



Dudley Educational  
Psychology Service

Making a difference  
Using Psychology to achieve positive outcomes and recovery

# Drawing the Ideal Safe School

A tool for children who are anxious about  
returning to school to use with parents/carers

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## Drawing the Ideal Safe School

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## Information about Drawing the Ideal Safe School

### A tool for children who are anxious about returning to school to use with their parents/carers

#### How have you been getting on?

Over the last few months you and your family have made huge adjustments to your lives. You can be very proud that you have been able to do this even when you have not been able to get support from other parents, friends and school staff so easily.

Many parents have re-shaped their family life and taken on home-schooling, at the same time as having other responsibilities and worries, or very sadly even being bereaved.



#### Thinking about the children going back to school...

After a while, quite a few families have found that this 'new normal' has made life easier in some ways. Being safe together at home has been reassuring - so thinking about the children returning to school in these uncertain times creates anxiety.

This can be because their children prefer to be at home, where things are more predictable, and they feel safe. An important part of going back to school is knowing that the best possible arrangements are in place to keep everybody safe and well.

#### Finding out what will help your child best...

Some children find it really hard to feel confident about returning to school. If we can understand their point of view, it helps us to reassure them and plan support.

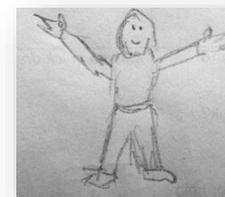
✓ How do you know that you are safe at school?  
Because my friends are there with me

**Research has shown that the combination of drawing and talking together with a child is a powerful way to find out their perspective.**

Find out more here: [Drawing the Ideal School Technique Publication](#)

Recent guidance from the British Psychological Society suggests that activities such as drawing the ideal safe school can increase feelings of being involved and reduce anxiety. [British Psychological Society Guidance to help prepare young people returning to school UCL](#)

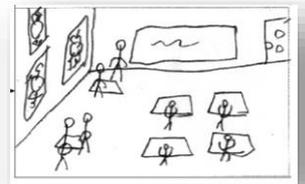
Many children of different ages have enjoyed drawing their ideal school. This version of the tool is an A4 double-sided sheet (pages 4 & 5) - with set of conversation starter questions to ask your child - and boxes for them to draw as they talk. Using the **Drawing the Ideal Safe School** tool can be a useful way to talk about enjoying school and increase your child's confidence that they will be safe and well there.



We hope that you will have a special time together using this tool.

*Dr Jane Williams, Senior Educational Psychologist. June 2020*

## Drawing the Ideal Safe School Guidance



### What do I need to know?

- ✓ Your child might come up with things that aren't possible!
- ✓ That is fine because any drawings or comments tell us something about what your child thinks about school - and would be ideal for them.
- ✓ It doesn't matter what the drawings look like – they are a quick sketch to share ideas.
- ✓ All children complete the activity in their own way and they can be very creative!
- ✓ They might draw characters from games, tv or videos to show you what they think.
- ✓ It's ok if you adapt the tool to work better for your child as you go along.
- ✓ *Try to be as open and relaxed as you can be about what your child comes up with – they are trusting you with their hopes and maybe fears too.*

### What will we need?

- ✓ A paper copy of the **Drawing the Ideal Safe School** sheet, a pencil for your child and a pen or pencil for you to note down some of things they say *in their own words*.
- ✓ Somewhere to sit down with your child where they can draw and talk to you.
- ✓ A good moment when your child might be interested in doing something with you - and you can focus on them - ideally without screens or other distractions.

### What do we do?

- ✓ Find a moment and sit down together with the drawing sheet and the pencil/pens.
- ✓ Show your child the sheet and tell them you are going to try something new together.
- ✓ Explain that this is not school or home-work – there is no right or wrong way to do this.
- ✓ Tell your child they will be thinking about their ideal or best possible school.
- ✓ Go through the sheet, one topic at a time. Read and talk about the questions together.
- ✓ Ask your child to make a quick sketch about each topic - remember it doesn't have to be their best drawing because it's just a way for them to show you their ideas.
- ✓ *Top tip: giving thinking time and waiting quietly often helps children to respond.*
- ✓ Write down any important answers to the questions, *using their own words*.

### What next?

- ✓ Thank your child for a lovely time together. Check back any key points. E.g.: "It seems like..." and agree who can see the drawings and ideas.
- ✓ *Remind your child that school can be fun and safe at the same time.*
- ✓ Choose a relaxing activity for each of you to do as a break.
- ✓ Give yourself time to reflect on what your child has shared and talk to a supportive friend or family member to plan how you share this information with school staff.
- ✓ More useful information can be found here: [Dudley Parent/Carer resources Dudley Educational Psychology and Counselling](#)



## Drawing the Ideal Safe School drawing sheet

<p><b>1. Getting ready at home</b> <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What do you need to know?</li>   <li>✓ What will you need to take?</li>   <li>✓ What are you looking forward to?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of you getting ready to go to your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>2. Outside of the school</b> <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What does it look like?</li>   <li>✓ How do you get in?</li>   <li>✓ Who is waiting for you?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of the outside of your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>3. Your classroom and desk</b> <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Where is your desk and what is on it?</li>   <li>✓ How do you ask for help?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of your classroom and your desk at your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>4. The playground</b> <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What do you do?</li>   <li>✓ What is the best thing?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of the playground at your ideal safe school</i></p>

<p><b>5. The teachers and helpers</b>  <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Who is there?</li>   <li>✓ What are they doing?</li>   <li>✓ What do they say?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of the teachers and the helpers at your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>6. The other children</b>  <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Who is there?</li>   <li>✓ What are they doing?</li>   <li>✓ What do they say?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of the other children at your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>7. Me</b>  <i>Ideas to talk about and note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What are you doing?</li>   <li>✓ How do you know that you are safe at school?</li>   <li>✓ How will the adults know you are ok?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of you at your ideal safe school</i></p>
<p><b>8. The most important thing about the school is...</b></p>	<p><i>Make a quick drawing here of the most important thing about your ideal safe school</i></p>

**Completed by:**

**Date:**