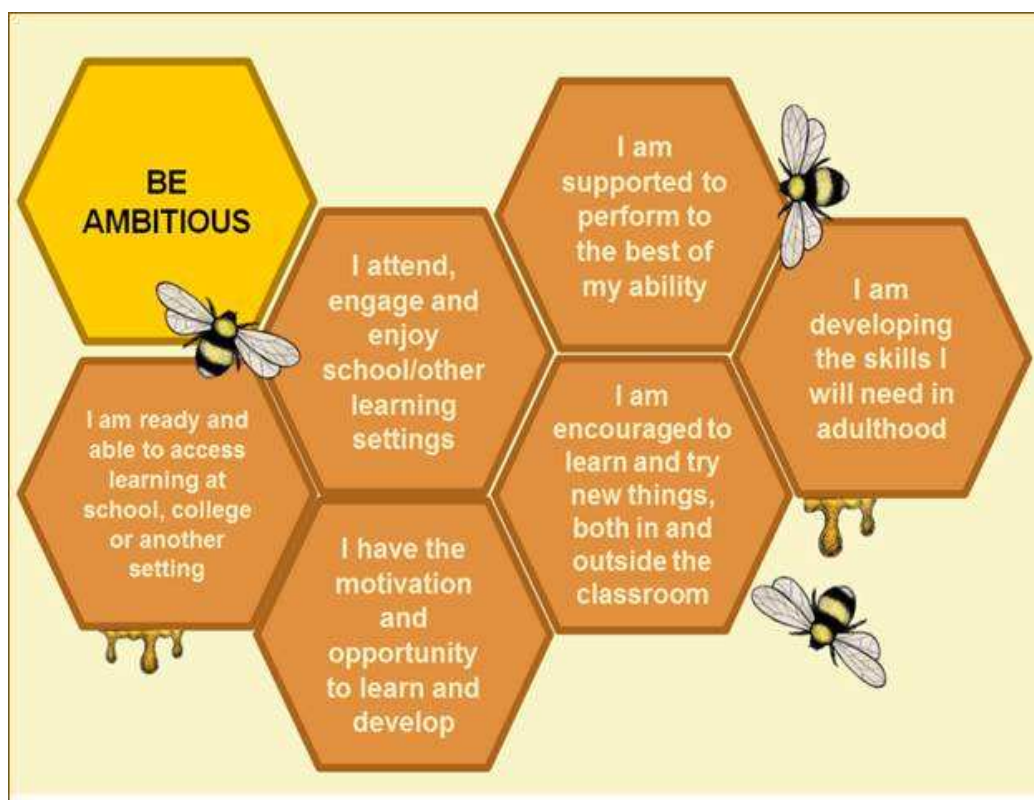


# SUPPORTING ADOPTED and OTHER PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION



# ADOPTWITHUS

*Trauma and neglect can impact significantly on children at any age and in many wide and varying ways. All children naturally show how they are feeling through their behaviour and this is especially so with those who have been previously looked after including adopted children. Many have complex feelings such as guilt and shame that they are unaware of how to cope with. For this reason it can be difficult for parents and teachers to unpick what the child's behaviour is telling them.*

*Adopted children are part of a larger group of previously looked after children who have many needs in common*

*No booklet can cover the vast and varied needs of previously looked after children. This is a starting point and a way of sign posting you to more specific help and guidance.*

*Adopted children want to fit in, learn, have friends, enjoy school and be like every other child they see. As adults we have the ability to support and nurture them on their journey through childhood. We play a vital part in reassuring them that the world is not a scary place and that life can be full of love and happy times.*

*Adoptive mother of two and Hertfordshire head teacher.*

This Guide is intended to help teachers, parents and carers understand and respond to some of the challenges that our children bring to the world of education.

# INTRODUCTION

- **Early childhood experiences can impact on the ability of any child to learn and to form relationships with peers and adults.**
- **A baby is able to learn in the womb (as early as 30 weeks). They are born with huge potential and pre-disposition to learn.**
- **The earlier trauma occurs, the more damage is done to the growing brain and to the child's global development.**
- **A child whose brain growth is affected in this way can be at risk of significant developmental vulnerabilities (emotional, behavioural and cognitive)**

When babies and young children get the nutrition, nurture and care that they need in utero and in their early years, their brains and bodies grow and develop well. These children quickly learn that the world they have been born into and the people in their world are safe.

This sense of safety allows them to grow, develop, and learn and to attach to and trust in others. It provides a secure and stable foundation which can be built upon – like a well cemented wall that can take layer after layer of bricks to make it grow tall, solid and strong.

When it is time for these children to go to school, their brains and bodies have developed well which prepares them to cope with and manage all that is involved within a school day.

When things do not go well for babies and young children and they don't get the things that they need in utero and in their early years, their brains and bodies are flooded with trauma, fear and stress hormones, which significantly affect their growth and development.

These children have learnt that the world they have been born into and the people in their world can be dangerous, scary and unsafe. This sense of danger and fear gets in the way and hinders all areas of the children's development. It impacts negatively on the children's capacity to grow and learn, as well as hindering their attachment to and trust in others.

This creates a shaky foundation and an unstable wall that is unable to take additional layers of bricks until the foundation level has been rebuilt, by forming a secure base.



Due to the nature of their early, difficult experiences, these children move to live with foster, adoptive families and other carers where the foundations of their wobbly walls can be realigned and re-cemented; slowly creating a safe and secure base that can be carefully built upon through patient and gentle developmental re-parenting.

When it is time for these children to go to school, they can have already experienced several moves living with multiple caregivers.

The scary and difficult experiences that these children have been exposed to, during crucial periods of early development, means that the primitive part of their brain remains over activated.

The survival responses –fight, flight or freeze - have been overused and when children experience stress or perceived danger, even when the source of danger has been removed, these survival behaviours are retriggered which in turn affects their ability to regulate their emotions or access their thinking skills.

The early dangers that had to be managed too soon, leaves these children with no internalised sense of safety about themselves, in relation to others. They benefit greatly from grown-ups who are able to understand and create a safe and predictable environment for them.

All that these children need to manage and cope with during a school day can often be just too much for their bodies and brains to deal with. It is often the case that behavioural strategies that work well for other children may be less effective for them.

The feeling part of their brain is muddled and confused and the things they feel are often disconnected from the words that describe those feelings. The thinking part of their brain, necessary for learning, concentrating, processing and making sense of things finds it difficult to stay in place because the primitive part of the brain is still scanning for danger.

During the school day, these children really need adults to understand that their behaviour is often their only means of communication because they don't have the words to tell about the scary things that happened to them before they learned to talk.

They need adults to understand that when they are unable to stay in the classroom or when they fidget and can't sit still, this is not because they don't want to, but this behaviour is often a clue that their fight, flight and freeze responses have become over activated, a familiar survival pattern from the past and they haven't yet learnt strategies to be calm by themselves or with others.

It is important that adults in their life at school can understand that because they missed out on so much in their early years, it really is too hard for them to function at their chronological age because their real emotional age is often very much younger.

These are the children who so wish that they could stay in the nursery class for longer and do the playing that they didn't get chance to do before, to fill in some of those crucial foundation skills.

