Return to School Questionnaire

Instructions for Parents/Carers and Practitioners

Instructions for Parents & Practitioners

The Return to School Planning Tool has been designed by West Sussex Educational Psychology Service and adopted and adapted by Bury Council to help schools, parents /carers and relevant professionals gain a greater insight into young people's experiences of school as well as their thoughts and feelings around preparing for a return to school. It also aims to encourage young people to experience more control over their re-integration, which we know helps young people feel safe and helps recovery from potentially stressful experiences. We understand that the events that have been experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic are unprecedented and may be perceived as traumatic to some young people. Others may have shown a reduction in anxiety through school closures and appear to be thriving at home. Experiencing a range of emotions around lockdowns would be expected and is normal. The Return to School Questionnaires are intended to provide information to guide the school and parents in designing a re-integration plan, which ensures that support is targeted and tailored to the child/young person's own experiences, views and preferences.

This document will provide some guidance to help you assist the child or young person to complete the questionnaires. The adult may be a member of school staff, a professional who knows the child or in instances where the child is not attending school and, where social distancing needs to occur, the child's parent/carer.

There are two versions of the questionnaire; Version A which is designed for younger pupils or those who may have literacy difficulties, and Version B designed for older pupils. There is no specified age range for each questionnaire, it is up to staff within school who know the child to decide which questionnaire is most suitable according to their age, cognitive ability and literacy skills. The questionnaire is designed to be printed out in colour and for the child to complete a hard copy.

Please provide the child with whatever support they need to understand the questions and record their views. If you are recording the child's views on their behalf, please scribe their responses word -for-word to help school staff hear the child's 'voice'. We ask that you please try to avoid influencing or judging the child's expressed views, and instead ensure any questions asked are open-ended so that we can have maximum confidence that the responses reflect the child's genuine opinions, which may differ to yours or others that know him/her. It is important that the child feels that their views are heard and taken seriously. You can provide information to the school regarding your views separately so that these can be considered.

It is important to remember that any child currently worrying about attending school will become anxious when asked to discuss returning. A good place to start with this questionnaire is to acknowledge it may be difficult, but you would like to know what the child or young person thinks and feels. It is important that the adult does not dismiss anxieties or worries the child has; empathise with the young person but do not collude or encourage worries or concerns.

The approaches taken will depend on the child's age, level of understanding, language ability and willingness to engage. Even if they are able, often children find it difficult to verbalise what they are thinking and feeling, and they may prefer to draw what they are feeling or have visual prompts to choose from. Other children may be reluctant to draw or talk initially. If this is the case just let them complete the questionnaire by themselves for a while, you may gently ask a few follow up questions later. You may wish to take a break from the questionnaire if the child becomes tired or bored.

There are four types of questions within the questionnaire:

1. **Scaling questions**

Doing my learning at home is : (Please circle a number from 1 to 10)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

😔
Not good !

🤷‍♀️🤷‍♂️
Okay…

😀
Great!
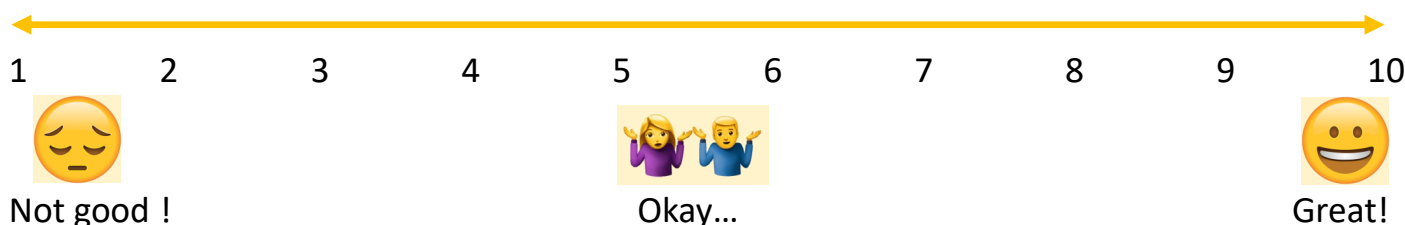
Here the child is asked to rate how they feel or think on a scale 1-10.

If the child is willing to talk you may wish to ask a suitable follow up question. Examples could include:

- That's interesting, why did you rate it as a 5 not 7?
- Can you talk about a time when it has been better than 5?
- Has it ever been worse than a 5?
- What number would you like your rating to be?
- What would help get you from a 5 to 7?

2. Questions asking them to circle or tick a visual/ written choice.

When thinking about school, which of these statements are true for you?
(Please put a tick in the box under the picture if it is true)

At school, I would like to get better at: (Please select those that apply)

Staying at home has often made me feel: (Please circle all the ones that are true)

These questions might ask them to indicate how they feel or what they are thinking. You may wish to acknowledge what they have said and further explore their choices.

- When have you felt happy/angry etc?

- Can you tell me a little bit more about what you think/feel….?

- That's really interesting, I wonder why you feel/think….?

- Is there anything else you want to say about that?

Circle/tick questions exploring the functions of school non-attendance

The activity on pages eight and nine in version A and seven and eight in version B show pictures which can be categorised into factors that either encourage or discourage the child to attend school.

