

Strategies to reduce separation anxiety

A number of your children may be feeling some anxiety about September. As adults it is not always easy to find the right thing to say or do to ease their fears **but acknowledging children's feelings is key**. Focusing on a **plan together** will help children get stronger and become more resilient. We have put together some suggestions of things you can do to support their successful return to school.

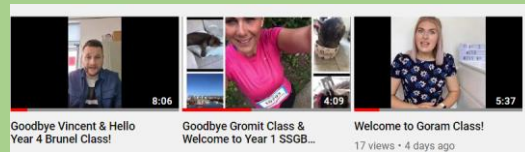
Countdown Calendar

It is a good idea to start preparing children during the last couple of weeks of the summer holiday. Start a countdown calendar to give them perspective on when school actually starts and re-introduce more routine around bedtime and mornings.



Teacher Transition Videos

Keep watching the videos school have sent to reassure and remind children that they will be safe and cared for at school. Links to our Youtube videos are found in letters and these are also saved on the school website.



Goodbye Routine

Come up with a goodbye routine for the gate in the morning and stick to it. This might be a secret handshake, a kiss on the cheek or you might give them a small transitional object (see below).

Whatever routine you both decide on, it's important to leave when it is done which sets the expectation that goodbye is goodbye until you see them after school. It is hard to walk away when your child is upset but they will eventually begin to rely on their own skills of independence and resilience.

Ideas of transitional objects to provide comfort in a stressful situation:

- ❖ a tissue or handkerchief with your perfume/aftershave on
- ❖ a photograph of you to keep with them until you pick them up
- ❖ write a note or message and hide it in their lunch box
- ❖ draw a heart on their hand and one on your hand then press them together when you leave
- ❖ make bracelets and wear one each



Brave face

Do your best to appear calm and in control of your own emotions. Children can sense when you are anxious or concerned even if you don't say it; this is called social referencing. Put on a brave face and show your child that everything is under control. Hiding your emotions from your children isn't always best practice but this is about helping them feel secure without you. They don't want to leave while you're crying any more than you want to leave them.

Be kind to yourself

Finally, be kind to yourself. Make a plan for something after school drop off time, get support from friends/family and give yourself the chance to regulate your own emotions before continuing your day.

