

Return to School

Resource Pack

Visual schedules for home routines such as bedtime and getting ready in the morning

Countdown calendars for the first day

Social stories around social distancing and changes to the school environment



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Going Back to School

Preparing your child for a return to school is going to be a little bit different this year as it more than likely is the longest period of time that you as a family have been away from school. The transition back to school from such a long break might present challenges not seen before or those that resurface at the end of every August and perhaps the first week in January. These include a lot if not all of the following:

- Getting the bedtime routine reestablished
- Waking everyone up in the morning
- The morning routine, getting clothes ready etc.
- Getting homework done in the evenings

Revisiting or introducing some of the basic strategies may help in structuring your routines and increasing predictability for everyone one involved. Strategies included in this document:

Visual Schedule

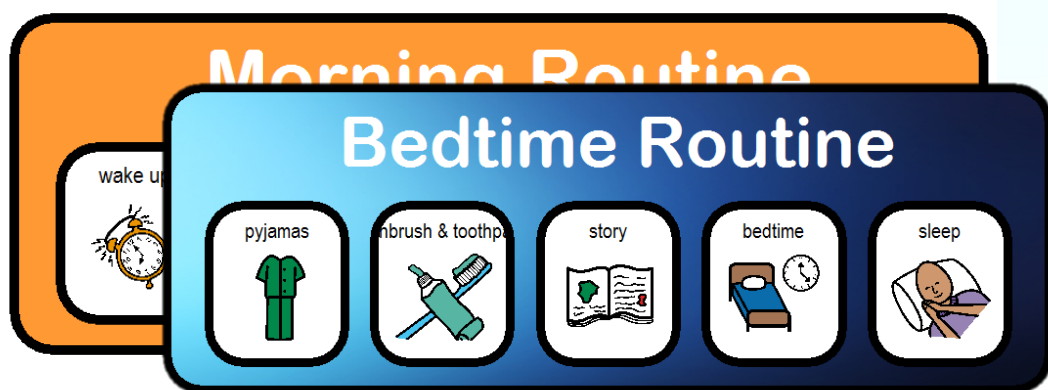
- Visual Schedules for each routine you might be revisiting:
- Bedtime
- Morning
- Getting Dressed
- Homework
- Travelling to school
- School Day (you may get some input from teacher on this one)

Countdown Calendar

This is a visual reminder of how many sleeps/days we have left until we return to school. It is also a useful way of introducing the concept of visuals that span a much longer time than the usual routine based schedules. These long schedules are useful when trying to visually quantify the waiting times for events like holidays, Christmas, relations visiting, appointments etc.

Social Stories

I have also included social stories that are beneficial in informing our children on what's going to be happening in the weeks before and the initial weeks of school. These will be different in each individual's case as schools will have different systems in place to deal with the social distancing recommendations from the Department of Education. This could be as small as will my seat have moved in the classroom. Whilst these may seem like small details they may be of huge significance to our children. This can be true of breaks during the day, which classroom I am in, any PPE that may be used in the school etc.



Visual Schedule

- What is it?

A visual schedule is a visual representation of what is going to happen throughout the day or within a task or activity.

- When is it helpful?

A visual schedule is helpful for breaking down a task that has multiple steps to ensure the teaching and compliance of those steps. It is also helpful in decreasing anxiety and rigidity surrounding transitions by communicating when certain activities will occur throughout the day or part of the day.

- How do I teach it and use it?

After your child understands the concept of sequencing activities through the use of a First-Then Board, you can develop a more complex schedule for a series of activities during the day. Decide the activities that you will picture in the schedule. Choose activities that really will happen in that particular order. Try to mix in preferred activities with non-preferred ones. Put on the schedule the visuals (e.g., photos, drawings, written words) that show the activities that you have identified. The schedule can be portable, for example, on a binder or clipboard, or it can be fixed to a permanent place, like a refrigerator or wall. Your child should be able to see the schedule before beginning the first activity on the schedule. It should continue to be visible to your child during the rest of the activities.

When it is time for an activity on the schedule to occur, cue your child with a brief, verbal instruction. For example, say "Whats next?" This helps your child pay attention as the next activity begins. At first, you may need to physically guide your child to check the schedule (e.g., gently guide by shoulders and prompt your child to point to the next activity on the schedule). You can gradually decrease physical prompts as your child begins to use the schedule more independently.

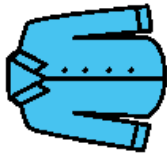
Morning Routine

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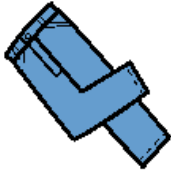
Bedtime Routine