During the school day, they will need adults to understand that when the things they do or say are very time consuming, repetitive or frustrating, they really are not "attention seeking" but what they are really doing is "attachment seeking" because things are too lonely, confusing, puzzling or scary for them to manage on their own.

Many of these children have a core fear of separation and abandonment and this is often played out in interactions with key adults in school. They need adults who can stick with them and look out for and provide commentary for them on all the positives they can see in them and understand that they will respond far better to *connection* than correction and to *time in* rather than time out.

These are the children who, during the school day will need adults to understand that because difficult and scary things happened to them in their early years their sense of self can be fragile, broken and fragmented. It makes sense then that any real or perceived experiences of failure are acutely painful for them and they tend to internalise this into a shame response.

These children benefit so much from being with adults who can have trust in them and their future and believe in their capacity to succeed.

***"All children need relationships to thrive; traumatised children need relationships to heal."***

***Golding and Hughes 2012  
Creating Loving Attachments***

# CHANGE

All change is difficult for our children and there are particularly difficult times that need careful planning and consideration by the adults supporting the child.

All school and setting moves are difficult, but secondary transfer is particularly challenging.

Schools and settings will never be able to plan for every eventuality and we need to expose children to change. This needs to be done gently to help them realise that they can cope with change and that it can sometimes be positive.

## Planned Change

- If there is a known change- e.g. an adult who matters to the child (teacher/TA/early years practitioner/lunch time supervisor) going on a course – inform both child and parent at the earliest opportunity.
- If possible – name the person who will be replacing the absent adult
- Explain when you will be back and try to name something that you will do on your return.
- Try to arrange a familiar member of staff to meet the child and remind them of the previous conversation confirming the name of the adult who will be working with them and when their regular adult will be back.
- If there is a job-share, specialist PE/music teacher or other adult who contributes to the usual timetable, remember that for these children, this counts as a transition with all the associated anxiety. Plan to bridge all of these transition with arrangements which reiterate, explain and reassure. A familiar member of staff who can provide this in the context of their relationship with the child, enabling them to feel as safe as possible.
- Make sure parents/carers are kept up to date with planned transitions so that they can reiterate, explain and reassure in partnership with the school
- Ask parents/carers to remind the child of the changes on the way to school.
- Remember that absences of children important to our children e.g. friends and assigned buddies can also create anxiety for our children so be proactive in explaining and reassuring children about these too.
- Visits and visitors create disruption to planned routines which in turn create anxiety for our children. Start preparing for these events early and provide details of the visits so that parents/carers can take children on a pre-trip or can make arrangements to support on the day.

## Unplanned Change

- Try to have a familiar member of staff available to meet the child who can explain who will be in class in place of their expected adult. Go through what will be happening during the day, emphasising the things that will not change.

## Daily Handover Time

This is also a time of change and can be very difficult for our children. Some of them will have experienced being left at school, setting or other places at other times in their lives. They can be reluctant to leave their parents/carers.

- Establish a morning routine, both at home and at school. Initially, it may be helpful to have the same person meet the child each morning.
- Keep Good-byes brief – use diversions, have various “jobs” that you need the child to help you with (watering plants, tidying books etc.)
- Use of “transference object”. Child to bring an object or photograph from home to keep with them at school during the day. This is a strategy routinely used for much younger children but should be incorporated as a strategy for these children at any age to feel safe over transitions and meet this key need to bridge the familiar and the unfamiliar.
- At the end of the day always end on a positive note and celebrate positives from the day leaving the child with a confidence in their relationships at school/setting. If there has been negative behaviour do not talk about it to the parent/carers in front of the child. Have systems in place to allow this e.g. telephone or e-mail later.



# BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

## Brain facts

- It is estimated that, at birth, a baby's brain contains thousands of millions of brain cells and some of these are already connected and communicating.
- Forming and reinforcing connections are the key tasks of early brain development. It is the early experiences and developing relationships that cause the connections in the brain to increase rapidly.
- Brain development takes place through positive consistent interactions with others, being active and involved, and learning through exploration and discovery.
- Babies are born ready to adapt and create connections to suit the environment they meet. This ability also makes humans vulnerable when placed in less positive circumstances, where the negative impact may last a lifetime.
- High levels of stress can actually weaken the connections in the brain or can cause brain cells to die. Babies need consistent relationships, firstly to create the necessary pathways in the brain, and then to ensure that these connections become hard-wired.
- Babies and young children who have positive emotional bonds with adults produce consistently lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol.
- Stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol can injure the human brain. At stressful times, these hormones change blood supply to key areas of the brain such as those that control language and the self-regulation of mood and impulse. This slows down development.
- Looked after, previously looked after including adopted children can be at risk of development delay as a result of their early experiences.



My Baby's Brain - [www.fivetothrive.org.uk](http://www.fivetothrive.org.uk)

My Teen Brain - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/virtual-school/documents/virtual-school-guidance/my-teen-brain.pdf>

*Your relationships and interactions have a life-long effect on a child's ability to reach their full potential.*



# ATTACHMENT, LOSS AND TRAUMA

Developing a secure attachment with babies and children is the foundation on which all learning and development is built. The development of a secure attachment takes time and commitment and needs to be a priority above all else when a child starts with you.

Many looked after children and previously looked after children including adopted children will have developed insecure attachments in their early years due to an inconsistent response to their needs. Early attachment experience provides the foundation for the child's ability to feel empathy, compassion, trust and love in future life. Loss and trauma can also compound the effect of insecure attachment in early life and can in themselves cause long term issues needing care and support.

**Secure Attachment** - When young children have a loving caregiver consistently responding to their needs, they build a secure attachment. This lifelong bond affects growth, development, trust and the ability to build relationships. A child with a secure attachment is generally more competent, more sociable, more self-confident, and inquisitive

**Insecure Attachment** - If a child is not provided with consistent loving care, insecure attachments form. Children with insecure attachments have learned that the world is not a safe place. They don't have the experiences they need to feel confident in themselves and trust in others. Insecure attachment shows itself in many different ways. Children may have trouble with learning, may be aggressive and act out, be excessively clingy, have difficulty making friends, suffer anxiety or depression, or be developmentally delayed

Having a key person helps children to form a secure attachment and is a requirement of the EYFS. The key person role is based on the work of the theorist John Bowlby who saw that young children need to be emotionally attached to a very small group of adults in order to then be able to make relationships with others, this is because of the trust that is built up by having a primary care giver. This close relationship makes it easier for babies and young children to cope with unfamiliar situations, tasks and experiences

In primary and secondary school, a key person/mentor continues to be important for children and young people with poor attachment and/or experiences of loss and trauma to feel safe.

Having a secure attachment to a key person means that the child feels secure and confident so that if anything goes wrong, if anything upsets them, someone is there who knows how to sort things out and make them feel better again - not just comfortable but happy and contented deep down inside.

## Attachment Theory and the Effects of Trauma

Kate Cairns - [www.katecairns.com/](http://www.katecairns.com/)

Margot Sunderland - [www.margotsunderland.org/](http://www.margotsunderland.org/)

## KEY RELATIONAL NEEDS FOR SECURE ATTACHMENT



### Attunement

Meeting the child's emotional intensity (positive or negative) on an energetic level, so as to connect with the child in their pain or their joy. Riding the same emotional energy contour (Moments of meeting – Daniel Stern). The child will experience this as a deep enlivening connection with the other.



