

Introduction

A lot has changed for everyone since schools started lockdown in March. School staff have been working hard to ensure that children experience a successful and smooth return to the classroom. The purpose of this leaflet is to outline some helpful considerations about what your child may need from the curriculum at this time and to help you to work with your child's school.

There are some helpful guides about what children need from school at the current time, including helping them feel safe, helping them process their experience (including losses and opportunities), helping them connect again with school, peers and teachers, and helping them feel like they belong in their school community. The curriculum also needs to help support your child to recover lost knowledge and to start engaging with the national curriculum again.

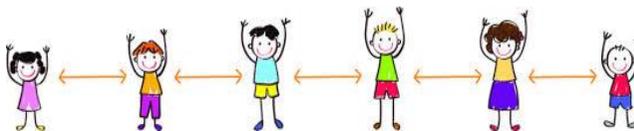
Schools are being advised to focus on using relationship-based approaches to check out if your child is okay and to help them to re-engage in learning within their school setting. This "Recovery Curriculum" framework focuses on 5 key "levers" which may be helpful for you to consider in your conversations with your child's school.

1. Relationships

Your school is likely to be thinking about how to facilitate the recovery and restoration of relationships within school following this long break. Children will need time to re-engage emotionally with teachers, friends and other

adults. Your child may be tentative about seeing other people and that is okay. Relationships in schools will be different to before lockdown because social distancing will still be in place. But we can see this as a learning opportunity: helping children to learn that relationships do break down throughout life and that we can restore relationships with time together and opportunity to reconnect.

Your school can provide specific times within each school day for opportunities to mend familiar relationships and build new ones, using structured learning and play opportunities alongside less structured ones. This may include reintroducing children to **play**, having **longer to play** and reminding them of how we can **play well together**. It may also be important for schools to think about **alternative soothing strategies** where touch may not be possible, for example colouring or listening to music at times of transition.



2. Community

Alongside relationships, it is important for your child and you, as a parent, to feel a sense of belonging to the school. We need to help everyone in the school community to feel that it is good and enjoyable to be back together. An important way to feel a sense of belonging is to share experiences and hear the experiences of others. How are your school's creating **time and space** for all students and adults to **talk** about their time in lockdown?

Schools may want to find a balance between talking about the child's experience and getting back to a learning routine. Some strategies that schools may find helpful include **circle time** (structured time to talk about feelings) or the use of **art and music**, which we know are helpful to learn and talk about any difficult emotions and experiences. It may also be helpful to think about how you as parents **stay connected** with school to share the family's experience during this time.

3. Transparent Curriculum

All children need to know that we are trying to **recover from the pandemic**, that their school is doing something to help them to go back to school and that what is happening in school relates to their concerns. This will help them to feel safe, calm and in control. This could involve school's creating a **space for reflection**, asking children what they have learned and struggled with at home, possibly exploring similarities and differences between home/school and school before to school now.

4. Linking school learning with recent learning (Metacognition)

We know that during their time off school children will all have had their own experience of learning. Maybe they have accessed lots of the resources sent home from school, maybe they have spent time learning life skills and helping you around the house, maybe they have spent lots of time playing, being curious and exploring outside or maybe you have focused on spending time together as a

family. All these experiences have involved learning for you, your child and your family. However, your child now needs to re-engage with their identity as a learner who can succeed at school. This could involve helping the children **reconnect** with how they learned at school previously and what they can use from their current learning at home, thinking about the **new structures and routines** at home and how they differ to school, **making space** for children to ask any and all questions about the new situation in school. This could involve asking **probing questions** such as how did you manage this at home? What helped you make the connection that these are all learning skills that can be applied in different contexts?



5. Space for children to recognise their experiences and feel ready to learn

Your child will need time within the curriculum to just settle back into school, to rediscover what school is like and to feel able to be involved. They will also need space and time to explore and learn about Covid-19 including reflecting about what has worked and has not worked during the pandemic. This will help them to feel safe and more able to learn from

the national curriculum. This could involve **teaching about Covid-19**, both initially and over time. Your school may consider the different ways that children can share their thoughts, feelings and emotions including **emotion charts** for the whole class, **thought boxes** to share private thoughts and using **circle time** to allow for questions.

Your School

As you can see this is not a step-by-step guiding curriculum, how each school sets out their recovery curriculum will be different to another school. So when you speak to other parents there may be lots of different ideas and strategies happening in schools. This is okay because each school will use their understanding of their students, staff, school environment and community. Also, your school may need to test out a plan and learn from this, therefore there are likely to be changes as they learn from how their students are reengaging with school life. Hopefully, this leaflet can help you to have a shared understanding of current school priorities and to work together to support your child to re-engage with school.

If you'd like further information, there are podcasts about the recovery curriculum and examples for how school staff are putting it in place at: <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

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The Recovery Curriculum

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**Dr. Amy Burns, Educational
Psychologist, One Education & Adoption
Psychology Service**



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