

Support with back-to-school worries

Clinical Psychologist Dr Nihara Krause has created these top tips to help parents manage concerns their child may have about returning to school after the holidays. Send them to parents as part of your pre-holiday communications

1. Rebuild routine early

Children thrive on routine and during school holidays, sleep patterns, mealtimes, and daily structure become looser. This is completely normal, but this shift can make the return to school feel overwhelming.

Start resetting sleep schedules 3 to 5 days before school begins by moving bedtime and wake-up time earlier in small steps. Reintroduce familiar routines such as reading before bed, laying out clothes, or having breakfast at the table. Limit screens for at least an hour before bed, as overstimulation can affect sleep quality.

2. Plan a calm and structured first morning back

Keep mornings calm by preparing as much as possible the night before (uniforms, packed lunches, school bags, and PE kits) to reduce stress and set a positive tone for the day.

Aim to wake up 10 to 15 minutes earlier on the first day back so there's no need to rush. Create a warm, steady routine with breakfast together, a quiet chat, and a moment to check in on how your child is feeling. Maintaining a relaxed tone yourself also helps, as children often "borrow" their emotional cues from adults.

A smooth, unhurried morning lowers stress and helps children walk into school feeling steadier and more confident.

3. Talk openly and validate feelings

Communication is key, so try to keep checking in with your child in the run up to the return to school. Listen carefully to what's on their mind, and help them break their concerns into smaller, manageable steps you can work through together. This helps them feel supported and understood.

Don't forget to highlight the positives of returning to school like seeing friends, their favourite lessons and enjoyable routines like after-school activities. Normalise their feelings and explain it's very common to feel a little uneasy shifting routines from holiday mode to back-to-school.