

Information leaflet

Working with your school

Schools can play a major role in your child's life. They can help them deal with the difficulties they have faced and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.

Research shows that children with early experiences of poor attachment or neglect are less likely to do well at school than their peers. The child's school should actively support their emotional wellbeing and help them overcome past experiences.

There are a number of things you should consider and be aware of when thinking about your child's school.

Choosing a school

Loss, neglect or trauma can mean your child may be more likely to struggle to manage relationships with teachers and peers and/or find it difficult to cope with transitions such as moving schools or class.

When choosing a school for your child it is useful to ask:

- If staff are trained on the impact of early trauma, loss and attachment.
- How do they support the child when they move from primary to secondary school?
- How do they help children build friendships?
- If they have a whole-school strategy to support children with attachment issues.

It's important that you let the school know about your situation and that they are aware of your Special Guardianship Order (SGO). It is a good idea to meet the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and ask them about the support they can offer. Other school staff that might be able to offer extra support are; the pastoral team, emotional learning support assistants and learning mentors. Talk to the school about the provision that they have and what may be available or useful for your child. Each school is also legally required to have designated or named member of staff who is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of previously 'looked after' children. This member of staff will understand your child's situation and the support they are likely to need.

If your child was 'looked after' before coming to live with you they will be viewed as high priority by local authority school admissions departments and this will help get your child into the right school for them.

Pupil premium plus and pupil premium

The pupil premium is additional funding available for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of children with disadvantaged backgrounds and help to close the gap between them and their peers.

To help overcome the impact of their early experiences, children who were previously 'looked after' are entitled to the highest level of the pupil premium (pupil premium plus).

Pupil premium plus is available for children from reception age to Year 11. It entitles state schools to access £2,530 per pupil per academic year and can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- Part-time teaching assistant support.
- Training around attachment issues, managing transitions, emotional regulation and anger and aggression.
- Specific resources such as timers and creating visual timetables.
- Communications or passport book.
- Extra resources such as lessons, special school trips and even residential trips.
- If your child was not 'looked after' but is entitled to free school meals, the school can access pupil premium. This is aimed at closing the gap between children on lower incomes and their peers. Pupil premium is currently £1,450 per pupil for primary schools and £1035 per pupil for secondary schools. It is up to the school to decide how the pupil premium is best spent. The school should publish the amount of pupil premium it receives, outline how it is spent and the effect it has had.

Free school meals

Your child might be able to get free school meals if you are receiving any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on
- Universal Credit

All children in infant schools receive free school meals. If you meet the criteria outlined, you can apply for free school meals.

Tools to help your child progress

If your child was previously 'looked after' a Personal Education Plan (PEP) would have been written for them and termly updates about their progress would have taken place. Some schools will continue to use the PEP once an SGO has been granted.

Another tool that the school might use is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This will help to identify and meet any early additional support that your child might need and will involve a range of agencies. If you are concerned about how your child is developing you can ask the school if there's a CAF in place or request one. There may also be 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) or 'Team around the Family' (TAF) meetings which you should be invited to. Again ask the school what is planned for your child.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in schools

Your school will offer a range of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A report describing the full range of their SEN services should be posted on their website. Common support includes:

- SEN Support Plan or Individual Education Plan. This describes each child's support and specific targets. Its 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle means a picture is gradually built over time about the best way to help your child progress.
- Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan. If your child needs extra help over and above what's in their SEN support plan they can be assessed for an EHC Plan which you can apply for through your local authority. The process should work to a statutory timeframe, with school staff, external professionals, family and the child contributing to the assessment if it goes ahead. You can read more about this.
- Pupil Passport. This gives a child a chance to voice what support they want. Including a photo this acts as a summary that can be used a starting point for discussing the child's needs. It also helps all teachers to be immediately aware of the child's needs. Although they are recommended not all schools have them.

Each local authority must also provide 'The Local Offer', a directory of education, health and social care services for children with SEN and disabilities. You can find further information.

Virtual Schools

The educational achievement of 'looked after' children is overseen by a 'virtual' school head teacher in all local authorities. The law changed in April 2017 so that all virtual heads must include within their care children living under a SGO arrangement.

Virtual heads offer advice to families, track children's progress and help identify extra needs they may have. They work closely with teachers and social workers to ensure support is provided.

Your school will be able to put you in contact with your child's virtual head.

How you can support your child in school

- When choosing a school ask how they spend pupil premium. Ask about the facilities they have and look for a nurture room and group; ask if one-to-one time is built into children's timetables and how friendship-building is supported. Recognise that different schools may have different approaches to spending the pupil premium but they may be equally effective.
- Good communication with your school is vital. Meet your child's named teacher in person to help ensure your child is getting the support they need. Encourage your child to talk about things they're finding hard and where some extra help would be useful. Keep talking to the school.
- In addition to parent's evenings it can be helpful to arrange half termly review meetings if your child has additional needs. These can be useful even when things are going well.
- Talk to your child to find out what they would like you to tell other parents and children about your situation. This will be helpful for you both when you are doing the school pick up.

Key points

- Schools can play a major role in your child's life. They can help them deal with the difficulties they have faced and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.
- It's important that you let the school know about your situation and that they are aware of your Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- The pupil premium is additional funding available for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of children with disadvantaged backgrounds and help to close the gap between them and their peers.
- Your school will offer a range of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A report describing the full range of their SEN services should be posted on their website.
- The educational achievement of 'looked after' children is overseen by a 'virtual' school head teacher in all local authorities. The law changed in April 2017 so that all virtual heads must include within their care children living under a SGO arrangement.

Useful Links

Adoption UK

www.adoptionuk.org

A range of resources and training for parents, teachers and SENCO designed to make education a successful environment for children who have suffered early trauma, neglect or abuse.

Child Legal Advice Centre

www.childlawadvice.org.uk

Tel: 0300 330 5485

Coram Children's Legal Centre specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people.

Educational Trusts Forum

www.educational-grants.org

A community of organisations which provide grants, to help vulnerable children. Includes a search function to search for educational grants that meet your needs as some trusts target families in specific situations.

Independent Parental Special Education Advice

www.ipsea.org.uk

IPSEA offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

Nurture Group Network

www.nurturegroups.org:

Tel: 0203 475 8980

The Nurture Group Network exists to promote the development of nurture groups through accredited training programmes and research on effective practice. Nurture groups are small classes of children or young people in early years, primary or secondary schools supported by the whole staff group and parents. Children remain an active part of their main class group but spend time within the nurture group according to their need and typically return full-time to their own class within two to four terms. Nurture groups assess learning, social and emotional needs and use whatever help is needed to remove the barriers to learning.

Pupil Passports

www.pupilpassport.co.uk:

Pupil passports help give children voice what support they need and are highly recommended.

Scope:

www.scope.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 800 3333

Scope provides advice and services for children and adults with learning disabilities or a physical impairment.

Family Action Head Office 24 Angel Gate, City Road, London, EC1V 2PT

T: 020 7254 6251 F: 020 7249 5443 info@family-action.org.uk www.family-action.org.uk

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