORY

Depending on children's ages and abilities, revisit historical periods when communities have experienced great crises (e.g. the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic; the second world war; recent wars and natural disasters) and survived. Think together about what helped them to survive, and find testimonies of hope and resilience from people who lived through these experiences.

### THREE GOOD THINGS

As a ritual to start or end your days together, invite each pupil to share three good things they have noticed or experienced (or are looking forward to) that day. Make sure the adults take part too. This might feel tricky at first, but people will soon start paying more attention to positive experiences, so they can share them in the discussion.

### GIVE HOPE TO OTHERS

As a group, think about what helps us to feel hopeful when we are sad, lonely, or feel worried that things won't be ok. Write poetry and stories, and create drawings and artwork, with these messages of hope. Share them within your school community and with your local communities (e.g. care homes; shops; parks).



# LINKS TO RESOURCES



## **Coronavirus: a book for children**

<https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler/>

## **The Incredible Five Point Scale**

<https://www.5pointscale.com/books.html>

## **The blob guide to social distancing**

<https://loggerheadpublishing.co.uk/product/blob-guide-to-social-distancing-download/>

## **The Invisible String**

<https://theinvisiblestring.com/>

## **While we can't hug**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY>



## **Safe Space visualisation**

<https://healthpoweredkids.org/lessons/guided-imagery-for-younger-children/>

## **Seated yoga**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JD2b1g7nro>

## **Drop the anchor exercise**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDm2c5FDLNI>

## **Progressive muscle relaxation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>

