Supplemental material

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Supp. Table 1. Six main themes derived from thematic analysis of ideas on what should be covered in a children's storybook to help children return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic

Main themes	Sub-themes	Quotes
Changes in school environment	Changes in classroom environment Physical distancing and changes in play New school rules to follow	"You may not have your normal teacher. They may not be in school, or they may need to teach other children." "We won't be holding assemblies." "The school day will be shorter than normal." "Spacing out children. Lots of cleaning before during and after school. Social distancing. Personal equipment – not sharing." "When we come to the school, Mum and Dad should say goodbye by the entrance to the school, and not inside." "…and although it's nice to share, we shouldn't share them [toys] with each other just for the time being." "We should preferably still only play with a few friends and preferably the same ones both in and outside of school." "Like outside school, you need to stay 2 metres away from other children and adults. This means you can be with your friends in the same classroom, but not too close." "Playtimes will happen but not all children will be out on the playground at the same time. This will be the same for

		lunchtimes. This means we will play and have lunch with a small group of our friends." "How will I know how close I can go to other children?" "Your teachers will help you. They may put markers on the floor or use ribbons to show you where you can and cannot go." "Toilets will be in use. You can use them but on your own." "One of the most important things is that we must still remember to wash our hands really often and thoroughly. Firstly, when we arrive in the morning, every time it's playtime, when we have been to the toilet, before and after eating, and when we have blown our noses. And again, when we come home from school." "We must also remember to give our mobile phones, tablets and keyboards such a good clean before and after we use them."
Acknowledging feelings	Mental health, fears and anxieties Encouraging hope and focus on positives Normalising reactions	"…their anxieties about returning to school may include wondering how other people, children and adults, may respond to whatever emotions the child is experiencing – and there can be a range." "…worry about passing COVID-19 to others and causing them illness, or worse, because of the way it has been reported." "Harnessing the kindness and gratitude that has come about during the pandemic."

		"Holding on to the positive things from lockdown– sense of community, family time, trying new things." "… 'smile more hug less'- developing new ways of showing affection/that you care around social distancing." "Celebrating the things children have achieved during lockdown. Giving hope that things will get better." "Creating a sense of belonging recognising that the environment may feel quite alien but also that children will all be in different places in terms of how they are feeling and have been impacted." "… its ok to feel cross about loss of normal life."
Relationships with family	Concern for others Separation anxiety	"… worried about someone vulnerable in their family… (The young carers hub has identified 278 young carers." "Children worrying that they might create risk for their parents [particularly if a family member is more at risk]." "Some children may have anxiety about leaving other family members behind, especially if they are worried about significant others who are already vulnerable. Will they pick me up? Will they be there when I get home?" "… fear of leaving families after being together for all this time."

		"My daughter says some children have been very isolated for three months if in a single child household- so they are anxious about returning to school."
		"Another is that young children have been told to stay at home very consistently over the last few months. Now some are almost afraid to leave the house."
Relationships with friends	Changes in interacting with friends Fears about getting close	"Because children will be organised to be in small groups or bubbles they may not be with their friends." "Can I hug and cuddle friends I haven't seen for a while? No. Doctors say that this isn't a good idea now." "Can I share my things with my friends? Not now. It is very important to use your own pens, pencils and books. This is so that germs are not spread around." "They have also been told to keep away from other children so being closer may worry them." "Fears about: Getting close to people/Catching the virus."
Language and content	Accurate information to be given Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning difficulties	"… keep the visual messages strong and clear & maybe have a repeated refrain/message which the characters return to e.g. surrounding hand washing or not worrying (whatever the key message of the book will be)." "Also something around fact vs fiction (dispelling myths about the virus that will circulate wildly in a child/school setting- built from media/social dialogue and child-like taunts etc)."

		"I think information about returning to school would be helpful to children and I think most importantly these books are to be read at home with the family. So they can be discussed and any questions raised can be answered by parents."
		"Establishing clear routines may be particularly important for children on the autistic spectrum."
		"My only suggestion would be to consider children with autism and perhaps seek expert advice from the National Autistic Society?"
Taking ownership of health and hygiene behaviours	Healthy behaviours Hygiene behaviours	"Do I come to school if I feel poorly? No. It is very important you stay at home if you feel in any way poorly." "Looking after yourself physically, eating well, physical activity, sleeping well." "Looking after yourself infection control, hand washing, 2 metres, staying in, vaccination."