Preparing to go back to school after the summer holidays

Whether your little ones will be starting school for the first time this September, or returning after six weeks of summer fun, there are a few things you could do to help them prepare, both practically and emotionally, for the new term.

**Make sure you have everything ready for the new term**

If your child is starting school for the first time and is not used to wearing a uniform, let them ‘wear it in’ around the house so it doesn’t feel as strange and new on the first day of school.  During the first few years of school, they may come home with a messy uniform and need a fresh full set each morning, so make sure you have plenty of spares, otherwise the washing machine will be constantly on!  It’s also a good idea to pop a spare set of pants, socks/tights and trousers/skirt in their PE bag, particularly during reception year, just in case of any accidents.  If returning to school, sort through your child’s wardrobe and make sure all their uniform still fits – even if it was fine at the end of last term, they may have had a growth spurt over the summer!

Name everything!  Buy iron on or self-adhesive labels, or just write on the garment labels with a permanent pen.  Label all clothes, shoes, PE kit, bags, lunch box, water bottle, pencil case, etc.  It may also be a good idea to include your child’s class name or year group if you can fit it on the label, then if something gets lost it can easily be returned to the right classroom.  If your child is just starting reception year you could also include a little iron on picture or symbol they can easily recognise, just in case there is someone else in their class with the same or similar name.

**Help your child get back into the school routine**

Get back into a ‘normal’ routine in the week before school begins.  So, gradually make bedtimes a little earlier and morning lie-ins a little shorter.  Practise being ready by a certain time – dressed, washed, teeth brushed and ready for the day ahead – even if you’re not going anywhere, it will help in the long run!  Also eating lunch and dinner at similar sorts of times your child would on a typical school day can provide consistency in their transition from home to school.

Try to focus their minds back on learning as well as having fun during the weeks before the new term starts.  Look for fun learning opportunities at home.  Make a cake and ask your child to help measure out the ingredients and read the recipe together.  Or play ‘shops’, adding up how much things cost and counting money.   With older children, try to refresh their knowledge before returning to school.  This doesn’t have to mean setting tests, but a few simple activities on the topics they learnt throughout the previous year will reinforce what they’ve already learnt and get them back in to the right frame of mind for school.

**Encourage a positive attitude about the new term**

Talk to your child about the new term and find out what they are looking forward to.  Try to address any concerns they might have before the new term starts and let them know that they can always speak to their teacher if they are worried about anything at school.

Above all, try to make the return to school a positive thing.  It can be worrying for parents on the first day of term, especially those with young children starting in reception, but your child is more likely to be anxious if they see you are too.  Talk about all the fun activities your child and their friends will be doing at school, so they can see the new term as an exciting opportunity, rather than something to be worried about.