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dress shirt



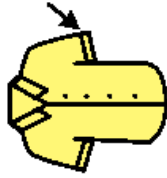
jeans



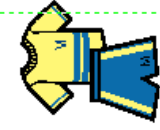
long underwear



short sleeves



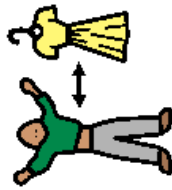
uniform



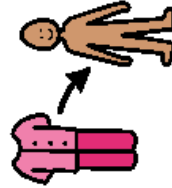
clothes basket



change



get dressed



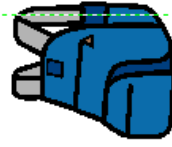
put coat on



put on



rucksack



swimming costume



bra



bobble hat



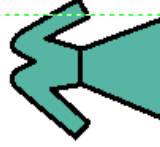
clothes



coat



dress



gloves



jacket



jeans



track suit



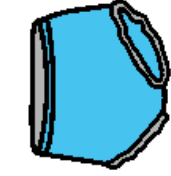
mittens



dungarees



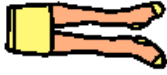
knickers



trousers



tights



boots



raincoat



dressing gown



trainers



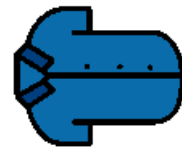
sandals



scarf



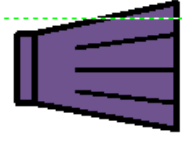
shirt



shorts



skirt



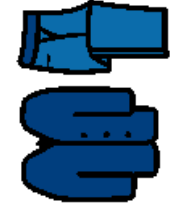
sneakers



socks



suit



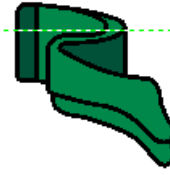
sweater



T-shirt



tights



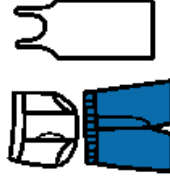
vest



underwear



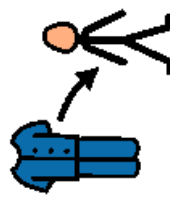
underwear



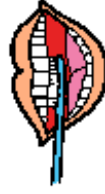
underwear



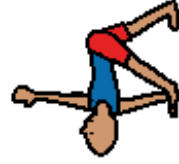
get dressed



brush teeth



exercise



walk outside



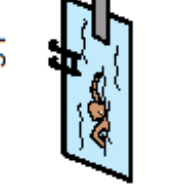
bathe



showerhead



swimming pool



watch TV



book



wash



wash hair



dry hair



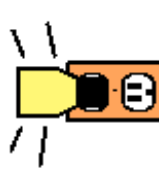
dry hair



put on pyjamas



night-light



light



dinnertime



DVD



drink



snack time



sit on bed



bedroom



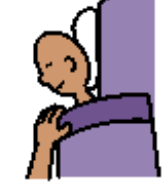
bedtime



bedtime story



tuck in bed



bedtime



make bed



good night kiss



sleep



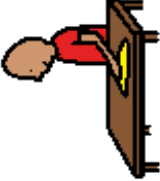
headphones



listen to music



clean table



say goodnight



quiet time



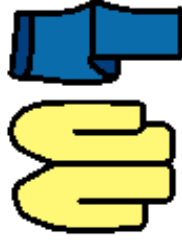
quiet



milk



clothes



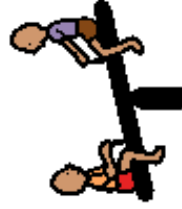
shoes



finished



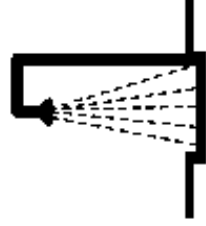
play



tea



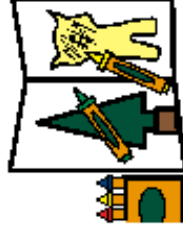
shower



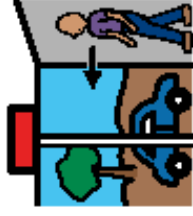
fruit



colouring book



go out



cereal



wash hands



watch TV



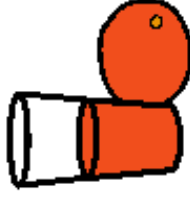
write



bathe



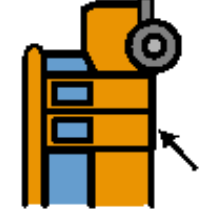
orange juice



wash



bus doors



I'll spell it



clean room



breakfast



wash hair



school bag



maths class



clean table



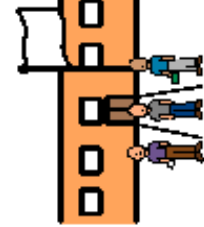
wake up



toothbrush & toothpaste



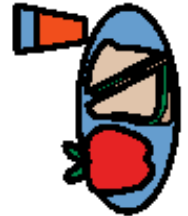
school



drink



dinner



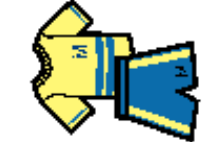
awake



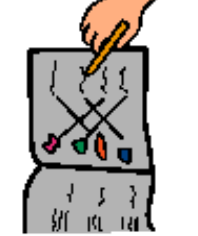
brush hair



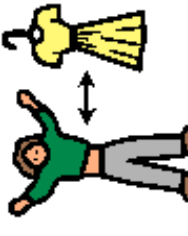
uniform



homework



change



Steps for Setting up a Visual Schedule

Picture or photograph schedules: You will know if your son/daughter/student is ready for a picture or photograph schedule if they can consistently match pictures or photographs (such as in a simple lotto game). Some individuals find photos easier to recognize while others do better with line drawing. You can either draw this yourself or use computer generated pictures from online resources such as clip art.

Your son/daughter/student pulls off the first picture and then goes to the activity that it represents. If they are distractible, and likely to lose focus on the way to an activity, you can use a matching picture schedule. In this type of schedule, you place an identical picture in the area they are going to (or at the doorway if for example they are going outside). They then take their picture and match it to the one you have mounted in the area. Velcro can be used to make the pictures stick to each other.

Below is an example of a photograph schedule used after school. When going shopping the parent took the matching photo and held it on the door for the child to match before entering. At home the parent has pockets with matching pictures as shown below:

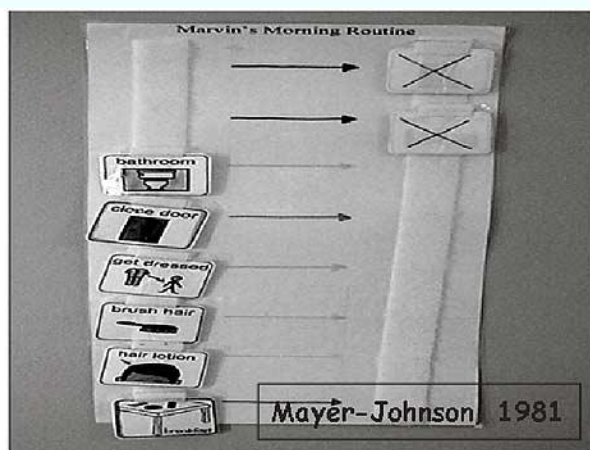


Pocket (envelope) with identical photo fixed to door for child to drop picture into.



If they are able to maintain their focus on what the picture was even as they move across the room/ building to the next activity, you may not need a matching picture.

Below is an example of a picture schedule used for a morning routine. The individual turns each picture over then does the activity.