### Empathy

Recognition of how the child is experiencing the event, even if it's very different to how you are experiencing it. Not trying to persuade the child out of having the feeling they are having. Rather affirming, understanding and recognising that s/he is feeling what s/he is feeling. Not just empathy, but finding the right words/ language of feeling/tone of voice to convey that empathy



### Containment

Being able to stay thinking and feeling about a child's intense feelings (e.g. rage, power plays, terror, distress) without deflecting into action, distraction, getting angry etc. At times this will mean being able to bear their unbearable pain. Also containment through clear structures, boundaries and carried through consequences. Otherwise a "limit deprived child".



### Soothing (emotional regulation)

Soothing and calming the child's emotionally dysregulated states. Soothing in conjunction with addressing the other relational needs above, can develop actual stress regulating systems in the brain and good vagal tone in the body. These systems are still forming after birth. When the child is not soothed and calmed during intense dysregulated states, they may fail to develop effective stress regulating systems in brain and body. This leaves them vulnerable to developing depressive, anxiety or aggression disorders in later life. They are also far more vulnerable to using alcohol, smoking, or drugs in order to calm themselves down or just to feel normal.

# FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME DISORDER (FASD)

'Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder' is the umbrella term for the range of preventable alcohol-related birth defects, which are a direct result of prenatal alcohol exposure, and it is used for those who are diagnosed with some, but not all, of the symptoms of FAS.

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) report that a disproportionate number of looked after children have FASD and are often misdiagnosed as having behavioural problems.

FASD is the most common, non-genetic cause of learning disability in the UK, although it is often misdiagnosed as autism, Asperger Syndrome or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

## ***What are the signs and symptoms?***

The damage caused by alcohol to a developing foetus depends on factors such as the level of alcohol consumed, the pattern of alcohol exposure, and the stage of pregnancy during which alcohol is consumed by the mother.

The effects of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome are **lifelong**, significantly impacting on the life of the individual and their families. For more details, see the BMA's 'foetal alcohol spectrum disorders: A guide for healthcare professionals' (PDF).

Children affected by FAS have distinct facial features, which can include a smaller head size, small or narrow eyes and a thin upper lip. Further symptoms which can present themselves include hearing problems, a weak immune system, epilepsy, liver damage, cerebral palsy or hormonal difficulties.

Children affected by foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), including foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), can also experience learning difficulties, problems with language, a lack of awareness of social boundaries, an inability to grasp instructions, egocentricity, mixing reality and fiction, and hyperactivity and poor attention. Many children experience a range of these behavioural and social difficulties, which without the proper support can lead to difficulties making friends and being left behind at school.

## ***What support is available?***

There is no cure for FAS. Children may, however, be referred to paediatricians, who are able to investigate problems further with psychologists, psychiatrists, speech and language therapists, and specialists for organ abnormalities.

## **For more information about Foetal Alcohol Syndrome:**

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/virtual-school/documents/virtual-school-guidance/foetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders.pdf>

<http://www.nofas-uk.org/WP/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/NOFAS-Factsheets-2016.pdf>

# SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) 0-25 YEARS

The SEND code of practice makes explicit reference to children and young people in specific circumstances that require additional consideration by those who work with them. Children looked after are one of the particular groups and therefore so are previously looked after children including adopted children.

Designated Person for CLA in early years settings and the designated teacher in school should work closely with the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to ensure the implications of a child being both looked after, previously looked after including adopted and also having SEN or disabilities are fully understood by relevant staff.

**For all CLA and children previously looked after including adopted children, attachment needs and needs arising from FASD should be considered when assessing a child's needs, planning strategies, implementing them and reviewing how effective these have been in supporting progress.**

The principles underlying the code should be observed by all professionals working with children and young people who have SEN or disabilities. These include:

- taking in to account the views of children, young people and their families
- enabling children, young people and their parent/carers to participate in decision-making
- collaborating with partners in education, health and social care to provide support
- identifying the needs of children and young people
- making high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people
- focusing on inclusive practices and removing barriers to learning
- helping children and young people to prepare for adulthood

All children and young people should expect to receive an education that enables them to achieve the best educational and other outcomes. Underpinning this is a range of statutory duties:

- All early years settings and mainstream schools have a duty to use their best endeavours to provide support for children and young people with SEN and must inform parents/carers when they are making special educational provision for a child.
- All pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Early years settings and maintained schools and academies must make arrangements to support those who have medical conditions
- All early years settings and schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards disabled children and young people. They must make reasonable adjustments to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage.
- All early years settings and schools should have a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN.
- All schools must publish information on their website about the implementation of their policy for pupils with SEN. This must be updated annually and should include arrangements for supporting children and young people who are looked after and have SEN.

A pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.

A child looked after, previously looked after including an adopted child should not automatically be identified as having SEN.

In all early years settings and schools early years practitioners and teachers, supported by the senior leadership team, should make regular assessments of progress for all pupils. They should seek to identify pupils making less than expected progress given their age and individual circumstances.

Where a pupil is making less progress than expected, the first response should be high quality teaching targeted at their areas of weakness.

Where progress continues to be less than expected the early years practitioner or teacher, working with the SENCO, should assess whether the child has SEN and receive SEN support. Early years settings and schools should not delay in putting in place extra teaching or other rigorous interventions designed to secure better progress. Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN. Equally; it should not be assumed that attainment in line with chronological age means that there is no learning difficulty or disability. Parents/carers must be informed if a pupil is in receipt of SEN support.

Identifying and assessing SEN for children or young people whose first language is not English requires particular care. Difficulties related solely to limitations in English as an additional language are not SEN.

From September 2014 the broad area of need, behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, was replaced with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Persistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviours do not necessarily mean that a child or young person has SEN. Where there are concerns, there should be an assessment to determine whether there are causal factors. Professionals should also be alert to other events that can lead to learning difficulties or wider mental health difficulties. Such events will not always lead to children having SEN but it can have an impact on well-being and sometimes be severe. Schools should make sure they make appropriate provision for a child's short-term needs. Where there are long-lasting difficulties schools should consider whether the child has SEN.

When reviewing and managing special educational provision the four broad areas of need that should be planned for are:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs

In deciding whether to make special educational provision, the teacher and SENCO should consider all of the information gathered from within the early years setting and school about the child's progress, alongside national data and expectations of progress and early discussions with the pupil and parent/carer. These discussions should be structured in such a way that they develop a good understanding of the pupils' areas of strength and difficulty, the agreed outcomes sought for the child and next steps. A short note should be added to the child's record and given to the parent/carer. SEN support should include planning and preparation for transition.

Where a child is identified as having SEN, early years settings and schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle (assess, plan, do, review) through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised. This is known as the graduated approach. Where a child continues to make less than expected progress, despite evidence-based support and interventions that are matched to the child's areas of need, the early years setting and school should consider involving specialists, including those secured by the early years setting, school or from outside agencies.

