



# Preparing for the return to on-site schooling for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities

## Information for teachers

Prior planning and a whole-school approach can support positive transitions back to school for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism, ADHD or anxiety. AllPlay Learn have created class schedules, school stories, emotions cards and many other resources to support the return of children to school. To view these resources and other helpful information, visit [allplaylearn.org.au/covid-support](http://allplaylearn.org.au/covid-support)

### Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will transition best when there is a consistent whole-school approach.

- **Provide clear communication and support to staff** in order to create a consistent whole-school approach. This could cover communication about COVID-19, and consistency around new rules and routines for children.
- **Identify ways in which all staff can provide a positive transition** to specific children with disabilities. Diagnosis does not have to be disclosed to all staff. Instead, this can be as simple as noting if a specific child may take time to understand some of the new rules, or providing strategies to use with a specific child if they're distressed.

### Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will need time and support to transition back to school.

- **Provide families with tools for the transition.** Create visual schedules and social stories about the return to school and any new rules or routines that children will learn. Use positive language while acknowledging that this transition can be challenging.
- **Re-orient children to school; highlight what has stayed the same and what will be different.** Children may feel more confident about transitioning back to school when they know what to expect. Emails or letters prior to commencing transition which include photos of familiar faces and places around the school, alongside information about any new routines may also help with the transition.
- **Check-in with parents and the child.** Take time to speak to parents and the child about how they coped during this period and what areas they may need support in during the transition. Communicate with parents prior about the purpose of meeting to give them time to prepare too.

### During times of increased anxiety & change, some children with disabilities may experience greater challenges in their learning, behaviours or emotion regulation.

- **Consider separation anxiety in planning.** Some children may need additional support during separation after having spent most of their day with their caregivers over the past weeks. Consider how this can be provided when planning how drop-off time will be initiated in line with Victorian Government and AHPCC guidelines.
- **Additional supports may be needed.** Consider where additional supports may be needed, who can provide that support, and how this support can be implemented for most impact. Liaise with the school wellbeing team, allied health, teacher aides.
- **A whole-school approach to well-being is important during this time.** Consider how safe spaces for distressed or anxious children can be adapted or created, and ways wellbeing activities could be integrated into the school day. Positive wellbeing activities to support staff will also have positive flow-on effects for children. Self-care can help staff overcome some of the demands and challenges associated with supporting children with the transition back to school.