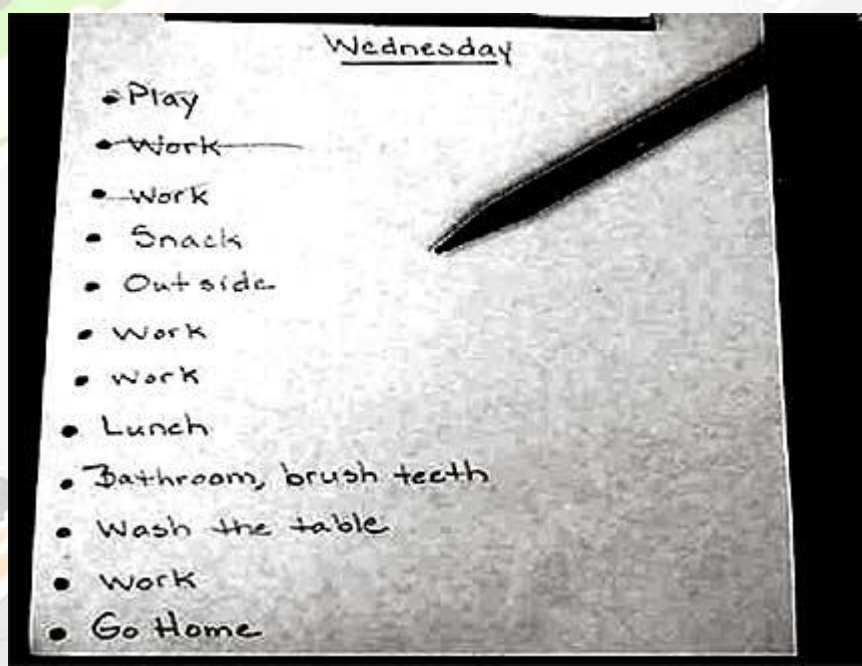
Written Schedules: These schedules are best for readers. If your son/daughter/student is just beginning to learn to read you can add some words to a picture schedule. Again you can use a matching schedule such as the one shown below:

Schedule



Matching word posted in the area.

Or you can use a basic written list where your son/daughter/student crosses off each thing as they complete it such as this one below:



For more advanced learners, you can move to a more complex written schedule format such as day planners and electronic organizers.

For more information about using written schedules with your son/daughter/student see Faherty (2000).

When choosing a schedule type, the important thing to remember is that the schedule has to work for your son/daughter/student when they are having a really bad day. As most of us don't perform at our best when we are stressed, this means that the schedule format is likely to be more effective if you make it easier than you think your son/daughter/student can handle.

2. Decide on the length of the schedule.

Again this will be based on your son/daughter/student's needs and abilities. Some may be able to use a whole day schedule while others will be overwhelmed by this amount of information and will need to see just one or two items at a time. You can take a guess at the number of items that you think will work and then try it out making modifications, if needed.

3. Decide on the cue you are going to use to get your son/daughter/student to their schedule.

Since verbal instruction and cues are not the most effective way for individual's with autism and ID to learn (Mesibov et al., 2005), it can be helpful to use a visual method of telling your son/daughter/student that it is time to check their schedule. This can also be an especially useful tool when your son/daughter/student is stressed. As giving verbal instruction during a crisis is likely to cause difficult behaviors to increase.

If your son/daughter/student is using an object schedule, then you are their visual cue as you hand them the object. For picture schedules, you can use a picture representation of their schedule as shown below or a photograph of themselves or the schedule.



For written schedules, you can use 'check schedule' cards such as the one shown below or for more able individuals, just hand them a pencil. Both picture and written cues can be mounted on index cards that you hand to your son/daughter/student when you want them to check their schedule.

If your son/daughter/student is managing a more advanced schedule such as a day planner or electronic organizer, they can set an alarm on their watch or organizer that reminds them to check it at key times.

4. *Teach schedule use.*

Like any new concept, using a schedule is something that you need to teach your son/daughter/student. For an individual with little or low verbal understanding, you can do this by placing the schedule object or picture in their hand and gently physically prompting them (from behind) to go to the desired area. It is important not to be in front of them leading them to the area as this can cause them to become overly dependent on you rather than looking at the schedule.

For individuals with more verbal skills, you can explain (briefly) the concept of schedules. For some individuals, this will be most effective if you do it in writing. You can also show them your schedule and pictures of schedules that other adults use to increase their motivation to use a schedule.

5. *Monitor how your son/daughter/student is doing.*

Once your son/daughter/student is using their schedule, notice whether they are independent in using it. Your son/daughter/student is independent when they go to the schedule on their own once you hand them their visual cue to 'check schedule' and then use the next schedule item to go independently to the next activity.

6. *Make changes to the schedule format if needed.*

If you have been teaching the schedule for a couple of weeks and find there is no progress in independence, this is a sign that you may need to modify the schedule. For example, reduce the number of items or change the format from pictures to objects.

7. *Be consistent in putting down all the activities on the schedule – especially if unexpected things happen.*

A characteristic of individuals with AUTISM AND ID is that they are quick to develop routines and are intolerant of change (Mesibov et al., 2005). This can often lead to behavioral difficulties. By using the schedule to show upcoming changes, you are teaching your son/daughter/student to become more flexible and more accepting of change because it is happening within the familiar routine of checking the schedule.

8. *As your son/daughter/student grows and develops new skills, you may decide to change the schedule format.*

Avoid the temptation to eliminate the schedule. Individuals with autism and ID are likely to regress back to over-dependence or loss of skills if your aim is to gradually fade the support of the schedule. However, for most individuals, the schedule format is likely to change as new skills emerge.



Countdown Calendar

August 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

The calendar can be presented in a few different formats. Ideally we want to convey the passage of days as simply as possible. This can be in the following ways