Where, despite the school having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the SEN of the child, expected progress has not been made, the early years setting, school or parent/carer should consider requesting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment by the local authority (for children looked after the request will need to be made to the local authority where the child is living). In the case of a child looked after the child's Designated person for CLA/Designated Teacher should expect to provide information and advice and ensure a Virtual School Education Adviser is also asked to contribute for a satisfactory assessment to be completed. If agreed, the needs assessment should take no more than 20 weeks. The code states that Local authorities should be particularly aware of the need to avoid any delays for looked after children and carry out the EHC needs assessment in the shortest possible timescale.

Once a school is named in an EHC plan, it must admit the child. Section F of the EHC plan specifies the special educational provision required by the child in order to ensure it meets their needs and will help them to achieve their desired outcomes. EHC plans must be reviewed at least every twelve months. For children looked after the annual review should, if possible and appropriate, coincide with one of the reviews in their Care Plan and in particular the personal education plan (PEP).

***This document is a guide to the main duties schools and early years settings must have regard to in relation to children looked after with SEND. It is not a substitute for the full Code of Practice.***

Hertfordshire's Local Offer provides information about the support available across education, health and social care for children and young people who have special educational needs or are disabled.

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/Local-Offer/The-Hertfordshire-Local-Offer.aspx](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/Local-Offer/The-Hertfordshire-Local-Offer.aspx)

### **Useful Resources from the DfE**

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years

Schools: guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice

Equality Act 2010

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Guidance

Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions

### **SEND-useful websites**

National Autistic Society - [www.autism.org.uk/](http://www.autism.org.uk/)

Autism Education Trust- [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/)

Living with ADHD - [www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/](http://www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/)

Children's Communication Charity - [www.ican.org.uk/](http://www.ican.org.uk/)



# ADMISSIONS

All parents/carers want their child to attend a good school/setting. All schools and settings must publish on their website, the latest grade given by Ofsted as a result of the last inspection. When choosing a school or setting it is important that the information in the report is used to help inform this choice.

Children Looked After and children previously looked after including adopted children should have priority of place in school under Rule 1 below. (there are some exceptions to this and the Admission Policy of the school will give their criteria)

## **Rule 1**

*'Children looked after by a local authority, including children who were previously looked after but were then adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order).*

*Children who were adopted without having been previously looked after, or who were adopted outside England and Wales, would not usually qualify under this rule.'*

## **Under 11's**

Applications into primary, infant, junior and middle schools open towards the end of Autumn Term and will close at the beginning of the Spring Term.

Leaflets explaining how to apply will be distributed to families. They will be posted directly to families of reception aged children (for the following school year) registered with a Hertfordshire G.P. and distributed by schools to children in year two in infant and year four in first schools.

## **Secondary Transfer**

The secondary transfer applications open at the beginning of the Autumn Term for admission into secondary, studio schools and university technical colleges and will close towards the end of October.

Your application must reach the Admissions and Transport Team by the deadline date either online or on paper. All additional information and application forms are available online at –

[www.hertsdirect.org/admissions](http://www.hertsdirect.org/admissions)

## **In Year Admissions**

Hertfordshire has developed special arrangements for the admission of children to a new school part way through a school year. This is called "in year admissions" Detailed information on this can be found using the link – <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/edlearn/admissions/inyear/>

Most schools in Hertfordshire are part of the Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) coordinated scheme and you should apply on the HCC In-Year application form for a place. Some schools will accept applications directly from parent/carers and for these schools, you need not complete the HCC form.

A directory of Hertfordshire schools, which explains how to apply for each school is available at – <http://www.hertsdirect.org/inyear/>

Some of the questions on the In Year application are included to identify more vulnerable children and to ensure that appropriate support is put in place for them at their new school. It is also advisable to include a letter from the child's social worker or your social worker confirming the child's status and supporting your rationale for choosing the selected school.



# NATIONAL CURRICULUM, LEVELS AND TESTING

All Local Authority maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum. Free Schools, Academies, Studio Schools and UTC's (University Technical Colleges) do not.

Over the past few years, both the Primary Curriculum and the Secondary Curriculum have undergone some major changes. These changes are still ongoing. Statutory Assessments are also in the process of change.

EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) has a framework that sets statutory standards for the development and learning of children from birth to 5.

The Assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA) applies to all early years settings including- All providers registered with a Child Minder Agency and all providers on the Early Years register ( e.g. nurseries and childminders ), Maintained schools, non-maintained schools and independent schools with Early Years provision.

The previous coalition Government abolished National Curriculum Levels, however all schools must develop their own system to evidence progress. Currently, most Hertfordshire Primary Schools are using a system called "Hertfordshire Tracker". This school by school levelling makes it difficult when children move between certain schools and between Authorities. To assist in this, schools will be able to say whether a child is working above/at/ below Age Related Expectations. This is sometimes shown as- (--AR/-AR/AR/AR+/AR++)

Secondary schools are still using National Curriculum Levels prior to Key stage 4. From 2017 GCSE grades A\*-E. changed for students to a grading system of 1-9.

All school age children are tested throughout their time in education and these arrangements are in the process of change. The school will be able to explain current arrangements.

## **Phonics Screening.**

Children are taught through the stages of phonics (1-6) which culminates in screening towards the end of year 1. If the child does not reach the pass mark, they will be re-screened in year 2.

## **SATs (Standard Assessment Tests).**

*End of Key stage 1* – These are more informal tests where the teacher will apply a number of tests over a period of time (May). There is no specific date when these take place in year 2.

*End of Key stage 2* - These are more formal tests which take place on given days in May in year 6

## **GCSE's**

From 2017 GCSE's in English Language, English Literature and Maths have been graded from 1-9 (with 9 being the highest).

There will be fewer assessments involved and more exams. The exams will take place at the end of the two year course in summer.

Re-sits will only be available in English Language and Maths in November.

## **AS and A Levels.**

Assessments will be mainly by exam.

AS and A levels have been de-coupled – this means that AS results no longer count towards an A level in the way they did in the recent past.

For more information on all the above, go to: [www.gov.uk/government/organisation/standards-and-testing-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisation/standards-and-testing-agency)

# THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)



This is the stage of education experienced in a day nursery, childminder, pre-school, nursery school, nursery class in a school and this stage starts at birth and ends at 60 months + when children are ending reception and going into Y1.

For Practitioners working with children who are looked after or who have been previously looked after including adopted children, the EYFS starts with the unique child. Practitioners should gather as much information on the child in order to get to know them and settle them quickly into the setting. Building positive relationships is crucial but may take time and patience. The environment should have places of calm to retreat if needed. Working together with everyone around the child will help build a base line of their learning and development so practitioners can begin immediately to focus on the child's individual needs.

## Good practice – tips for practitioners

Children will struggle to learn anything if they are not emotionally safe, loved, cared for, responded to and happy. These tips for good practice will guide practitioners to offer the best support for looked after or adopted children in their setting.

- The child's key person should always be available to the child especially in the beginning when the relationship is forming. Ensure the staff rota allows this.
- Have a second key person who learns all about the child, and builds a trusting relationship so they can take over when the child's key person is absent.
- Observe young children's body language to interpret their thoughts and feelings then name and validate them "I can see you are frightened" "You are watching the fish". This validates feelings and builds language development.
- Be specific when you praise, describe what the child is doing well such as: how the child concentrates, tries different approaches, persists, solves problems, and has new ideas. This allows the child to be very sure about what they are doing well and enables them to build self-worth by repeating behaviour that gains praise.
- Keep transitions to a minimum and always warn the child when change is about to happen. The child may find any change however small unsettling due to previous changes in their life.
- Ensure all staff are aware of attachment theory, Foetal Alcohol syndrome and how the brain develops in order to offer the best support.

