



Welcoming children with Down syndrome back to school

This sheet is for information only and the charity does not encourage nor discourage children returning to school.

As students return to school think about what will make a successful transition from home. We have put together some things to help, use them as you need thinking about what is most relevant to the student that you support.

Try to have some contact with the child you support before they are due to come back to school. This may be in the form of a letter or postcard, a phone call or a facetime call. Be positive when talking to the child you support and discuss some of the fun things that you will be able to do together when you see each other again. You could ask them about the things they have been doing whilst at home and encourage them to bring some photographs of their home activities into school for you to see.

Write a social story explaining what will happen when they come back to school. Include some of the things that may be different than what they are used to for example more hand washing, social distancing. We have created an example social story on Power Point (attached) as an example for you. Think about routines that you usually have at school that will be the same or different and talk about it in your social story. Will school use the normal entrance and exit at the start and end of the day? Will your child wash their hands on entering school? Will they be sat in their normal seat? Will they have the same teacher? Will they be in their normal classroom? What are playtime and dinnertime arrangements going to be like? Send the social story to parents so they can read it with their child often before school reopens. You could also read it with them over Zoom and again when you are all back in school.

Cheshire Down's Syndrome Support Group Registered Charity Number 1146127

Website address: www.cheshiredownssyndrome.com

Phone number: 07518 590300

Support us at: www.justgiving.com/cheshiredownssyndrome/raisemoney

Remember to use LOTS of praise and positive behaviour strategies like Working For boards (attached) when school does reopen. Using the interrupt, ignore, redirect, reward method can also work very well. We have included a separate instruction sheet about this strategy. If you require further help with this method please contact your area Education Advocate who can help you further.

Cheshire West and Chester– Sarah Larkin or Becky Harris and Cheshire East
Yvonne Edwardson.

sarah.larkin@cdssgroup.org.uk

becky.harris@cdssgroup.org.uk

yvonne.edwardson@cdssgroup.org.uk

Use a visual timetable or now and next board. Include handwashing on the visual timetable. We have included a Makaton handwashing sequence that some children may like to use (attached)

Make handwashing fun by singing a song or rhyme whilst doing it. Alternatively, the child you support may enjoy counting to 10 and back down to zero again, or counting up to 20 whilst washing their hands. Would they enjoy doing a funny walk to the bathroom, or moving in different ways to get there? Tip toes, jumps, skips etc. Maybe the whole class would like to join in? Is there a nice smelling soap that they can use? Try to make handwashing as stress free as possible.

Remember that the child you support may get tired easily to begin with after being at home and out of normal routine for so long so schedule regular learning breaks at first. You may need to recap a lot of work previously done in school to remind the child you support how to do things. Errorless learning techniques can be used to help your child if they are finding things they could previously do a bit tricky. Errorless learning is the best way of building success and self-confidence at the task for the child. Errorless learning simply means teaching the child to complete the new task by guiding them through each step correctly with prompts and not allowing them to fail. As the child becomes more confident the teacher fades the prompts until the child can do the whole task without help. Remember to be patient and always end a piece of work on a positive note.

You may want to write another social story about handwashing, social distancing and coughing into arms etc and begin each day by reading it as a reminder of how we need to act in school at the moment. If your child is finding it difficult to remember social distancing and hygiene rules, try to be patient and use positive and timely

Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support Group Registered Charity Number 1146127

Website address: www.cheshiredownssyndrome.com

Phone number: 07518 590300

Support us at: www.justgiving.com/cheshiredownssyndrome/raisemoney

reminders and demonstrations. Remember to praise the child you are working with when they are doing well.

Children with DS can often understand far more than they are able to communicate and may find it especially difficult to verbalise their emotions. They may be finding the new routines at school worrying and be missing their parents and siblings a lot after spending more time than usual at home. They may also have missed friends and other family members like grandparents that they usually see but haven't been able to for a long time. Unfortunately, there may have been some illness or even deaths in the family since the last time you saw the child you work with or their homelife may have been stressful if their parents were having a lot to deal with during the time schools were closed. In addition to all this, seeing people covering their faces and wearing masks may also be scary for some children. Unwanted behaviours can often arise at times when children feel vulnerable, worried or scared. Again, the best way to deal with this is to praise wanted/good behaviour, ignore and redirect from unwanted behaviours, use visual timetables, working for boards and errorless learning to make school less stressful and read social stories to help children's comprehension of why things are so different at the moment.

Discuss and plan activities around different emotions to help your child name how they may be feeling. This may need over learning over a period of time for your child to understand and become comfortable to say or sign their emotions. It may also be a good activity for the rest of their class mates at this time. We have attached the Makaton signs for some emotions.

Give your child a mat, cushion or silicone circle to put where they sit (on their chair, in the hall, at lunch time or on the carpet etc) to help them know where they should be and maintain social distancing from their peers.

Shorter and more frequent break times, with organised games may work better than letting children run free and trusting them to be able to social distance from one another.

Keep up frequent communication with parents over email.

Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support Group Registered Charity Number 1146127

Website address: www.cheshiredownssyndrome.com

Phone number: 07518 590300

Support us at: www.justgiving.com/cheshiredownssyndrome/raisemoney

Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support Group Registered Charity Number 1146127
Website address: www.cheshiredownssyndrome.com
Phone number: 07518 590300
Support us at: www.justgiving.com/cheshiredownssyndrome/raisemoney

INTERRUPT -IGNORE- REDIRECT- REWARD

Interrupt – Ignore – Redirect- Reward

The first rule is that no harm should come to anyone. Therefore, aggression, self-injury or severe destructive behaviours should not be allowed to continue.

Interruption means

- **Not reprimanding** the person
- No particular attention should be given to the person about the problem behaviour
- Redirect at the earliest opportunity with the goal of providing reward for any approximation to positive/desired behaviour.
- Interrupt in an 'ignoring' manner as much as possible
- Do the minimum to manage the behaviour to stop injury to anyone. This can be achieved by raising forearms to block/protect yourself or quietly 'shadowing' the hands of the person who self-injures.

How to Ignore

- No consequences are given which relate directly to the behaviour
- Activities continue, do not stop what you are doing
- Do not ignore the person only the behaviour
- Continue as if behaviour has not taken place

Its purpose is to defuse undesirable behaviour and take away its power

How to Redirect

- Redirection is a prompt or cue to engage in a behaviour so that a reward can be given
- To communicate alternative means of interaction
- Your message is "DO THIS INSTEAD"
- Purpose is to encourage participation
- It communicates that behaviour, which previously stopped interactions or gained inappropriate attention, is no longer effective
- It is often better to use physical and gestural prompts with brief verbal cues
- Use non-verbal prompts such as pointing, touching materials, touching the person hand/arms to focus the person's attention to the task
- Accept any participation by the person and immediately reward this with a positive response (warm verbal comment, physical contact, smiles) and continue assistance towards desired behaviour or task

Cheshire Downs Syndrome Support Group Registered Charity Number 1146127

Website address: www.cheshiredownssyndrome.com

Phone number: 07518 590300

Support us at: www.justgiving.com/cheshiredownssyndrome/raisemoney