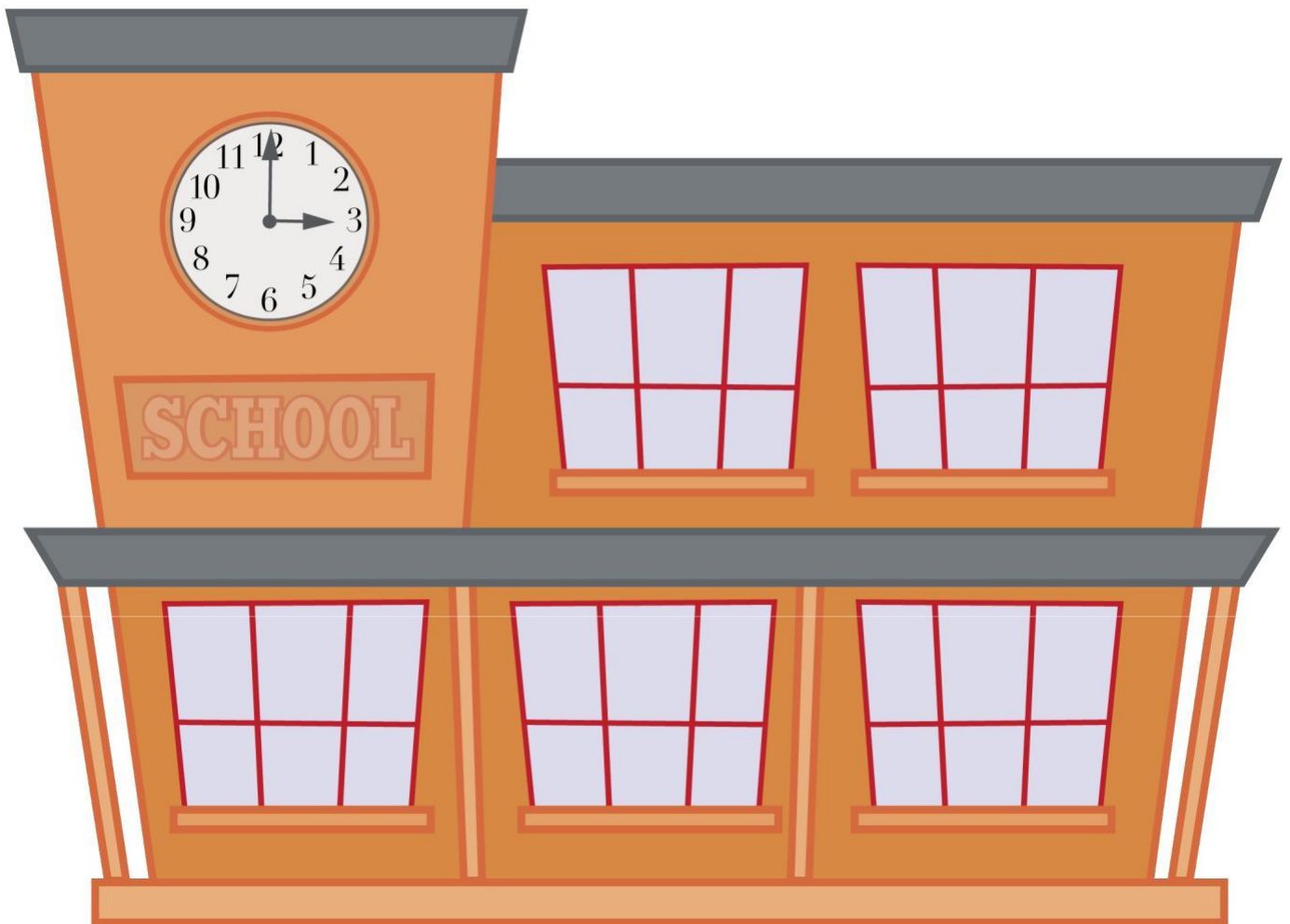
1. A basic list of numbers that are crossed off
2. A calendar showing the days of the week/regular calendar with the dates subsequently covered or crossed off.
3. A more interactive version where Velcro icons are removed showing the number of days left

Social Stories

The following social story has kindly been shared by
senresourcesource.co.uk



Going Back To School



The coronavirus is a virus that
has been making people feel
very poorly.



The coronavirus is also called
Covid-19.

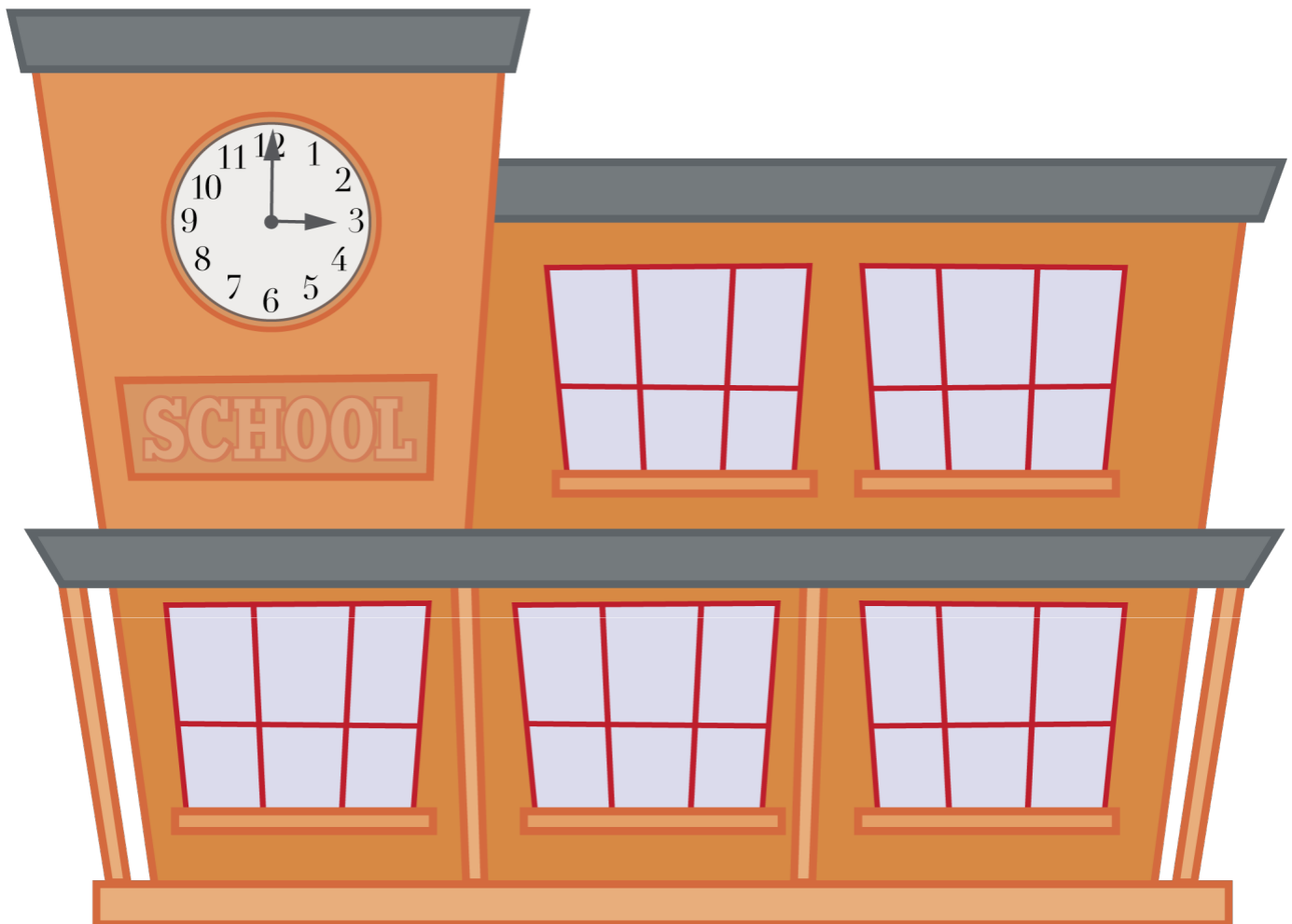
Because of the coronavirus we have all been in lockdown. This means that we have not been able to leave our homes.



