

## Section 1: What is a Recovery Curriculum?

<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

Many children will be returning to school after more than five months away. Their experiences at home will be vastly different and it would be remiss to think that the most important thing to do is jump straight in and catch up with missed curriculum.

A recovery curriculum needs to give the school community time to rebuild stamina and routines for learning, rebuild trusting relationships and rebuild a sense of community and normality. Putting mental health at the heart of what we do will be vital.

“The common thread that runs through the current lived experiences of our children, is LOSS.

From loss emanates three significant dynamics that will impact majorly on the mental health of our children. Anxiety, trauma and bereavement are powerful forces. For them all to appear at once in an untimely and unplanned fashion is significant for the developing child. Our children are vulnerable at this time, and their mental-health fragile. And on top of that, they are witnessing a sea of adult anxiety, which they unwittingly are absorbing.

The loss of friendship and social interaction could trigger a bereavement response in some of our children. They will grieve for that group of peers, who not only give them angst, but also affirm them as the person they want to be. The rules of the peer group have vanished without warning, and our young people in particular, were ill prepared for this. They will mourn for how their life was compared to how it is now. They have undergone a period where friends and family members have been avoided because they are a threat; how long will it take for children to feel not threatened by nearness of others?

The loss of routine and structure, will be traumatic for some. Children can find it alarming that the infrastructure of their week has been abandoned however logical the reason.

Anxiety is a cruel companion. It eats away at the positive mental health of the child, and can cause a deterioration in their overall well-being. The anxious child is not a learning child. Mood swings may prevail; they can become irrational and illogical. There can be a loss of sleep; the cumulative tiredness can diminish the child's coping mechanisms.

Those 5 losses, of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom, can trigger the emergence emotionally of anxiety, trauma and bereavement in any child. The overall impact cannot be underestimated. It will cause a rapid erosion of the mental health state in our children.”

Barry Carpenter, CBE, Professor of Mental Health in Education, Oxford Brookes University, UK

Matthew Carpenter, Principal, Baxter College, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, UK

As we plan for a new academic year in 2020-21, our planning will be unlike anything we have experienced before. We are mindful that:

- Some children will have experienced no time in school since March 2020
- The National Curriculum and EYFS curriculum have not been fully taught to those pupils in school or learning from home since March 2020
- It will not be possible for children to experience fully the closure we would wish them to have from the end of the current academic year and prepare for the beginning of the new academic year
- Whilst some pupils will have engaged fully with home learning, many will not. This will be through no fault of their own but due to a wide range of factors including:
  - lack of IT equipment to access Google Classroom / Tapestry; having to share equipment with siblings and parents also working from home (both IT and physical resources such as pens, paper, books etc);
  - impact of anxiety and mental health issues upon ability to self-regulate learning;
  - lack of parental guidance, interest or understanding to support learning;
  - illness (their own or that of family members)
  - failing to see the importance of home learning
  - difficulty in understanding the work which had been set and becoming disillusioned about learning

As a result, the gaps in understanding between pupils (especially our most vulnerable) may have increased. There could also be a significant increase in the misunderstanding and misconceptions of key areas of learning as a result of working independently without the support of a qualified teacher or support staff helping them to navigate and exploit fully the learning opportunities available via home learning.

Prof Barry Carpenter (Oxford Brookes University – Professor in Mental Health in Education) suggests that pupils will need to relearn ‘the rhythm of school (both in terms of daily life (bedtimes and get-up times) and school life (routines and times in the day)).’ He also suggests that we should be mindful of the need to plan our curriculum to respond to what pupils have learnt and not what we expect them to have learnt.

In addition, we need increased awareness of the sensory impact upon pupils of returning to school e.g. being overwhelmed by the proximity of others including noise intolerance, separation anxiety from being away from family and a sense of the world (and school) no longer being the safe place that they knew it to be before the crisis.

## Section 2 : Importance of Mental Health and Well-being in the Recovery Curriculum

In one of the many guidance documents produced by the DfE for the wider opening of schools, they have advised Governors that:

'We expect school leaders to prioritise support for pupil's mental health and wellbeing and make their own assessment of pupils' learning and further curriculum support needs, including those with additional needs or those facing transition to another phase.'

Gateshead Council have produced a helpful guide for thinking about the many different things that children might have experienced.

As we seek to plan for the further opening of schools and the return, in the new academic year, to the full expectation of delivering the National Curriculum we must be mindful of the experiences of our pupils and their families during the lockdown.