## Funding in the EYFS

### Two year olds

Children can access a free two year old funded place (15 hours for 38 weeks) if they meet criteria. This funding is available for children that:

- are looked after by a local authority
- have a current statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan
- have left care through a special guardianship or an adoption or child arrangement order
- are in receipt of disability living allowance.

### Three and four year olds

- All 3 and 4 year olds can get **15 hours free early education** (570 hours per year). You can use these from the term after your child turns 3.
- Use these hours with a **school, childminder, day nursery or pre-school**. Contact them about place availability and when your child can start.
- Some 3 and 4 year olds can get an extra 15 hours childcare. This will depend on your circumstances

**For more information on funding and finding a place:**

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/childcare-and-advice-for-parents/free-early-education-and-childcare/free-early-education-and-childcare.aspx>

### **Extra funding for certain 3 and 4 year olds**

Pre-schools, nurseries, schools and childminders can claim [early years pupil premium \(PDF 2.6mb\)](#) – an extra £302 a year to support your child's learning.

It can be claimed for 3 and 4 year old children who have been in care or adopted from care or whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits.

**For more information:**

Foundation Years – [www.foundationyears.org.uk](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk)

My Baby's Brain - [www.fivetothrive.org.uk](http://www.fivetothrive.org.uk)

# TOP TIPS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **Organisation and executive function skills.**

- Timetable . Have copies of your child's timetable – on the fridge/ in the child's room/ by the front door. Laminate small copies of the timetable for each day and what is needed for that day as a visual reminder and put them by the front door. You can then support children to become independent and learn strategies for organisation. Work with the school so they reinforce the same system at school.
- Equipment- Check timetable every night and encourage your child to prepare their school bag with the correct equipment for the next day.
- Do weekly equipment check. Equipment is often lost and being well prepared with the correct equipment ensures a good start to the day.
- Request a plan of the school and mark key areas. Talk this through with your child. Ask for pictures of key adults so you can talk about what has happened in the day.
- Ask if your child can have a coat peg at the end of a row so they can find it easily and not have to negotiate for space.

## **Home-school communication and Homework .**

- Establish a named contact and set up an agreed method of communication so that discussions can happen without the child present
- Familiarise yourself with the home –school communication book or agreed method for home school communication. Sign to show you have read it and ask school staff to sign your comments too..
- Register for Parent Mail / class page on website/VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) – if available.
- Suggest the use of a “Homework Buddy” – useful to be able to check homework requirements if not clear with another parent and child.
- Time management – use a visual timer to ensure that your child is spending the correct amount of time on homework and alert teaching staff if homework is taking too long or not long enough.
- Establish a routine for homework that fits for your family.

## **Transition**

- If starting new to the school ask for a tour of the school and permission to take photos of the environment so you can talk about the school when you are at home. Ask for spare uniform to take home to add to the discussions at home and to show to wider family.

- When changing classroom over a summer holiday, ask for a photo of the new teacher, a picture of the new classroom and information about where the new place for drop off and place for pick up is so that you can rehearse new systems over the summer holiday reducing anxiety for all.
- Consider taking the same name card and pencil case with favourite pencils and pens into the new class to reduce change and smooth transition. Be guided by your child. Perhaps buy new equipment after a few weeks of getting used to the new class so it all doesn't change at once.

### **School Community.**

- Involve yourself in school activities – PTA, School Fetes, and Productions etc.
- Attend all Parent Consultations
- Attend all school events – concerts, plays etc.
- Encourage your child to take part in School activities, After School Clubs, School Trips etc.
- Possibility of becoming a Parent Governor.

### **Key Person.**

- Make sure that your child knows who their key person is and how to access them – where their room is, when they are available etc.
- Make sure that communication is two-way – let them know if there has been a significant event that you feel may affect your child.
- If required, request a “weekly check-in”. Some of our children benefit from a weekly session with one person to review how the week has gone and to plan the week ahead.
- Agree how you can share any information that you feel will help support your child in a timely way
- If all is well at school celebrate this with staff
- If all is well at home share this with staff
- If you are having difficulties with your child at home, let the school know so you can work together to find solutions early.
- Agree a transition object that your child can bring to school and have to hand.

# TOP TIPS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

## **Organisation.**

- Timetable . Some secondary schools operate on a two week timetable, others on a weekly timetable. Have copies of your child's timetable – on the fridge, in the child's room. Laminate small copies so that your child can keep it in their pocket as well as in their planner.
- Equipment- Check timetable every night and encourage your child to prepare their school bag with the correct equipment for the next day.
- Do weekly equipment check. Equipment is often lost and being well prepared with the correct equipment prevents confrontation with teaching staff.
- If the school provides lockers – purchase a locker key.
- Request a plan of the school and mark key areas. Talk this through with your child.
- Punctuality between lessons and after break and lunch-time. If you envisage that this may be a problem, request that your child can use mobile for alarm reminders.

## **Homework.**

- Familiarise yourself with the use of the Planner as a Homework diary and as a method of communication.
- Register for Parent Mail / Show My Homework / VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) – if available.
- Suggest the use of a “Homework Buddy” – useful to be able to check homework requirements if not clear.
- Time management – use a visual timer to ensure that your child is spending the correct amount of time on each subject and alert teaching staff if homework is taking too long or not long enough.
- Establish a routine for homework that fits for your family.
- Use of Homework Club at school.

## **Communication.**

This is always harder for parents/carers as often the child goes to school independently and the “hand-over” time that was usual at primary school does not exist. Therefore, it is important to establish an agreed method of communication with the school which suits everyone.

- Establish a named contact and set up an agreed method of communication.
- Use of Parent Mail.
- First Day Response / Texts.

**School Community.**

- Involve yourself in school activities – PTA, School Fetes, and Productions etc.
- Attend all Parent Consultations
- Attend all school events – concerts, plays etc.
- Encourage your child to take part in School activities, After School Clubs, School Trips etc.
- Possibility of becoming a Parent Governor.

**Key Person.**

- Make sure that your child knows who their key person is and how to access them – where their room is, when they are available etc.
- Make sure that communication is two-way – let them know if there has been a significant event that you feel may affect your child.
- If required, request a “weekly check-in”. Some of our children benefit from a weekly session with one person to review how the week has gone and to plan the week ahead.
- Share any information that you feel will help support your child.



# PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS IN SCHOOL

Pupil Premium Plus is now available to previously looked after children including adopted children as well as to children looked after (CLA). The eligibility for previously looked after children is –

- Children that were adopted from care in England and Wales
- Children who left care (in England and Wales) under a Residence Order (now called a Child Arrangement Order)
- Children who left care (in England and Wales) under a Special Guardianship Order.
- Children in Reception to year 11.
- Early years pupil premium is also available to all above.

From reception to year 11, pupil premium plus is £2300 per child per year.

Early years pupil premium plus is £302 per child per year.