However, now the doctors have
agreed that it is safe to start
going back to school.



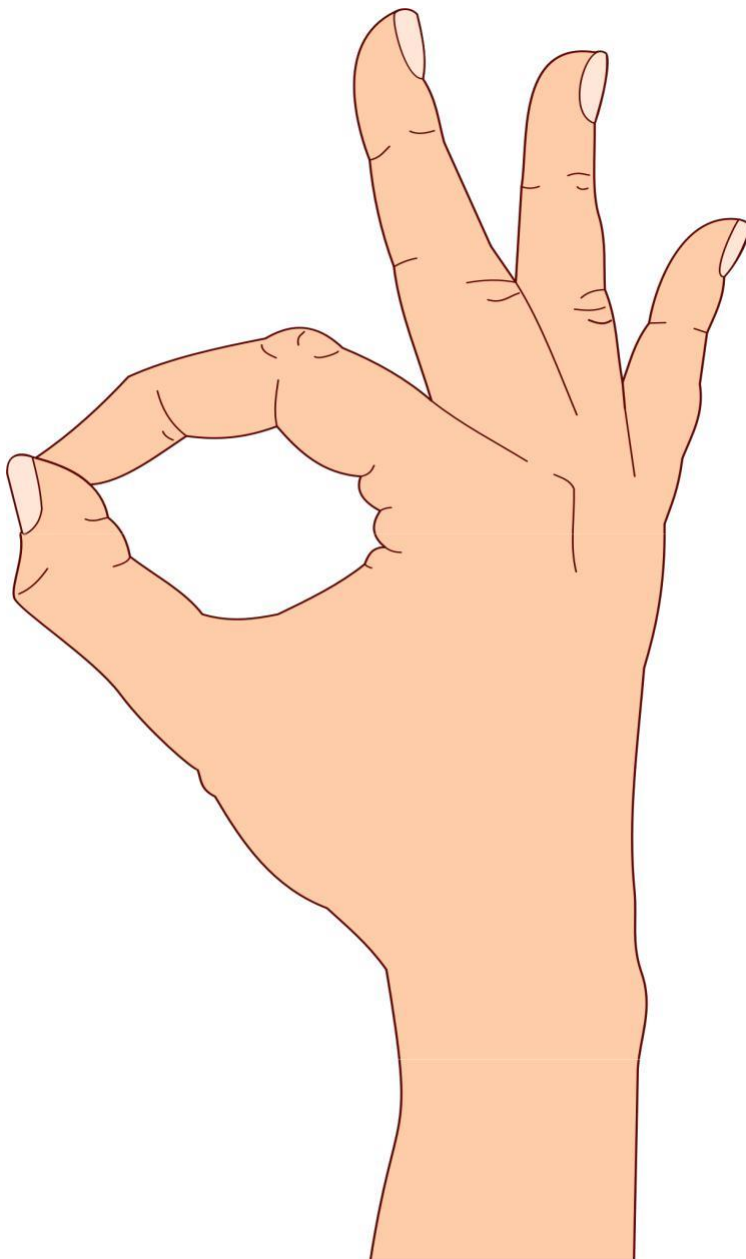
I have been enjoying being at home all the time and going back to school is going to feel very different.



Although I am excited about going back to school, I am also very nervous because I have been at home for a long time.



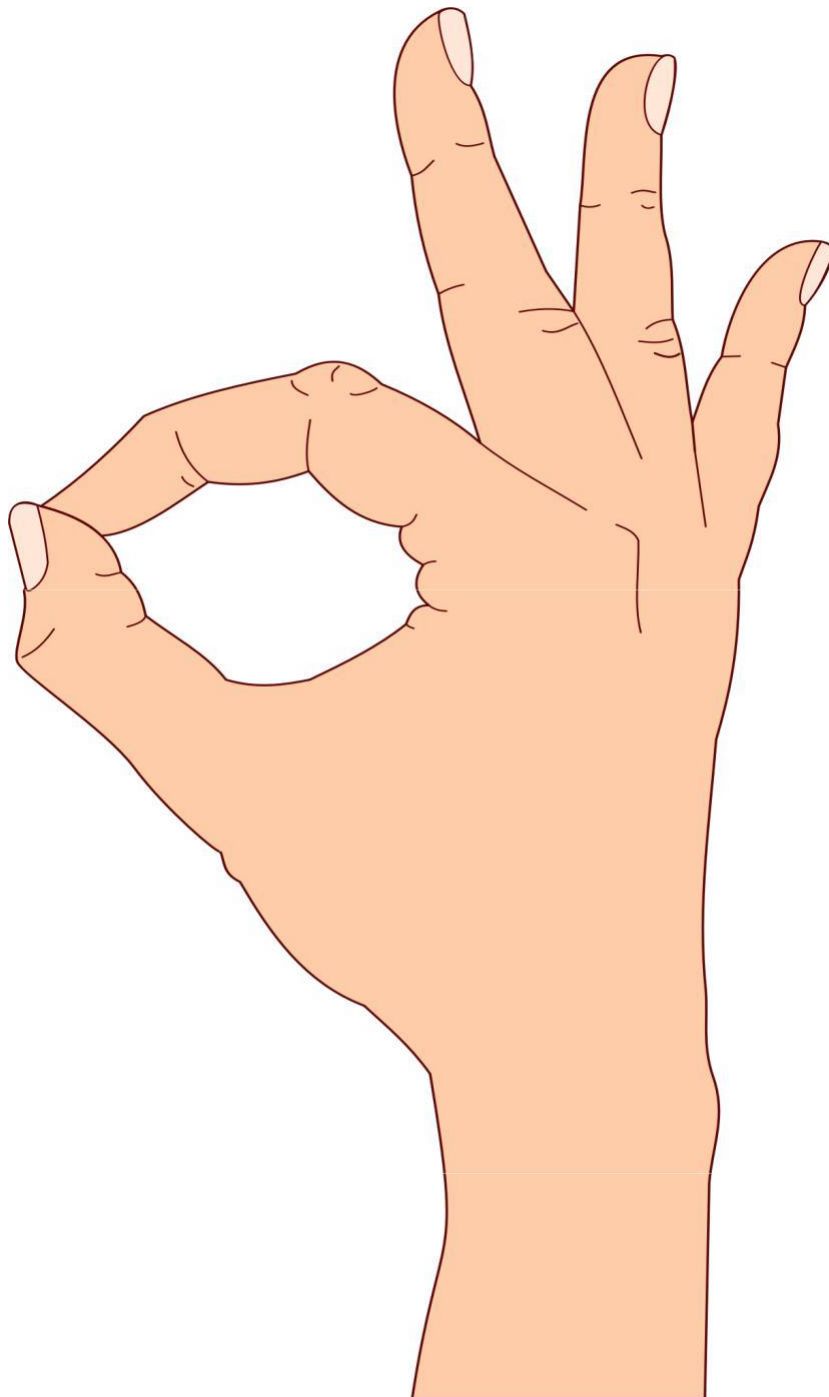
It is OK to feel nervous,
everyone will be feeling nervous
about going back to school and
my teachers will be there to make
us feel better.



