

Worries about returning to school

Coming back to school from a long time away can be difficult but there are ways we can help ourselves (or get help from others). The first thing is to recognise any fears, who you can get to help you conquer these and what action you are going to take. Several students have shared what things they are worried about when returning to school - some are listed below. Highlight on the chart which worries are yours, identify who could help you and fill in the blank boxes with any extra worries you might have - try to be as specific as you can:

Worries	Who could help me?	Action to be taken
I haven't seen my friends		Consider that many people will have not seen friends during the lockdown but we can move on from this. Maybe you could 'offer an olive branch' to the person you have not seen before the start of school and have a socially distanced walk together outside. Ask your parents if they could help you reach out to other friends and arrange to meet them on the first morning back. Remain calm - remember your friends will be nervous too.
I don't want to leave the house		Before the day of your return, take short trips out - walk for 10 minutes, 20 minutes, then 30 minutes etc, take trips out in the car, then to the park, a garden centre, meet relatives at a 2m distance (whichever you are allowed to go to).
I don't want to leave my family		Remember families are bound together and these bounds come from the tiny things we can do for each other and our love and care for each other. Your family want you to have a fulfilling life which includes doing things without them plus you'll have more to talk about when you get back. We have to take positive risks in life to make us grow - think of the consequences of taking a positive risk, e.g. improving your prospects of getting a good job, independence, holidays, making friends etc.
I don't like change		A lot of people feel this way and change can be very over-whelming. Know that change happens, has to happen and will happen. However, you can adapt to it by controlling the small things - I 'have' to go to school but I can control when I pack my bag, if I have a bath or a shower, which people I speak to, whether I will have a positive outlook, who I will help on the first day back etc. Write yourself a list of events for the first day - 1) get up at _am 2) get washed and dressed, 3) eat breakfast etc then tick them off as you do them. Don't treat it as "Day One", think of it as a series of smaller events and tasks.
I prefer home learning. Everything is too overwhelming at school		Some people will have hated home learning but others will have loved it. Either way there will be things you have missed out on - practical experiments, team sports, performing, asking questions, making other people laugh, teachers' praise, choosing your own snacks at break time. So, make a list of the fine details that you have missed and focus on them. If you have specific sensory issues please make these known (to a parent or teacher) so that we can help.
I might get ill		This is a tough one, people do get ill but they also get ill when we aren't in school too. We reduce this risk by following government guidelines on hygiene and social distancing - make sure you know what these are before returning to school, research the best strategies. In our school you each have a map of the school and the route you need to take to get to your classroom; this lowers the risk. My Mind has useful information at https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/?utm_source=Schools+Updates&utm_campaign=48637c1a62-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_04_25_03_46_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d23e44bb74-48637c1a62-74759935

I've been feeling very down lately		These feelings can be overwhelming too but luckily there are a lot of ways to cope with them. There are several resources listed below but talking to someone about your feelings (even if they don't have any 'answers') often is the place to start. Don't run from your feelings - take control and tackle them head on. You will probably need support to do this so ask a parent to contact the school and/or one of the support services like CAMHS. The SENCO also has lots of resources, that might be able to help you, listed at the end of this document.
I think I'm behind on the work		You are certainly not alone on this one - some pupils will not have been able to work well at a computer for 5 hours a day, some will have been ill or too upset to work to their usual standard. Teachers know this and will understand - they will want to welcome you back into school life not shout at you. Putting a plan together, with your form teacher or subject staff, will help to get you back on track. It is more important to focus on what you have achieved during lock down. Ask a parent/carer to approach them if you are a little shy.
I've been ill and don't feel 100% I'm not used to all the walking anymore, I'm exhausted		See the previous answer - plus making staff aware (or getting a parent/carer to) will help them to support you the best they can. Teachers will not expect you to catch up overnight - heads of year can help stagger the workload and inform staff that you might need small breaks and work at a slower speed. When you are back in school you won't have to walk about much as the rooms you will be using will be limited.
My uniform doesn't fit		Most students will have grown over the time that they have been out of school and so their uniform may not fit. Early on in the summer make sure you try on your school uniform and PE kit to make sure they are the correct sizings. If not then book an appointment at the school outfitters well in advance of September so that there is no need to rush to buy things at the last minute. If uniform is an issues, get a parent/carer to speak to your head of year before your first day back.
Everyone's pretending everything is normal - it's not normal!		Anxiety about what is happening in the world is to be expected - people are coping with it in different ways, whether or not they have been directly affected by it. Some use humour as a way to cope and don't mean any disrespect by it. Some people just want to be back in school, work hard, and forget about it for a while. Others will need some support to come to terms with their feelings. All of these reactions are normal - if you need support please do reach out and ask.
I've lost a family member or friend		There will be few communities that will not have lost members to the coronavirus, or other illnesses, during lockdown. It is essential that we recognise this and take time to mark and celebrate their lives. There are lots of sources of bereavement support available - please ask a parent/carer to contact school if you need this support. Michael our chaplain and Julian our new chaplain can offer moral support and reflection if you are having a difficult time with grief.
I'm not used to getting up so early anymore and all the things I have to do		For many pupils the re-establishment of routines will be difficult. This will not just be for school routines; it will also be for those basic daily life routines, such as sleep and getting up. We know that this is difficult and a source of anxiety at the beginning of every term, but this will be on a larger scale. We will need to re-learn the rhythm of the school - but we will be doing this together and we will find our new normal.
My parent/carer is a keyworker, these other students don't understand what it feels like		There will be significant differences for those of you who have and have not been on the school site during the lock down. It would be wrong to assume that those who have been in school are OK. There may be a feeling, for the students who have stayed in school, that school is their safe place and as others return to school, they are intruding on it - you need to be aware of other people's concerns. Remember some students may not have been able to see a keyworker parent for several months and not had the opportunity of having a hug in all that time.

Services available to young people:

<https://www.kooth.com>

Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people

<https://www.mymind.org.uk>

MyMind website also has a fantastic range of information on positive mental health and where to find support.

<https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing = CAMHS have put together a set of resources which are designed for students and parents if they are experiencing stress, anxiety or other mental health challenges. These resources can be found here

Bereavement support

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Cruse offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies.

<https://www.winstonswish.org>

Winston's Wish is the UK's childhood bereavement charity.

<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk>

Grief Encounter is a Child Bereavement Charity