



# Managing Anxieties Around School

Here are some suggestions for parents if children are struggling to go to school or feel anxiety in the lead up to going back to school after holidays or are anxious about moving to a new school or class.

## Giving time and space to your child

Create a culture in the family where emotions are talked about. Make time daily to be with your child without other distractions, to enjoy time together and to have conversations. This opportunity sometimes leads to a child sharing concerns.

## Modelling calmness

Parents may be struggling with their own worries. Be aware of how you model your own anxiety.

## Listening and validating

Listen to your child. Hear what their concerns are. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know that you know it's tough for them.

## Limit reassurance

Asking questions is helpful but giving excessive reassurance is not. It's very tempting to give lots of reassurance to your child, as it may relieve anxiety in the short term. In the long term it keeps it going. Instead listen and ask them what they think, and what they think will help.

## Deferring worries

Children can be encouraged to make a list of worries and have an agreed deferred time to worry about things on their list. For example, at 4pm spend



30 minutes discussing the worrying. This can help to contain worries, and often the worry feels less distressing at this deferred time.

### Encourage a growth mindset

Help children to recognise that building tolerance of uncertainty can help them manage their anxiety and develop their growth mindset. It is like building up 'mind muscles'. Encourage children to ask questions, and support skills in problem solving so they can consider their own solutions.

### Rewards

Use rewards to help children manage their anxiety about getting to school and managing at school. This should be age appropriate and not too expensive

### Taking care of self and others

Encourage children to think about their own mental health including eating healthily, exercising, doing things they enjoy, spending time with others. In addition, practice being kind to self and others.

Dr Jess Richardson