It will be really great to see my friends and my teachers again.



When I go back to school things will be a bit different. This is OK, it is just to keep everyone safe.



When we first go back to school we will not go back full time. We may go for just a few hours a day or we may go for just a few days a week.



When I am not in school I can still
do my learning from home the
way that I have been.



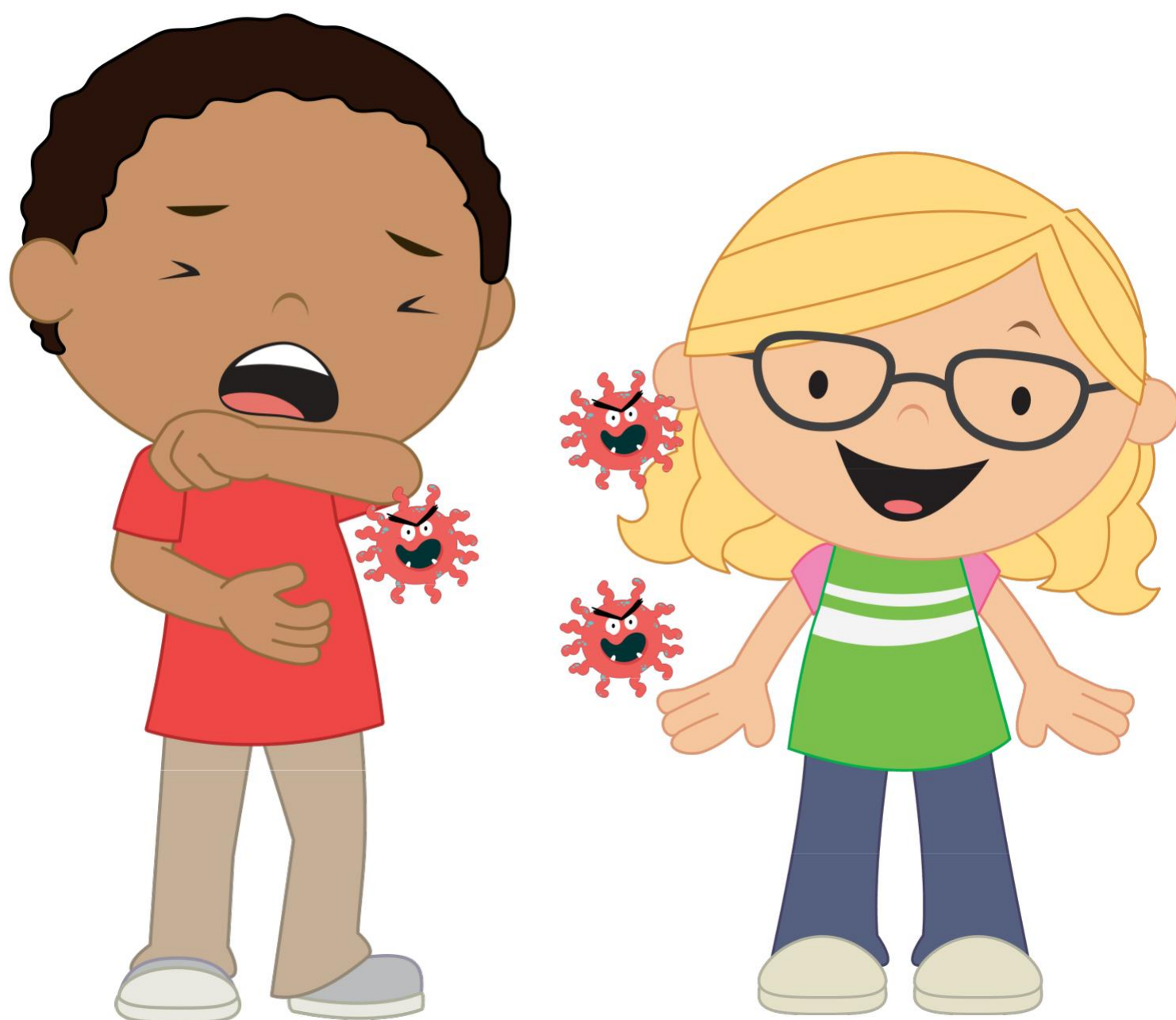
The coronavirus is very contagious. This means that it spreads from one person to another.