The background colour of the pictures indicates whether it is at the child, school or family level. Pictures with a blue background are at the child level, these are factors within the child such as their emotions, feelings and thoughts. Pictures with a pink background are at the school level, these are factors that are associated with things or people within the school environment. Pictures with a green background are at the family level, these are things or people associated with the family and home environment.

The borders of the pictures are colour coded to help you identify which of the functions of school avoidance (Kearney and Silberman, 1990) the card most closely corresponds to. Consideration is also given to an additional function, given the current context of the pandemic, to include health concerns.

Green Border: Negative feelings

Grey Border: Avoiding stressful situations:

Function 1

To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress or anxiety (e.g. fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams)

I feel stressed	My head is too full	I feel sad
I feel lonely	I feel worried	I feel like I don't belong
I feel confused	I feel pressure	I feel helpless

I need help with my learning	I don't like some teachers	I worry about exams
I don't like the toilets at school	I don't like some of my lessons	I don't understand what my teacher is saying

I don't like PE	**I don't like breaktimes**	**I don't like getting to school**
I worry about my schoolwork	**School is too noisy or busy**	

Function 2

To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group)

The borders are blue.

I don't like speaking in public	**I worry about seeing my classmates**	**I am being bullied**
I feel embarrassed	**I worry about what other people think of me**	**I don't know how to make friends**
People don't listen or believe me	**I don't like reading aloud**	**I don't like working as part of a group**

Function 3

To get attention from or spend more time with significant others at home (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the well-being of parent)

The borders are orange.

My family need me to be at home	**I worry about leaving my parents/carers to go to school**
I have to look after people at home	**I would rather be at home than school**

Function 4

To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (watch TV, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

The borders are dark green.

I prefer to spend time with my family or pets	**I prefer spending time doing fun stuff**	**I would rather spend time on my phone/games**

Function 5

To avoid worry or stress about health-related issues

The borders are purple.

I am worried about catching coronavirus	I worry about people getting too close to me
I worry I have a fever	I worry my family will get ill

Strength and recovery factors

These pictures represent strengths and recovery factors which encourage school attendance

These pictures have a yellow border and a yellow background.

There are people that help me at school	I can do things if I really try	I think things will get better at school
I feel calm when I am at school	I have friends at school	I believe people at school care about me
I feel safe when I am at school	I feel in control when I am at school	I want to go to school
People listen to me at school	I know what I want to do when I leave school	I am a good learner

In version A, the wording has been simplified and some pictures removed. However, the colour coding remains the same.

In this section we have also asked questions for children to identify key areas that they feel they need to get better at and therefore require support to develop.

The final question in the return to school section provides children with an opportunity to let you know the questions or concerns they may have.

3. Questions asking them to rank their responses (Version B only)

What are you most looking forward to about returning to school? (Please rank them in order of their importance to you, e.g. writing 1 next to the one you are most looking forward to , then 2 beside the next most important, and so on)

Seeing my friends | Learning | Having routines | Breaktimes | Time away from home | Seeing my teachers

This question is encouraging them to think about what is most important to help school staff know what will be a priority for the child. If they have difficulty ranking, just ask them to tick which ones are true for them.

You may wish to ask further questions exploring more information about their choices:
- Can you tell me a little bit more about why you have rated that one first/chosen that one?
- What is it about learning/seeing my friends etc that you are most looking forward to?

4. Open questions

friends, toys, pets, family. Write or draw in the boxes.

What **was** good about learning at home? | What **was not** good about learning at home?

At school these things are important to me

At home these things are important to me

Is there anything else you would like to get better at?

10

These questions allow the child to write or draw their responses. The 'anything else' thought cloud allows the child the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings that may not have been an option in the question before it.

When completed please return the questionnaire together with any comments you wish to make about the child/young person's responses and what your views are. The school should then work with the parent and the child/young person to create a 'Return to School Support Plan'. This plan should outline what the child can expect on returning to school and the support that will need to be in place for them.

Appendix 4 Example Support Plans

Below are some places for children/young people to go to get further information or help:

Kooth Online mental wellbeing support which is free, safe and anonymous. Includes access to online tips and advice from other young people and the Kooth Team, discussion boards, a chat service and online journal. https://www.kooth.com/

Shout 24 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. A place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Text 85258.

https://www.giveusashout.org/

The Mix provides information, support and listening for people under 25.

Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours) www.themix.org.uk

Think Ninja - 'Thinkninja' app providing self-help knowledge and skills for young people from 10-18 years old who may be experiencing increased anxiety and stress.

www.healios.org.uk/services/thinkninja1

Childline - Features lots of breathing exercises, activities, games and videos to help you let go of stress www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone

Emerging Minds - Supporting young people with worries about COVID-19 emergingminds.org.uk

The Bury Directory provides a guide to emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children, young people and adults in Bury. https://theburydirectory.co.uk/support-for-children-young-people

Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership – Resource Hub

Free access to a useful range of documents and films around mental health, includes a COVID-19 specific section. https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/

Return to School—Questionnaire

Please record any notes or comments that you wish the school to be aware of:

Child's Name: **Parent/Care Name:**

                                     Practitioner Name :