



The Starfish Reintegration Conversation Guide

For Schools, Children and Families - a relational approach to returning well

A Different Starting Point.

The reintegration meeting is not a formality.
It is the moment where we rebuild what has been shaken.
This is not about revisiting everything that went wrong.

It is about:

- restoring connection
- rebuilding trust
- creating a shared way forward



Part 1: The Reintegration Meeting

With Child and Family

The Purpose

- To listen, not just inform
- To understand, not just explain
- To rebuild partnership, not assign blame

Setting the Tone (before the meeting)

Who is present matters:

- A trusted adult (not just the most senior)
- The child must feel safe, not outnumbered
- The family must feel welcomed, not judged

The environment matters:

- Calm, private, unrushed
- Chairs side-by-side where possible (not across a table)
- No rushed agendas

The tone of the first 2 minutes often shapes the whole meeting.



Opening the Conversation

Instead of:

“We’re here to discuss what happened”

Try:

“We’re really glad to have you back”

“This is about making sure things feel okay moving forward”

“We want to understand how we can support you better”

Hearing the Child

Give space before structure.

Prompts:

- “Do you want to tell us what that day felt like for you?”
- “What was going on before things became difficult?”
- “What do you wish we had understood at the time?”
- “What helped, even a little?”

Key reminder:

We are listening to understand, not to correct.

Hearing the Family

Prompts:

- “How has this felt from your side?”
- “What have you noticed at home?”
- “What do you feel your child needs right now?”
- “What has helped in the past?”

Families are not outsiders to this process.

They are partners in it.

Moving Forward

Only once listening has happened do we move forward.

Prompts:

- “What would help the first few days back feel easier?”
- “Who feels like a safe person in school?”
- “What might make things harder and how can we plan for that?”



Part 2: Collaborative Action Plan

Building the Way Forward Together

The Principle; Plans should be built with the child and family, not for them.

Key Areas to Explore

1. Safety and Regulation

- What helps the child feel calm?
- What are early signs things are becoming difficult?
- What support can be offered before escalation?

2. Relationships

- Who is the key adult?
- How will connection be maintained daily?
- When and how will check-ins happen?

3. Learning Access

- What feels manageable right now?
- Where might flexibility be needed initially?
- What small success could we build first?

4. Practical Adjustments

- Start of day support
- Movement between lessons
- Break/lunchtime structure
- Exit strategies if needed

Language Matters

Avoid:

“Targets”
“Compliance”

Use:

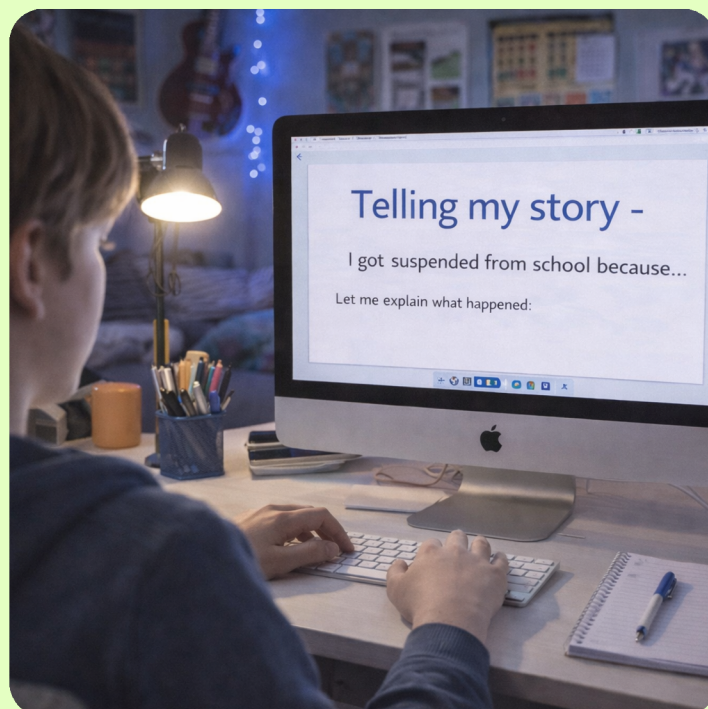
“Support”
“What will help”
“What we will do together”

Closing the Plan

“We’re going to try this together and keep talking about what’s working.”

Plans should feel:

- flexible
- human
- revisitable



Part 3: Restorative / Mediation Conversation When another person has been impacted

The Purpose

Not to force apology.
Not to assign blame.

But to:

- understand impact
- repair relationship
- allow both voices to be heard

Before the Conversation

Ensure:

- both parties feel safe
- participation is voluntary
- the adult facilitating is calm and neutral

Opening the Conversation

“We’re here to understand what happened and how we move forward.”

For the Child:

- “Can you tell us what happened from your perspective?”
- “What were you feeling at the time?”
- “What do you think the impact was on the other person?”

For the Other Person

- “What was that experience like for you?”
- “How did it make you feel?”
- “What do you need moving forward?”

Moving Towards Repair

- “What would help make things feel okay again?”
- “What could be done differently next time?”
- “What support might help both of you?”

Repair does not always mean resolution but it should move things forward.

Final Reflection for Staff

Before closing any reintegration process:

- Does the child feel they belong here again?
- Does the family feel heard and included?
- Does the plan feel realistic and human?
- Have we prioritised relationship alongside accountability?

The Starfish Way

Reintegration is not a return to where things were.
It is an opportunity to build something stronger.

We don't just welcome children back.
We show them they were never truly outside of the community.

One conversation.
One repair.
One starfish at a time.