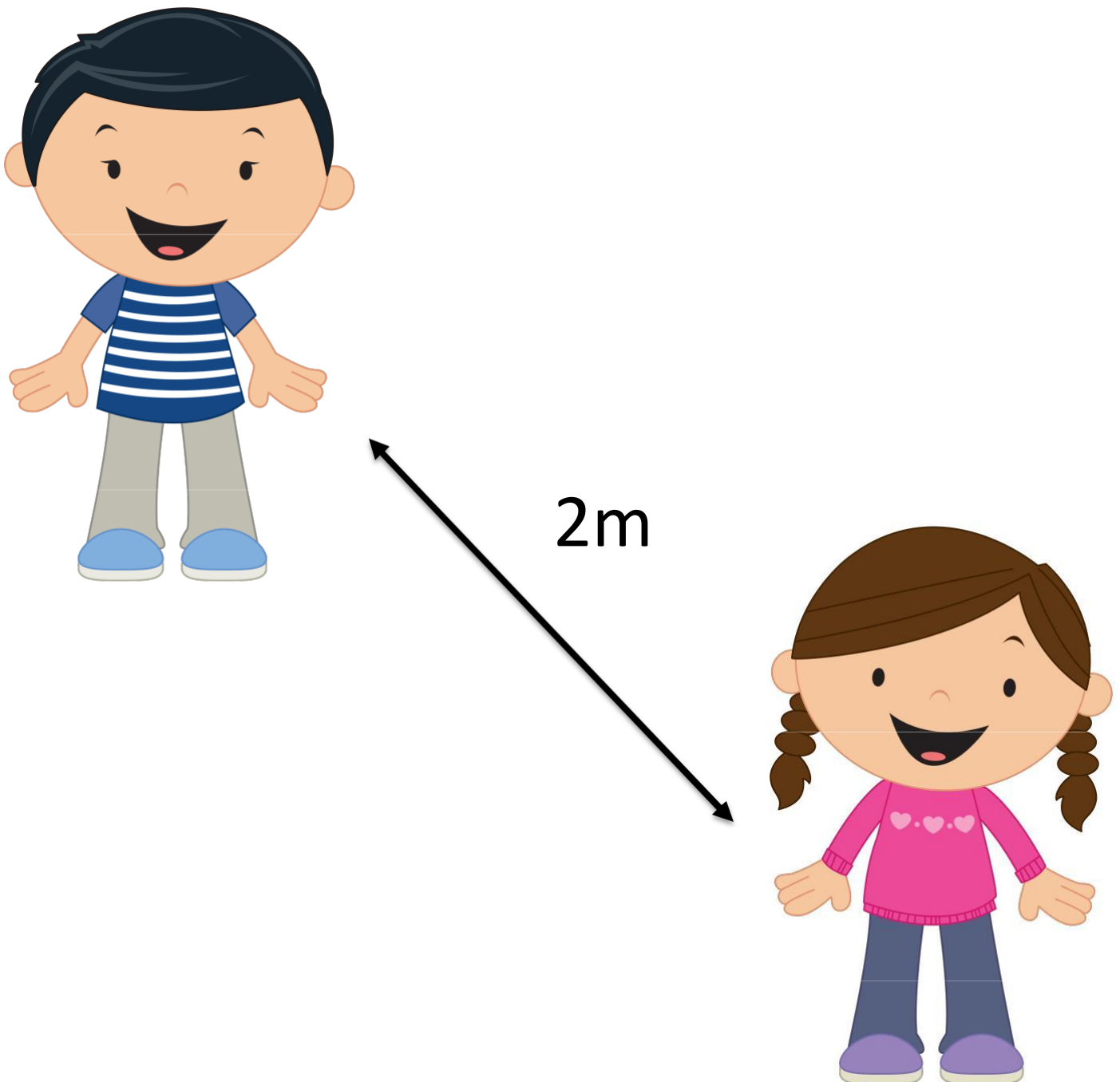
To stop germs spreading when we are at school there will be lots of new rules and routines.



Germs can only spread from one person to another when we stand close to each other.



That means that when I am at school we will all have to stand with a 2 metre gap between us.



This means that when I play
with my friends, we cannot
stand too close to each other.



It also means that I cannot stand too close to my teacher.



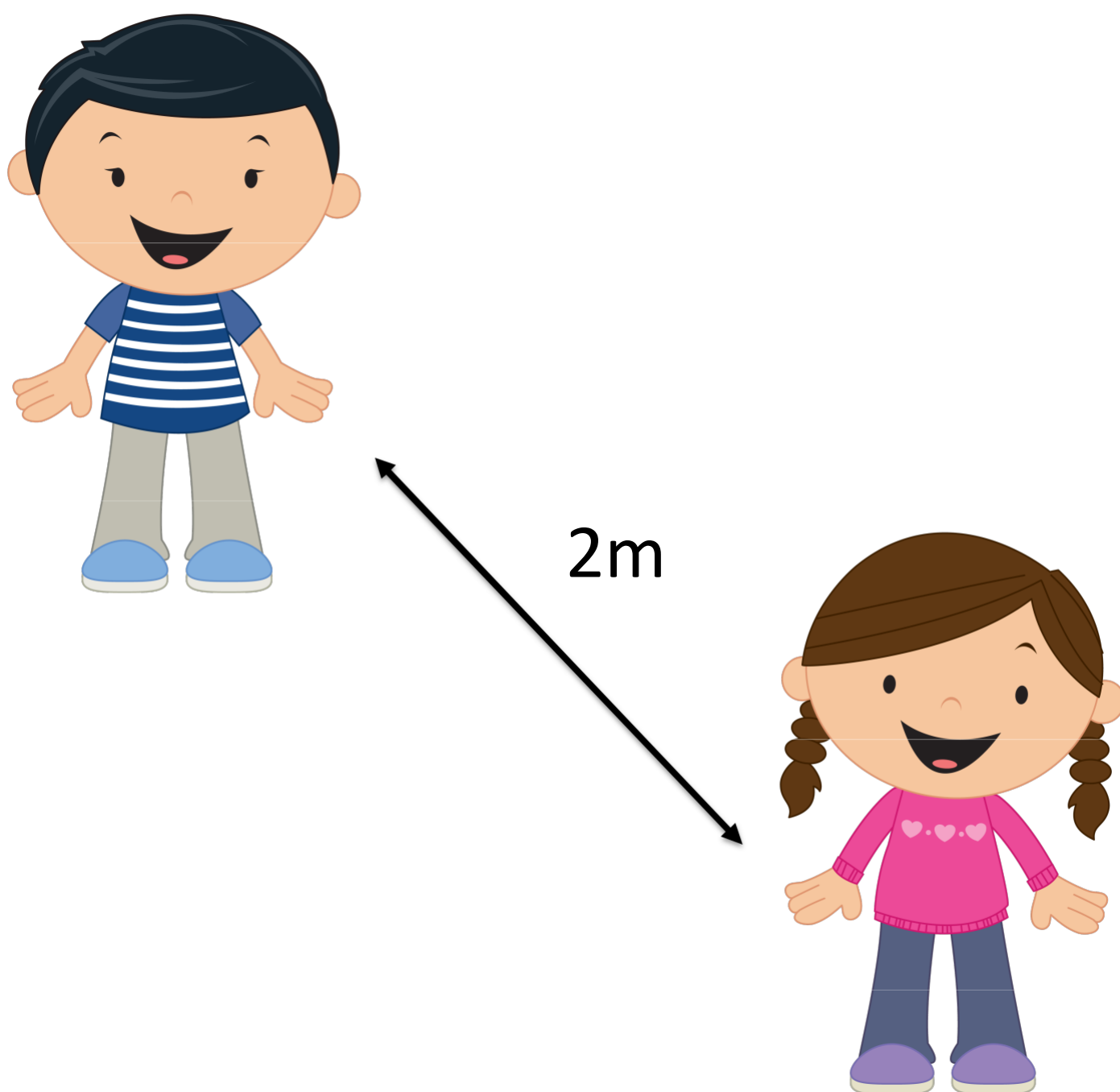
I may want to hug my friends
and my teacher because it has
been so long since I have seen
them but I will not be able to
hug anyone.