To receive pupil premium plus money, schools must record the relevant information on their January census. For adopted children, the parent must self-declare the status of their child and provide supporting evidence (e.g. Adoption Order). Parents have to self-declare only once to each school and need only inform one person (Head teacher). It is helpful if schools are sensitive around this issue.

## USE OF PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS

Pupil Premium is provided to raise attainment and to support learning. It does not have to be used only in 1:1 situations, but the child carrying the pupil premium **MUST** benefit from the provision or intervention.

Effective use of Pupil Premium should tailor interventions to meet individual need through systematic tracking of progress. The use of pupil premium must be on the schools' website.

Some suggested uses –

- 1:1 tuition
- Support to develop speech language and communication
- Small group targeted intervention.
- Academic mentor.
- Education focused trips and visits.
- Purchase of specialist equipment to promote academic progress (e.g. Kindle for a reluctant reader)
- Study and revision classes
- Additional LSA/TA support (must work in close liaison with class teacher to ensure that work and intervention is correctly targeted)

It is the responsibility of the school to use and target the money appropriately but it is helpful to discuss with parent/carers as to suggested uses of the Pupil Premium money to support their child.

# SECURITY: PHOTOGRAPHS, FILMING, EMAIL

## Photographs and Filming

With modern technology it is often difficult for early years settings and schools to prevent parents/carers taking photographs during events. It is often requested that parents/carers do not take photographs but it is not possible to be totally sure that this will not happen.

**It is sometimes necessary to protect the identity and whereabouts of children and if the school has any concerns about this it is advisable to consult with carers/parents.**

- Be aware of any photographs / DVD's placed in the public domain. – E.g. School or setting web-site, newspaper reports (Open days, School fete, sports day, concerts etc.)
- Newsletters with photographs that can link the child to the school or setting.
- Try to avoid parents photographing / filming school concerts, plays, sports days etc.
- Find ways of including the child that mean they are not easily identified.
- Make use of "School or setting produced official DVD's." These could include the child, strategically placed to minimise identification.

## Email security

**Emailing personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information-*Exercise caution when sending the email and always follow these checks before releasing the email:***

- Verify the details, including accurate email address, of any intended recipient of the information.
- Verify (by phoning) the details of a requestor before responding to email requests for information.
- Check that you have keyed the correct email address.
- Do not copy or forward the email to any more recipients than is absolutely necessary.
- Do not send the information to anybody/person whose details you have been unable to separately verify (usually by phone).
- Send the information as an encrypted document attached to an email.
- Provide the encryption key by a separate contact with the recipient/s.
- Do not identify such information in the subject line of any email.
- Request confirmation of safe receipt.

***It is recommended that you use password protection on attachments containing restricted information when sending to secure email addresses. This is to prevent mistaken disclosure from accidental email misaddressing. Passwords must be sent in a separate email and / or preferably phoned through.***

## **Exchanging documents to HCC accounts from non HCC accounts**

HertSFX is HCC's web based secure file exchange system that enables you to send and receive files securely. You may be given instructions to use this system by a social worker if they are asking you to send sensitive documents.



# CHILD PROTECTION FILES – POST ADOPTION

A child ceases to be Looked After once the Adoption Order has been issued. A child could be living with their prospective adoptive parents but is not legally adopted until after the order has been issued therefore the child remains Looked After. It is important to understand this distinction for reporting purposes because the school census should be flagged as Looked After if the child is in Local Authority care, foster care, or placed with their prospective adopters. However, if the child has been legally adopted the flag should be “Adopted From Care”

Once a child has been adopted they have a new identity and the information about the child’s past should not follow the child to his / her next school. The school’s Child Protection file and any other sensitive information about the child’s past must be returned to the LA once the child is adopted.

If you are aware of any children on your school who have been adopted, please arrange for Child Protection file to be sent, by internal courier or Special Delivery, to the following address-

*Data Protection Team,*

*Room C1 County Hall,*

*Pegs Lane,*

*Hertford*

*SG12 8DF*

## **NAME CHANGES**

A child’s surname will change following the Adoption Order being granted. Prior to this, officially, they still have their birth surname. Often schools will have the child’s name on book labels/work on display/coat peg etc. Their work may be up around school after their name has legally changed. It is suggested that schools use only the child’s first name on everything on display until formal adoption.

Case law is very clear that neither a forename nor a surname can be changed without leave of the Court prior to the adoption order being made.

The child will retain both formally and informally their first name(s) and surname as given at birth until the final adoption order is made in accordance with stated and established case law.

## **UPN**

At present children who are adopted should be given a new UPN number. But the DFE are looking at a change to this. They are currently doing work with the Department of Health to ensure that children adopted from care retain their NHS number and will be doing similar for the UPN.

Until this time there is differing practice in schools. If you require assistance please contact the School IT Systems Support Service Desk, Telephone 01438 844777, who will be able to advise on how to ensure that previous data is not lost.

# EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOL

## My child has been excluded from school – what does this mean?

All schools have a behaviour policy which sets out how their pupils are expected to behave. Any child who does not follow the school rules may be excluded for a number of days this is called a **fixed period exclusion**. Schools should use exclusions as the last resort.

If your child is excluded you should receive a letter from the Head teacher telling you the reasons for the exclusion and how many days the exclusion will last.

## Facts about fixed period exclusions

The school will let you know how your child's education will continue during the period of exclusion. During the first five days of exclusion, the school should set work for them to complete and arrange for it to be marked. Parents/carers should make sure that work sent home is completed and returned to school.

When a child is given a fixed period exclusion of six days or longer, the school must arrange for the child's education to be provided at an alternative setting. This is from and including the sixth school day. The school should contact you about these arrangements.

During the first five days of a fixed period exclusion, the excluded pupil must not be in a public place during normal school hours without reasonable justification. This applies whether or not the child is in the company of an adult.

The Head teacher should arrange a meeting with you during or following any fixed period exclusion. This will give you the opportunity to discuss the incident that led to the exclusion. It will also be an opportunity to discuss any strategies to prevent a reoccurrence of the behaviour in the future.

## What can I do to support my child?

- Keep the letter about the exclusion. It will contain helpful information including information including the reason for the exclusion and the arrangements for your child to return to school.
- Listen carefully to your child's version of the events that led to the exclusion. Tell them that you will also be speaking to the school and will listen to them as well. Try to keep an open mind.
- Contact the school as soon as possible so that your child can see that you are working with the teachers and staff to resolve the situation. Your child will feel more secure if they see that adults are in control of a difficult situation.
- Contact the school immediately if you have any questions or queries about the exclusion.
- If your child has had more than one exclusion you should contact the school to discuss any individual support that your child is receiving and to consider whether any further strategies could be tried e.g. A Pastoral Support Programme (PSP). A PSP is a short, focused period of support in addition to the pastoral care available to all pupils in the school.

## **Permanent Exclusions**

For very serious or repeated breaches of the school's behaviour policy a child may be excluded permanently. If this happens the governors of the school will have to hold a hearing to review the Head teacher's decision. You will be able to attend the hearing, make a statement and ask questions. The governors will decide to either uphold the decision to exclude or overturn it and reinstate the child. If they decide to uphold the head teacher's decision you may ask to have their decision reviewed by an Independent Review Panel.

