

Parent Guidance for Supporting Children with Cognition and Learning Difficulties during Coronavirus or Non-Attendance at School

Be Aware of Emotional and Physical Changes

Pupils with cognition and learning difficulties may struggle to comprehend why they are currently off school and they might have difficulty in expressing how they feel during this uncertain time. They may feel out of control of their everyday life and they might be confused, scared, anxious, more stressed or display different behaviour due to their response to what is currently happening. Now your child is at home, keep an eye out for any changes in their behaviour or emotions as this will help to support you in identifying how they are feeling, both emotionally and physically.

Provide Clear Information Using Visual Support

Pupils with cognition and learning difficulties may need further support in understanding what is currently going on in their world. Some pupils may require extra or adapted explanations about the current situation and why they are at home, as well as reassurance, support and comfort from family members.



Use visual supports, including photos, social stories, signs, symbols and gestures, to communicate clearly and in different ways with your child about what is currently going on and why they cannot be at school. You could use [this social story](#) with your child, which explains what the coronavirus is and how we can keep safe. If it is necessary, you could adapt this social story to further support their understanding.

If possible, talk openly to your child about what is currently happening in their world and answer, in an honest way, any questions or concerns they may have. Explain to them, using pictures or social stories, the measures in place to keep them and the rest of their family safe and what we can do at home to keep safe. For example, covering our mouth and nose with a tissue and washing our hands regularly.

Ensure the information you give them is factually correct. Use the most recent government guidelines or information from the NHS. Try not to expose them to news articles or information that could be misleading or overwhelming.

Listen and Acknowledge Your Child's Worries and Concerns

Listen to your child's concerns and worries as it might be good for them to communicate their feelings. You may not have all the answers but it will still be good for them to tell you how they feel.

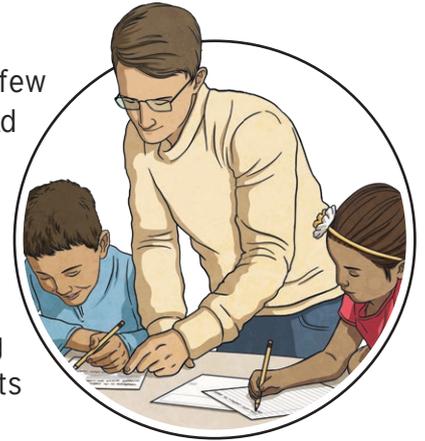
They may be able to write their feelings down or draw pictures of how they feel. This will help you discuss and talk about these worries together. This [My Main Worries Worksheet](#) is great for supporting you with this.

Create a New Home Routine

Where possible, develop a home routine that works for both you and your child. A routine is key in helping to manage the changes that are happening around us and can give an increased feeling of safety and comfort, particularly for children with cognition and learning difficulties. Create a new home routine using [visual timetables](#), [now and next cards](#), [schedules](#) and calendars.

Try to explain any changes to the routine that may occur in the next few weeks and, together, plan some solutions to these changes. This could include doing some [yoga](#), [different exercises](#) or a hobby they enjoy. This will provide your child with some coping strategies for any anxiety that may arise.

There are lots of [matching games](#), [memory activities](#) and [Easter-themed resources](#) available on the Twinkl website that are perfect for supporting your child at home during this time. If your child has dyslexia, there are lots of great resources available to download [here](#).



Be Aware of Their Use of Social Media

Monitor your child's use of social media during this time as they may feel worried or distressed upon seeing false or misinterpreted information. Listen and discuss with them what they have read or heard and try to answer any questions or concerns they may have in an honest way. If possible, avoid going into too much detail. Using visual supports to communicate information could be really helpful and adaptable.

Instead of cutting out all media, consider limiting the amount of news your child sees on the television or online to once or twice a day. This can be something that you talk about at the beginning or end of the day to minimise the worry and stress your child may have.

Be Aware of Your Own Reactions

Be careful of how you yourself respond to the situation of being at home. Children and young people can be aware of emotional cues, body language and high levels of stress around them so it helps them if you remain calm. Again, listen to their concerns and worries and try to answer any questions they may have.



Have Fun!

Where possible, include fun and exciting activities in your daily routine. This can help make both your child and you as a parent feel happy and calm. Follow your child's interests and see where they take you! This could be cooking together, watching a film, building dens or painting in the garden. Remember, you know what works best for you and your family so continue doing a great job.