**Wellbeing Advice Issue 7 – Transition, Mrs Wardle at Cavendish**

The transition back to school following the Covid-19 closure will be a whole new experience for all students who have not been accessing schools throughout. Most of our lives have been turned upside down and we have to re-learn how to function in a completely different place to the one that we left, with quite unexpected challenges and opportunities. Every single one of us – children, parents and school staff have faced a loss of normal routine. For some there has been separation from family, friends and for many, the fear of losing employment and income.

The fact that this is new to us all means that we have very little experience to draw on as we move forward; nonetheless, we need to all understand what circumstances may be like for schools and their population and how we could be moving forward, the focus being on minimising stress, preserving mental health and most importantly, developing a positive future for all.

Children and young people face many transitions, but moving to a new year or a new school is a major event in a child’s life at any time. As many children are not currently in school and have not been for a prolonged period of time, this transition will be even more difficult for them. Change is a normal part of everyday life and can provide opportunities for personal growth and enable adults and children to develop their sense of self-efficacy and resilience. The majority of pupils will be able to cope well with change even in the face of adversities brought about by Covid-19, however, psychologists predict that there will be a significant number of pupils that will feel anxiety around returning to school facing transition after a prolonged period of social distancing due to the recent Public Health crisis.

A key message for preparing children for the next step in their educational journey is that life will not immediately return to normal, there will be a long period of adjustment where our lives gradually move towards something that looks and feels like ‘normal’. Children will need time and space to talk about their feelings and worries to ensure that they are emotionally settled enough to learn.

Children may have anxiety about leaving their parents and returning to school, they may be worried about their own safety and that of their family they are leaving at home. These new changes may be quite a lot for children to take in and they may need the time to talk about these changes and how they feel about them. Equally, some children will not have had any routine during lockdown and may have had a lot of screen time so it will be a challenge to access their new routine again.

It is important that children are supported to experience a successful transition back to school, recognising that transition is a process not a single event. Research has shown that an individual’s personal experience of transition can have a powerful and long lasting effect on their academic outcomes as well as impacting on their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.

While transition can be a period of great excitement and opportunity, some children can also feel the following;

* A loss of attachment to familiar people, friends and a familiar environment
* Entry into a new environment that is less familiar and predictable
* A perceived loss of control
* A feeling of being left behind and less valued
* Uncertainty about the future

Establishing a new routine will help children to know what to expect giving them consistency and tools to manage their emotions and behaviour. Positive praise and recognition of what they are dealing with will reinforce this. It is anticipated that pupils will return to school with some level of anxiety and we will do all that

we can to ensure that our pupils are supported emotionally and given the help they need to manage their big feelings both pleasant and unpleasant and maintain a level of calm moving forward.

Even though there is uncertainty, there is also a lot of certainty which is positive. You know the building, you know the staff, you will see your friends again, you will have to wear your uniform and there will be social distancing in some form. You will have lessons, some of which you will love and some you may not, either way, the basic routine of school will still be the same so draw on those positives when you are feeling a bit overwhelmed about things before you return, try to use these familiar things to rationalise your feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.

We still want to reinforce the need for our pupil’s to maintain some sort of routine, but also to enjoy the summer stress free so that you can return to school in September refreshed and ready for the new year ahead. Here are a few handy ideas;

* Get good sleep, try to ensure you are getting enough sleep to keep you feeling well and rested during the day.
* Get dressed each morning and keep your personal hygiene good
* Keep a daily exercise regime, whether it be a walk, jog, bike ride or something you do at home
* Find a project to focus on over the summer, something you enjoy doing which will make you happy and feel accomplished
* Keep in touch with friends and family in a safe way and always talk about concerns or worries you may have as this is very important to keep yourself emotionally healthy
* Give yourself time to unwind, enjoy music, a good book, writing, drawing or even watching a good series
* Be careful about the amount of time you spend on screens. Try to do something different every day and vary your activities
* Be aware of how you are feeling and ensure that you accept your feelings and share them to make them more manageable.
* Remember that staff are available to support you as well. Email us on **wellbeing@cavendish.e-sussex.sch.uk**with any concerns or worries you may have about the return to school in September.

Routines can help to minimise any anxiety our pupils may have about the next step in their journey through school, it is important to maintain a sense of wellbeing so that you feel more relaxed about your return to school in September, try to maintain some meditation skills and develop your coping strategies to minimise any feelings of anxiety. During the summer holidays appreciate what you have around you, experience the natural beauty of where we live, trips to the beach, the downs and the woods are always fun maybe you could enjoy building a den in the woods this year.

Even though you will have some concerns about your return in September, we want you to be reassured that we will manage your transition carefully and do all that we can to ensure that you are supported and will have someone to talk to when you return.

[The Mental Health Foundation has put together a fantastic page about returning to school after Covid-19](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/returning-school-after-lockdown)

[The Child Mind Institute has put together a very helpful page about helping children manage transitions](https://childmind.org/article/how-can-we-help-kids-with-transitions/)

[Charity Young Minds also has some very helpful tips for helping children manage transition](https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transition-tips-for-parents/)

I have found a you tube video by Eliza at Cahms giving some great information about returning to school, click [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNTHB_zWGdA) to watch it. I also found a very helpful video about anxiety in children and how to understand and manage it, click [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M) to watch it. Rainbow breath – Flow by GoNoodle is a lovely and quick mindfulness video to raise your energy levels and help you manage your day, click [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29e4rRMrV4) to watch it.