

WHAT PARENTS MISS WHEN CHILDREN RETURN TO SCHOOL

The school term is now well underway. Classrooms are active again, school compounds are lively, and the rhythm of learning has resumed. For many families, attention quickly shifts to assignments, tests and academic performance. Yet beneath the routine of books and timetables lies something parents often overlook — the emotional adjustment children make when returning to school.

While most students reported earlier in February, others in Senior One and Senior Five, have only recently begun their journey.

For them, and even for many continuing students, setting back into school life is not always as smooth as adults imagine.

INVISIBLE TRANSITION

Returning to school is more than packing a suitcase or buying textbooks. For children, it often means stepping back into a world of expectations, social relationships and academic pressure.

The shift from the relaxed atmosphere of home to the structured routine of school can feel overwhelming. Younger children may struggle with separation from parents. Boarding students may quietly experience

homesickness. Others may worry about friendships, teachers, or whether they will keep up academically.

These emotions rarely appear on report cards, yet they strongly influence how comfortably a child settles into the term. In many ways, adjustment to school is not only academic — it is emotional.

THE PRESSURE TO "BE FINE"

One reason parents often miss this transition is that children frequently try to appear strong. When asked how school is going, the common answer is simple: "I'm fine."

But that short response does not always tell the whole story. Some children fear disappointing their parents if they admit they are struggling. Others may not yet know how to express what they feel. Sometimes they are still trying to understand their own emotions.

As a result, many emotional struggles remain hidden behind normal routines.



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ENTERING NEW SPACES

For Senior One and Senior Five students, the adjustment can be even more significant. These students are not simply returning to school; they are entering entirely new academic and social environments.

A new school means unfamiliar teachers, new classmates, different rules, and sometimes a completely different culture.

Even confident students can feel uncertain in such settings. Parents who understand

ATTENTION...

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this transition can offer reassurance that adjustment takes time. No child instantly feels comfortable in a new environment.

CREATING SAFE CONVERSATIONS

One of the most helpful things parents can do during the early weeks of the term is to create space for conversation. Instead of asking questions that invite short answers, parents can try more open conversations.

Asking a child what surprised them most about the new term, what they enjoy so far, or what they find challenging can open meaningful dialogue.

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THE POWER OF PRESENCE

In a busy world, parents sometimes assume that providing school fees, books, and school requirements is enough. While these are important, emotional presence matters just as much.

Simple gestures, such as checking in with your child, sharing meals together, or setting aside time for conversation can make a significant difference.

These moments communicate something powerful: Your experiences matter to me. When children feel emotionally supported, they gain the confidence to face both academic and social challenges.

ADJUSTMENT TAKES TIME

Every child adjusts at a different pace. Some settle in quickly, while others need more time. Parents should resist the temptation to compare children or expect immediate perfection. The early weeks of the school term may appear normal on the

SIGNS PARENTS SHOULD NOT IGNORE

Children do not always openly express emotional difficulty, but their behaviour often communicates what words cannot. A child who suddenly becomes unusually quiet, withdrawn, or irritable may be signaling stress. Others may complain about minor physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach aches. Some may avoid conversations about school altogether. These small signals are not always signs of serious problems, but they are reminders that parents should pay closer attention.

surface, but for many children, they involve quiet emotional shifts that parents may not immediately see. When parents pay attention not only to grades, but also to how children are feeling, they help build the emotional foundation children need to thrive at school and beyond.

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