All children	Most children	Some children
Experienced different routines at home	Have missed seeing their friends and family as regularly as before the lockdown	Will not have missed their friends, peers and wider family and will be anxious about a return to 'normal'
Have not seen the majority of their friends and peers	Will have experienced the anxiety of adults around them concerned about the virus	Will not have missed school and won't be looking forward to coming back
Have had little opportunity to play in groups of more than 2-4 (this being their own family)	Have missed opportunities to play with their friends face to face.	Will not have enjoyed spending more time with their immediate family
Will have followed different rules and expectations at home	Will have had opportunity to undertake some home learning	Will have additional learning or sensory needs which will impact on
Have had limited contact with adults outside their immediate family	Will have spent additional time outdoors	May no longer feel safe in school
Will have sensed their community as being an unsafe place to be	Will have learnt that they should be wary of contact with others	Could have experienced bereavement for the first time
Will have increased awareness of viruses and bugs being very dangerous	New understanding of the importance of hand washing to kills germs/viruses	May have had no one to listen to them or talk to them
Experienced a sense of isolation at times	Will now understand the Government makes decisions which affect us all	Will have experienced family stress/anxiety and perhaps seen DV
Developed an understanding of adults socially distancing when outside, queuing for food etc	Developed greater respect for the NHS and key workers	May not feel safe outside the boundaries of their home
Will have had greater contact with the people in the family they live with	Spent more time on electronic devices and watching TV than before	May have enjoyed not having structure and routine in their lives
	Have a greater awareness of illness and death	Could have felt abandoned by friends, family and school staff
	Will have enjoyed spending more quality time with their immediate family	Will now be negative and disengaged with school, not appreciating its importance to life
		May become overwhelmed by the physical and sensory perception of others around them in school

### Section 3: Identifying and supporting those pupils experiencing Mental Health difficulties upon returning to school

All children will be different upon returning to school and staff must be alert to the needs of pupils being mindful that changes in behaviour are a form of communication.

Staff will need to discuss the pupils transitioning into their class with previous teachers to be aware of how much contact there has been e.g. via Google Classroom and whether there are any alerts to well being they need to be aware of. CPOMS will be vital in recording these.

Staff should also be aware that communication with families of the most vulnerable pupils will be important. Pupils with SEND are statistically more likely to have mental health issues and it should be a matter of priority to prepare return to school packs for those pupils possibly with visuals and timetables once guidance from the government is clear.

Mental health must be a priority as we start to get back to normality. The Government have begun to share resources and training modules for schools linked to RSE – more information can be found at the following link for the first of these modules.

(Link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-mental-wellbeing>)

'This (initial) training module supports the physical health and mental wellbeing section of the statutory relationships, sex and health education curriculum. This is the first of a series of 14 modules to support schools to implement the new curriculum.

## Section 4: The Curriculum

### **IN GENERAL**

- When we first return we need to focus on promoting safety and stability. Introduce children to the routines and expectations of school. Ensure they know how we are keeping school a safe place. Focus on active learning, PSHE, collaborative art, singing and time to play and reconnect.
- Re-establish the rhythm of school with typical timetables although for the first month this should focus on opportunities to read, build resilience for short written tasks, complete maths activities, PSHE, daily PE (for an hour on 2 days and 30 minutes on the other 3 days) and a focus on the arts and shorter and reflective RE tasks.
- By half term, we may be in a position to return to a more typical timetable. We will have had time to establish which children have the most significant gaps in understanding and which will need further emotional support.
- Do not try to 'cram' in what has been missed or not fully understood from the previous year. The Autumn Term is NOT a time for intense catch up.

### **ENGLISH**

Priority will need to be based on areas that weren't covered in the previous year group. Give plenty of opportunity for reading daily, discussion and build up resilience to writing. By half term you may have built up to daily phonics / spelling, reading/comprehension, grammar or short writing tasks with plenty of modelling and quality teaching.

Split sessions across the day depending on Key Stage – separate reading lessons to SPAG and Writing opportunities.

Make links between the previous and current year group objectives - These links can be used to support teachers to understand how they can teach objectives from the previous year while still moving towards or into their own year group objectives during the Autumn term.

### **MATHS**

Similar to the English. Focus on re-teaching and embedding the key areas for the previous year group. Don't overload the children with intensive maths work trying to catch up and don't rush through coverage at the expense of understanding.

All children should be completing a short daily session of mental maths of approximately 20-30 minutes. This could include written calculations. WRM Flashback 4, True or False, Problem of the Day. This could also include times tables, Topical Resources, maths games and outdoor maths. It is important to provide children with a variety of topics and learning opportunities.

Children also need to be reintroduced to maths lessons daily to bridge the content missed in the summer and recap learning from Easter Term. As resilience to learning builds up these may increase in time to build back up to the maths hour but it may well begin with calculations, whiteboard work and some time to work in books – we need to boost children's confidence and show them they are succeeding. There will no longer be the opportunity for a split lesson but if maths is split across the day

### **PSHE / WELLBEING**

In the initial half term, use Kapow Primary mental health and wellbeing curriculum. This includes videos for staff use only. After week 2 you may wish to pause for a couple of weeks and supplement with the Twinkl PSHE blocks on Thinking Positive. Teachers will need to use their judgement about what is necessary for their class.

