

## Advice for principals and Teachers

### 2. Getting ready for the return of some students

At the time of writing, our situation is very complex. When we go to Level 3, there will be a mixed model of both on-site teaching and on-line learning. There will be difficult physical distancing and hygiene requirements to be adhered to. We are entering new territory but here are some things that I have adapted from my on-going, post-disaster research:

- Communication is key. If your school has been using a range of channels to keep students and families informed, then this is where these important messages can be shared. As a school, discuss and define what your approach will be.
- As you cannot invite parents in to look at your physical distancing arrangements, consider making a short video or take some photographs of the procedures and layout so parents can be reassured. This will also mean that students will not be surprised or upset when they arrive on their first day.
- Discuss as a staff how you might manage any unexpected issues that might arise (for example, students you were not expecting, students you were but who have not arrived, an unwell student, or a staff member being unavailable).
- Discuss how you plan to keep staff safe. How will you manage staffroom, office, classroom, and playground interactions? How will staff be able to share the extra load and yet take small sanity breaks during the day?
- In my study, when students came back to school, many found comfort in familiar things – their friends, their teachers, their classrooms, the school grounds. Give them time to reacquaint themselves with these aspects but plan to do it in safe physical distancing ways.
- Students will be confronted with many changes. They will need to learn new routines as well as try to remember the old ones. Apart from the ones imposed by Covid-19, try to find a balance. Students need to feel that amid the chaos there is some normality - as they will be very aware that life at present is not back to normal.



*Helping teachers work with children when they first return to school following major traumatic or life-changing events*

What expectations and rules can be relaxed a little to take stress off staff and students? How will you explain these?

- Be prepared for talking about the virus and its impact on us all. Consider what information or answers to questions are appropriate at each age/year level. Consider how you will support children who seem to be deeply affected by the situation.
- Each school will be different. Some will have complex family needs, some will have staffing issues, others will need to think outside the box to cope with whatever surprises present themselves. Each school needs to find a way to move forward that reflects the needs of their students and community. Again, it is not time to judge what others have chosen to do or not do. Focus on what you can do best for your community.