The school should set work for your child for the first five days after a permanent exclusion. The Local Authority becomes responsible after that and will get in touch to arrange next steps.

## **Further advice and information about exclusions**

- The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE). Helpline number is 0300 0115 142 or email [enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ace-ed.org.uk)
- The Coram Children's Legal Centre. Helpline number is 08088 020 008 or email – <http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com>
- The Integration Team who may be contacted for general advice and guidance. Contact Hertfordshire County Council's Customer Service Centre on 0300 1234 043

# SOME TIPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

## PLANNING A SCHOOL OR SETTING MOVE.

**For all previously looked after children,** use the PEP process to plan the move and the transition plan.

For adopted children, if the child is Looked After (before the Adoption Order is granted) use the PEP process to plan the move and the transition plan.

### PRIOR TO THE MOVE.

- Using local knowledge and their social worker, identify the school or setting that is the right one for your child. Government recommend that a “Good” or “Outstanding” school or setting is the appropriate school for CLA and previously CLA.
- Arrange a visit to the school/setting and be prepared to ask questions that will clarify that it is the right one for your child.
- Apply for a school/ nursery/early years setting place. As previously CLA or Adopted, they should prioritise your child and schools are expected to go over number if required.
- When the school/setting has been identified, request a meeting with key adults (designated teacher (school), designated practitioner (early years setting), prospective adopters, carers, previous foster carers, previous school, social worker)
- Plan a number of visits for your child ensuring that they experience all aspects of the day (breakfast club, break time, lessons, lunch-time, home time etc.)
- Make sure that you are clear on all the routines of the school/setting e.g. what happens at hand-over time, lunch-time etc.
- Use school/setting web-site as a resource for information.
- Plan to meet adults with key roles e.g. designated teacher (school), designated practitioner (setting), SENCo (both school and setting).
- Purchase any uniform or equipment required in advance and encourage your child to try uniform on taking photos to collect in a transition book. This could also include photos of the school, photos of key adults.
- Plan for the child to start – probably in a phased way. Reassure your child about where you will be to collect them at the end of the agreed time. Produce a plan that everyone has a copy of.
- Handover any previous education data or arrange for previous school/setting to liaise.



- Establish a key contact person and an agreed method of communication which allows for conversation away from school and away from the child so that positive relationships can be maintained and each day can end on a positive note.
- Ensure that school/setting have names of any relevant people and dates of any appointments or key dates. Ensure that you have names of relevant staff and dates of any key events so you can be part of planning for transitions.
- Alert school to any known significant behaviour issues and/or triggers as you learn about your child.

## **PLANNING FOR SECONDARY TRANSFER**

Secondary transfer is often a very difficult and worrying time for both children and parents/carers. It is important to choose the right school for your child and not necessarily the one that their friends are going to. More often than not, children will make different friends at secondary school and although friendships are important, they are not the most important factors to consider on choosing a secondary school.

### **Year 5.**

All secondary schools will have Open Evenings in the Autumn Term (September/October) and will be advertised on their web-sites. It is acceptable to attend these evenings when your child is in Year 5 as it will start to inform your choices in year 6. Begin to discuss the future changes with your child.

### **Year 6.**

- Visit schools again on their Open Evenings. Ask questions that will help you assess the schools' ethos on Inclusion and Individual Needs e.g. Do they have experience of working with Children Looked After, adopted children and other previously looked after children?
- Discuss with your child the pros and cons of each school. Be clear, when listening to your child that their wishes will be taken into consideration, but that the final decision will be one made by you.
- Applying for Secondary School. – Applications are done on-line and can be accompanied by a supporting letter from a social worker (Adoption Team). CLA, Adopted children and other previously looked after children should get the first choice school but there are exceptions to this. (Check the school's Admission Policy)
- Meetings – attend any meetings at the primary school and secondary school prior to the move. These are a way of meeting other parents and ensuring that you are clear on all expectations and processes.
- "Moving-up Day" or "Transition Day". All secondary schools will have a day when current Year 6's will attend their new school for a day. This will be in July. Additional days can be requested if you feel that this will be beneficial for your child. Often a key member of staff from their primary school can accompany them. Ask your primary school to arrange this.
- Identify your contact person in school (Year Head, Senco, and Inco). Arrange to meet them before September and share with them any key information you feel they will need to support your child.

- Ask your secondary school if you can bring your child up to school in the summer holidays and on a day before the official start day in September so they can keep reminding themselves of the new school and ask any questions they need to.
- Familiarise yourself with all the routines of the new school – start and finish times of each day, homework policy, uniform etc.)
- Make sure that your child takes part in any end of term activities at their primary school (Year 6 trip, school Prom etc.) Endings are as important as beginnings.
- Familiarise yourself with the school web-site and look at it with your child. It will often have key information on it and key figures that will play a part in your child's life.
- Practice the journey to the new school, particularly if this involves the use of public transport. Do the journey several times, accompanying your child both ways initially and then allowing them to do the journey unaccompanied. Discuss strategies with your child if something goes wrong – they miss the bus, the bus doesn't turn up etc.
- Talk openly about "Fears and Anxieties" and use "Social Stories" to alleviate fears.
- Find out about summer activities or summer schools taking place at your child's new school and encourage your child to attend.
- Ensure that your child has an identified "Key Person" in school and how and where to find them in school if they need them.
- Ask if they have a 'safe space' where your child is allowed to come if they feel anxious. Ask if they have a pass system for children to show so they can leave lessons with permission if they are anxious to come to the safe space.
- Purchase uniform and all equipment required (be prepared to replace this frequently!) Children with difficulties organising themselves lose things in a large secondary school environment. Mark equipment and uniform with an easily recognisable sign which you agree with your child so they can find their clothing and equipment easily.
- As soon as you have the timetable, create a daily reminder checklist which you keep by the door at home so that your child can put everything they need for the next day into their bag the night before. Share this with the key person at the school so they can help keep your child's organisation on track.

# TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Children Looked after and previously looked after need special consideration when planning. You may have children in your school who are being prepared to move to an Adoption Placement, to a foster carer or to a new home with a kinship carer or who have been moved into their Adoptive Placement and are new to your school. This is a very difficult time for the adults involved and very difficult for the children. They will have experienced numerous changes and it is important that the adults involved do everything that they can to help the children feel safe and secure. This will have an impact on their future learning.

Planning and communication are key to the success of the placement both in school and with their new family. It is good practice and beneficial to have school staff from both schools (previous school and new school) involved in the planning of any move. It is important that everyone is involved in the plan and that everyone is aware of dates and timeframes.

Remember, some children can just manage to self-regulate at school but react to this at home with difficult consequences for parents and carers. Believe parents and carers when they describe the issues they are having and work with them to support them. Supporting educational progress for children involves home and school working together as partners.

Change is a difficult time for our children and the school day is full of change – lesson to lesson , breaks to lesson time, hand-over times, staff absence, seasonal changes ( Sports Day, Christmas celebrations, trips etc.).

There will be challenging times but schools are a very important part of the picture for our children. They may have had difficult early years experiences including trauma and loss and may have had little input from birth parents which can lead to some educational and emotional difficulties. Educators have the opportunity to accelerate learning and give our children the best possible chance for their future in partnership with carers and adoptive parents.