## RE

Teach your Autumn topics as usual but be mindful about the type of task you are giving to pupils – build up to longer bits of writing. Make links to wellbeing and PSHE where possible.

## SCIENCE / GEOGRAPHY / HISTORY

These curriculum areas will pick up after October half term and we will discuss condensing topics during staff meetings in the first half term. Coordinators have set out priorities.

## ART / MUSIC

In its report 'Returning to school after the coronavirus lockdown', Mentalhealth.org identified the arts as one way of supporting children's mental health and wellbeing as they return to the classroom.

"The creative arts can often help us express feelings that we struggle to put into words or help us feel less alone in difficult feelings. Pieces of music, visual art and drama that reflect some of the feelings that children might be having can be a useful way to start discussions – they don't have to be about coronavirus specifically. Creating art can also bring people together."

## ART

Try to provide opportunities for art every week but for the first half term this doesn't have to link to your MTP however it can if you wish. You could take a 'lighter touch' approach or change certain ideas to make work more collaborative. Be mindful about current guidance about sharing of resources.

Creating a piece of art as a whole class (or even as a whole school) can help build connections and create a sense of belonging. Something simple like a picture made up of individual handprints is easy for pupils of all abilities to access. It can be displayed in the classroom as a physical reminder of the class's joint identity.

A school rainbow where each child draws/paints a portrait of themselves in a particular colour which are all put together to make a huge school rainbow.

Painting pebbles to make a school path

<https://www.weareteachers.com/collaborative-art/>

Using art and music in the classroom when talking about feelings.

In her article ' Art for a post lockdown school' , Emily Gopaul gives a number of suggestions <https://theprimaryartclass.com/2020/05/27/art-for-a-post-lockdown-school/>

Just playing with playdough or modelling clay can be mindful and relaxing and can link to other areas of the curriculum as well as using scrap card to make models.

Zentangles and Mandala Patterns can calm and relax. This kind of repetitive creative work, in and of itself, can be calming and self-soothing as well as simple as they only require paper and a pencil/black pen.

Opportunities for use in sketch books should be made wherever possible.

There are huge amounts of artwork that can be done outside. Below are a couple of links which give ideas for outdoor art.

<https://www.tts-group.co.uk/blog/2018/08/22/top-12-outdoor-art-ideas.html>

<https://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/storage/resource/downloads/e8137741-d25a-442e-a658-8149993cf1aa/original/outdoor-art-natural-connections.pdf>

<https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resources/lesson-ideas/>

## **MUSIC**

It has long been recognised that Music is good for you, and in 2011, researchers found that music releases dopamine, the feel-good chemical in your brain. It also found that dopamine was up to 9% higher when volunteers listened to music that they enjoyed. It may be obvious to us, but it is strong evidence for the link between music and mental wellbeing.

<https://bebrainfit.com/music-brain/>

What are the mental effects of music?

The benefits to pupils of participating in musical activity in terms of their wellbeing are well-known. Sheffield University's music department has a specific research group dedicated to wellbeing; many mainstream and special schools fund music therapy sessions and music is a staple of youth work and mental health projects. The charity Mind devote a page of their website to the benefits of music to mental health. Because of its rhythmic and repetitive aspects, music engages the neocortex of our brain, which calms us and reduces impulsivity. We often utilize music to match or alter our mood.

Singing together can be a fantastic way to build a sense of community with groups. Singing in a choir or singing in any sort of group environment with other people can be a fun, bonding activity. It gives you an opportunity to share an experience with a group of people. We can access songs on SINGUP as well as using the range of songs and additional resources in Charanga. Try to stick to your Charanga topic for the half term but supplement it with your 'playlist' – this could include songs that make us happy chosen by the children.

## **DT**

Focus on the food unit during the first term – adapt it where possible – and think about making links with wellbeing in terms of health. <https://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/>

## **PE**

Please teach your 2 autumn units as usual. On the other 3 days in 'active time' ensure that you are promoting activities that get the children very active to really promote good health. SAQ activities, running, skipping etc. Using Super Movers and other moderate activities are fine in addition but children need to be building up physical strength and stamina again. You could also use some strength building yoga or Pilates type routines – Cosmic Kids yoga is nice. Make sure any mats are wiped down before and after use. Keep your equipment for that half term in your class PE tub as this half term.

## **Computing**

Please focus on coding units – this can be an opportunity for creativity and often provides pupils with a sense of 'down time'. Please also cover parts of your safety curriculum and engage children in discussions about screen time as we are moving out of lockdown e.g. how much is too much? Age restrictions for social media accounts. Risks with online chatting and gaming.

