**SENDIASS TOP TIPS for parents of children with SEND on going back to school.**

Going back to school after a long summer break can be exciting for children, however it can also be a very anxious time of the year for children and parents.

Here are some top tips to consider when preparing your children to return to school:

1. Routine - Start getting your child/young person back into a routine. For example, ensure that wake up and bedtimes are the same as you prepare to return your child/yp to school.
2. Talk about school - Talk to your child about school, including fun activities, teachers, playtimes, etc. Ask what things they are looking forward to, are there any stories from summer they are looking forward to sharing with friends?
3. Visit the school websites with your child and look at pictures of the school. Look at the gallery on the school’s website if available, talk about what is happening in the pictures.
4. Have a practice journey - If possible, take a trip past the school grounds and talk about the different outdoor activities that they will be engaging in once they return to school. If your child will be using public transport or school bus, run through where they should go and what they need to know. You could even take turns pretending to be the driver, child or young person and showing your pass etc.
5. Countdown to school calendar - Make a return to school count down calendar and count down the number of days left before the start of school. You could create other visual resources to support the routine of getting ready, or to prepare your child for the school day.
6. Be Prepared - Start buying school supplies, such as uniform (if required), school bags and shoes beforehand to avoid unnecessary stress and anxieties
7. Face any worries - If your child/yp can express their anxieties and worries about returning to school have an open discussion about them. Give them the opportunity to talk about their feelings. Some children respond better to creative activities such as drawing a picture or making up a story about the first day of school.
8. Stay Positive and stay calm - Speak positively about school and returning to school. Try not to express or show your own anxieties or fears to your child/yp. If you have any worries about transition back to school you could contact parent support groups such as SENDIASS, PFBA or AWARE for advice and support. Some schools also have a parental engagement worker or pastoral teacher who could help.
9. Be observant to any changes in your child’s/young person’s behaviour. If you notice any changes in your child/yp behaviour speak to them and seek support if required. You can always contact the class teacher or SENCO if you have any new concerns about how your child will cope with school.
10. Contact SENDIASS if you need any information, advice and support on specific difficulties with your child’s education. Here are some examples of common issues and advice:
* Your child has SEN but does not have an EHCP and you are unsure what support will be in place in the new school year. Ask to speak to/meet with the SENCO and/or class teacher to discuss your child’s needs and what support they will be providing. Each school will record things slightly differently, but they should be able to explain whereabouts on the SEN register your child is, any areas that they are behind age related expectations and what support is planned for your child. Remember that it takes time to review the support effectively and the school will want to have chance to see how the support planned is working, perhaps over a term or half term, before making further changes or applying for EHCP. This graduated approach, the ‘assess-plan-do-review’ cycle is good practice and ensures that your child’s needs and support are being monitored.
* Your child has an EHCP but you are not confident about the named provision. Again, the first step is to speak to the SENCO at the new school about how they intend to provide the measures in the EHCP, they may be able to reassure you. As above you may need to give your child time to settle and the school time to try and support your child. As the EHCP is a legal document the named school must provide the support which is specifically written in there. Remember though if you give it a try and no progress is made, or if you, your child, or the school feel that the child’s needs are not being met you can always request an interim review and it may be possible to change provision at a later date if the named school proves to be not right for your child so don’t panic.
* We are aware of some families who are awaiting a final EHCP plan naming a school. We understand that this can be a very stressful time for families as the new term approaches. The best advice is to stay in regular contact with your SEN officer at the Local Authority (Bradford Council) to ensure that you are up to date with any developments and that your views and those of your child are taken into account. Until a new school is named on a plan, the responsibility to provide your child’s education and support remains with the school named on the most recent finalised EHCP, so it is also worth contacting them to keep them up to date and discuss how that education and support will be provided in the meantime. If you think you may need to appeal a decision you can also contact SENDIASS for advice.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) 01274513300 <https://barnardossendiass.org.uk/bradford-sendiass/>