Speech and Language is often an area that needs input. If children have not had parents that are available to them, because of their own needs, they will often have delayed and impoverished speech. Their vocabulary can be limited and poor with consequences for progress in literacy and across the curriculum.

It is important to establish good and regular communication with the parents/carers as a consistent approach will help children feel safe and secure. It is important that they know that all adults are working together and support one another's decisions. It is important that all adults involved give very positive messages about school to the child. Remember that Adopters are "new parents" and will need support to learn the education process and will not necessarily have had the gradual nurturing into the education system that others have had (through playgroups and nursery). They may also have an incomplete picture of the child's past so may not always have the detail that you require.

There are some key areas for teachers and school staff to consider when working with our children–

## **Concentration and other executive function skills**

A significant number of the children that we work with have had to learn to be hyper-vigilant in order to protect themselves. They are always hyper-aware of their surroundings and what is going on around them. This can appear as lack of concentration and can lead to conflict.

- Use a seating plan – sit them away from the door / window, away from too much stimulation. Possibly at the back of the classroom so that they can see everyone and avoid them constantly turning round to check others' whereabouts.
- Provide a coat peg at the end of a row so it is easily accessible and possessions are visible to the child.
- Choose their learning partner / table carefully.
- Use their name at the start of any instructions.
- Try to break down any instructions into small steps.
- Give clear instructions with clear expectations and avoid rhetorical questions.
- Check often for understanding.
- Use timers.
- Use visual timetables and prompts.
- Provide warning that a change is coming so the child has had time to use strategies to plan what is required.

For more on executive function skills:

<https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Enhancing-and-Practicing-Executive-Function-Skills-with-Children-from-Infancy-to-Adolescence-1.pdf>

### **Curriculum Issues**

Always try to discuss with parents/carers when you feel that a difficult area may be coming up and give parents/carers the opportunity to tell you when this might be too. To support this, provide advance information of the topics to be covered. Our children need to be included in all areas of school life, but a sensitive approach is often required. It will sometimes be necessary to consult with the parents as to how a difficult subject can be dealt with.

Some areas to consider when planning:

- P.E. – A child who has been abused may be uncomfortable getting changed in front of others. Try to identify an area of the room that will give them some privacy.
- Family Trees – Families are discussed at different times and in different lessons in school. Children can be asked to bring in a photograph of themselves as a baby. Some of our children will not have these. Speak to parents and agree how this will be achieved – e.g. generic photograph from the Internet, photograph of one of the parents as a baby.
- Sex Education – Some of our children may have been sexually abused or may have viewed sexually inappropriate material. Be prepared that they may be more sexually aware than their peers.
- P.S.H.E. – certain topics may trigger painful memories e.g. drugs, domestic abuse, alcohol, homelessness etc.
- Visits by police/fire-brigade/ambulance staff may trigger memories.
- Children in Need, Red Nose Day, Non-uniform days, Charity Events.

## **Celebrations**

Christmas, birthdays etc. can often have bad and painful memories for some of our children. Christmas is also a time, in school, when normal routines of the school day change (concert rehearsals, carol concerts in local church, trips to theatre etc.). This is a time when it is important to communicate with parents/carers. Let them know about any changes so that they can help to prepare the child for change.

Be prepared that the child may not have the same happy memories of celebrations that others have.

## **Unstructured Time**

This can be a time of conflict due to relationships issues and lack of self-regulation. It is often better to pre-empt these problems by having arranged activities during break times. A possible use of Pupil Premium could be in employing a “play leader “during these times. It can also be a good idea to encourage the young person to arrange a “club “, including other young people. It is better to start with small groups – two playing board games, to develop the relationships slowly.

## **School Trips**

Any school trips will need careful planning and communication with parents/carers. This will be particularly important with any residential trip.

The separation from their parents/carers can cause extreme anxiety. They may believe that their parents/carers will not be there on their return.

As some schools do not encourage parent/child contact during the trip, school and parents/carers need to carefully consider strategies that will reduce the child’s anxiety.

- Begin conversations early with parents/carers to identify any areas they feel may be difficult for their child.
- Encourage parents/carers to begin the conversation with their child and to liaise with school over any worries they may have.
- Use “Social Stories” to help the child develop coping strategies.
- Suggest the child brings a special object from home (their own pillow. Mum’s scarf with her perfume on it, family photograph )
- Parents/carers to write a note for each day to be given to school staff. These can be given daily to the child at an appropriate time of the day.
- Encourage the child to write post cards home.
- If it is felt that the child will not cope with the whole residential trip, try to facilitate them attending for part of the trip.
- Use pupil premium money to fund an additional member of staff (one that the child is familiar with).
- If the school policy allows contact, make use of technology available. Arrange Skype time, to avoid disappointment ensure that contact is set up before the child is informed.

# A VIRTUAL SCHOOL ACRONYMS LIST

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| EYFS  | Early Years Foundation Stage                                   |
| GLD   | Good Level of Development (at end of Reception Year in school) |
| 1:1   | One to One tuition   |
| IAELD | Individual Assessment of Early Learning and Development        |
| CAIU  | Child Abuse Information Unit                                   |
| CAF   | Common Assessment Framework                                    |
| CAO   | Child Arrangement Order  |
| CCM   | Children's Centre Manager                                      |
| CL    | Communication and Language                                     |
| CLA   | Children Looked After  |
| CLU   | Child Litigation Unit  |
| CP    | Child Protection   |
| DST   | Designated Senior Person for Child Protection                  |
| DT    | Designated Teacher   |
| EA    | Education Adviser for the Virtual School                       |
| EAD   | Expressive Arts and Design                                     |
| EHCP  | Education, Health and Care Plan                                |
| ESMH  | Emotional, Social and Mental Health Needs (previously BESD)    |
| EP    | Educational Psychologist                                       |
| EPO   | Emergency Placement Order                                      |
| ESW   | Education Support Worker for the Virtual School                |
| EYFS  | Early Years Foundation Stage                                   |
| FGC   | Family Group Conference  |
| FT    | Full Time  |
| ICO   | Interim Care Order   |
| IEP   | Independent Education Plan                                     |
| LPM   | Legal Planning Meeting   |
| LSA   | Learning Support Assistant                                     |
| PA    | Professional Assistant to a Social Worker                      |
| PD    | Physical Development   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| PSED     | Personal Social and Emotional Development  |
| PLO      | Public Law Outline   |
| PM       | Practice Manager   |
| Post-LAC | CLA who have left care into adoption, Special Guardianship or are subject to a Child Arrangement Order |
| PP       | Police Protection  |
| PSM      | Placement Support Meeting  |
| PT       | Part time  |
| S&L      | Speaking and Listening   |
| SALT     | Speech & Language Therapist  |
| SENCO    | Special Education Needs Co-ordinator   |
| SEND     | Special Education Needs and Disabilities   |
| SGO      | Special Guardianship Order   |
| SLCN     | Speech Language and Communication Needs  |
| SLFS     | Safeguarding Locality and Family Support   |
| SO       | Supervision Order  |
| SW       | Social Worker  |
| TA       | Teaching Assistant   |
| UW       | Understanding the World  |