I may want to hold hands with my friends or my teacher but I will not be able to hold hands with anyone.



It is really important that I
remember to stay 2 metres
apart from everyone else.



To help me and my friends stay 2 metres apart my classes will be smaller with less people.



This means that some people at school might not be in their usual classroom.



This is OK. We are all safe.

This means that some people
might be taught by a different
teacher to usual.

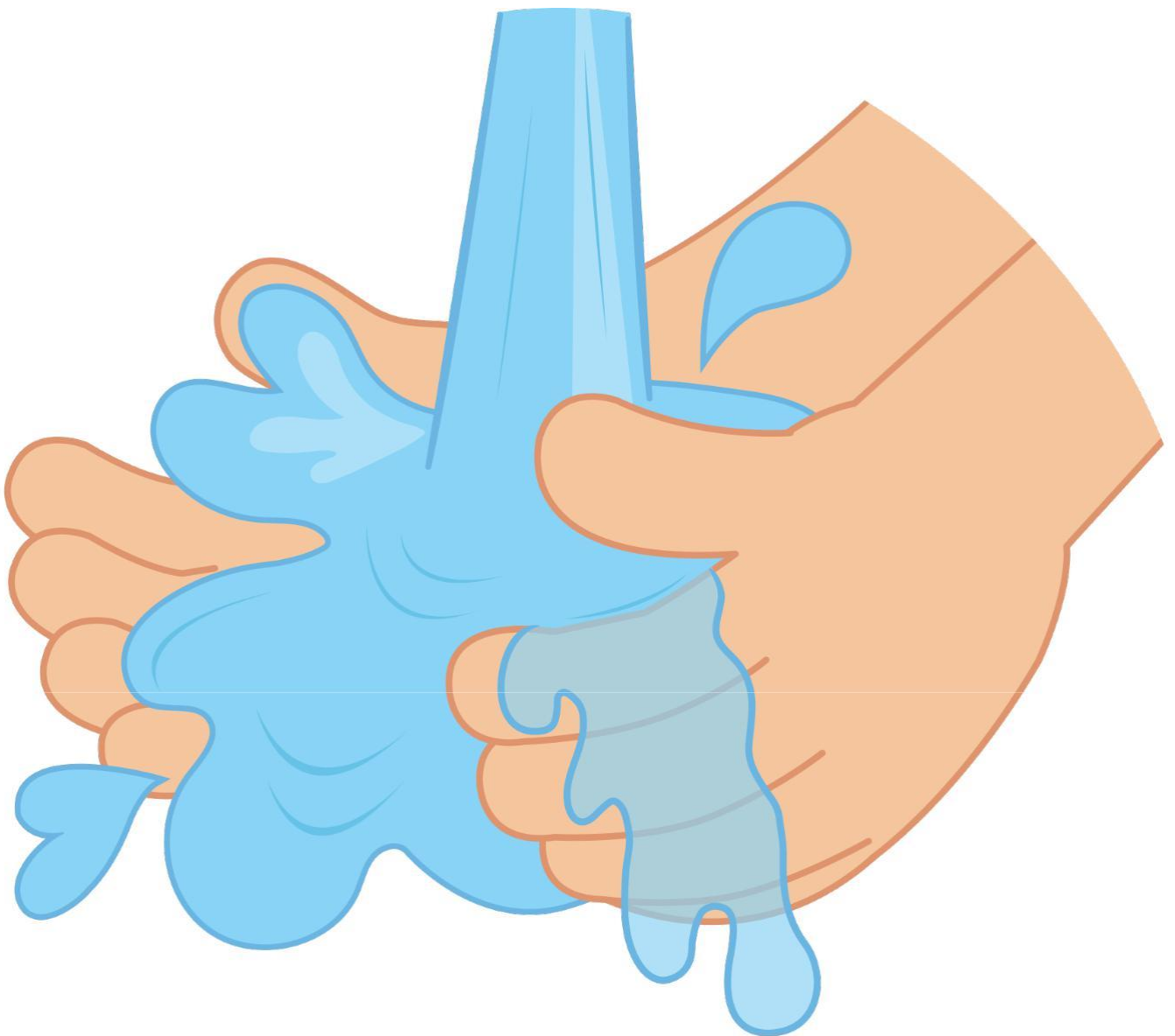


This is OK. We are all safe.

When I am at school I will need to wash my hands regularly to make sure there are no germs on them.



My teacher may be setting a routine for us to wash our hands a few times a day.



I should wash my hands with soap and water all over the back and front of my hands and between my fingers.



It might feel strange being at school with all these new rules and routines but it will be great to be with my friends and my teachers again.



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I will be happy being back at
school.

