

EDUCATION PACK

Introduction

This educational information pack has been prepared to assist adoptive parents at any stage with a range of educational questions they may have before or during their child's educational journey. It addresses some frequently asked questions as well as giving some very useful contact information and sites to refer to.

ACE would like to thank Heidi Wilde, Warwickshire Educational Adviser, for producing this document and Jade Busby, Worcestershire Educational Adviser, for contributing. Whilst we are mindful that different local authorities may vary the names of some meetings and groups, the core business remains the same.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your support agency who will signpost you appropriately.

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**For the purposes of this document Children Previously Looked After (CPLA) will be referred to as Previously Looked After Children.*

1. Admissions

Your local authority has a school admissions department and they are responsible for ensuring your child gets a school place. Since September 2013, Previously Looked After Children and children who left UK care on an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO) (formerly Residence Order) have the highest priority.

This means you don't have to live within the school catchment area to be able to get into the school. All schools must publish their admissions criteria/policy which should be available on their website. Even faith schools generally have some places which are not reserved for their denomination and adopted children should be high on the list for the remainder of places. Check individual school admission policies as there can be differences, especially with academies.

Deleting a child from the admissions register

A school cannot delete a child from the admissions register unless it is done with parents' agreement or unless one of the grounds are met within the legislation for The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1751/regulation/8/made>

If a school have already deleted a child off roll they would need to have notified the local authority, this became a legal requirement in 2016.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

When is the best time to start school?

Children in England generally start school in the September after their fourth birthday. However, the compulsory age for starting school is five. A child reaches compulsory school age on the 'prescribed day' following his or her fifth birthday. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to Reception rather than Year 1.

(Department for Education, 2014b pp. 24)

Many adoptive parents also feel that their children need extra time at home to catch up on developmental stages they may have missed.

2. The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked-after Children

Following amendments made by the 2017 Act, section 20A of the 2008 Act and Section 2E of the Academies Act 2010 place duties on the governing body of a maintained school in England and the proprietor of an academy in England to:

- Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously Looked After pupils who are no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order, or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales;
- Ensure the designated person undertakes appropriate training; and
- Ensure they and the designated teacher have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

The designated teacher should work closely with parents and guardians of Previously Looked After children. The designated teacher should make themselves known to parents and guardians as someone they can talk to about issues affecting their child's education.

The views and wishes of parents and guardians should be respected at all times. They should be encouraged to participate in discussions about their child's support needs and strategies to meet identified needs, including how Pupil Premium Plus should be used to support their child.

Designated teachers will want to satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously Looked After status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society.

For more information please see the [statutory guidance](#) from the Department for Education. This guidance is for governing bodies of maintained schools in England*, proprietors of academies and designated teachers for Looked After and previously Looked After children in such schools.

** A 'maintained school' means a community school, foundation school, voluntary aided school, voluntary controlled school, community special school, foundation special school or maintained nursery school.*

3. Before the child moves in with the adoptive family

- The choice of destination school should be discussed with the Virtual School.
- The prospective adopters should organise a visit to the possible schools to look around. (This is an opportunity to find out about the school's experience of supporting children who have experienced early trauma or have attachment needs.)
- During the school visit, pick up a prospectus and any other relevant information, take photographs where possible to help with the transition process.
- It may be appropriate for the family to visit the existing school to meet with the teacher or designated teacher to understand the child's needs. Care needs to be taken to ensure this meeting takes place when the child is not at school so that the child does not inadvertently come into contact with the prospective adopters.
- A transition meeting should be held that includes the current school, new school, current carers and prospective adopters. This meeting should focus on the school's and carers' experience of what works well, both in terms of supporting the child's emotional needs and educational progress.
- Ensure that the school understands what names the child will use, when talking to and about their birth and adoptive family.

The current school should consider appropriate leaving arrangements e.g. peers to make cards, possibly purchasing a book that the class have focused on as a gift, a leavers assembly. The current school should also ensure that they collect photos, work, videos etc. of the child's time at school, which can form part of their life story work.

With your child:

- Look at the school website – write down any questions your child might have about the school.
- Organise a visit with your child. Consider when this visit takes place, during quiet times, after school, during busy times - you need to get a feel for what the school is actually like. Ask any questions your child might have.
- Ask school staff to show your child where the safe spaces are, or where they can visit if they are feeling vulnerable.
- In some schools the Reception teacher visits children at home before they start school. Ask the teacher if you can take a picture of them for your child, you could even make a recording of the teacher's voice so that your child can become familiar with it.
- With your child's input, create an 'all about me' profile to give to his school and teachers – this will reassure your child, to some extent, that the teachers and school 'know' them. The linked document from PAC UK could be useful - [Me and My World](#).
- Explain the school policies and rules clearly, in a way that your child will understand.

- Practise tasks your child may have to do at school with role-play so that they will feel more in control when the event takes place. For example carrying a tray in the dining hall.
- If you don't feel your child can cope with a full week of school, ask the head teacher if it would be possible for them to start with a four-day week instead.

4. Choosing a Pre-School Setting

Choosing childcare is a big step for you and your child. It is important that parents/carers not only feel confident that they are leaving their child in a safe and loving environment, but also that they are leaving them in an enabling environment where they can learn and develop. We recommend that you:

- visit a range of providers to give you an idea of what is best for your child
- visit during opening hours to see if the children and child carers are calm, happy and busy
- ask for a trial session before you sign a contract.

When you visit a setting look out for the following:

- As you approach the nursery is it clean and tidy in appearance? What security systems are in place for visitors entering the setting? Does the environment as a whole look clean and safe? *Remember, you should not be able to walk into the nursery or be let in by another parent or visitor without having been signed in.*
- When entering the different rooms are they calm, with children engaged in activities and play, and appearing to be relaxed and happy? Are older children's independence skills visible to you, for example: washing their hands, wiping their noses and pouring their own drinks?
- The environment and equipment both indoors and outdoors should be maintained and free from damage. Are children allowed the opportunity to select and choose resources of their choice? Are these available at their level and do you see this in practice when you visit?
- Do children have daily opportunities to play and explore outdoors when they choose? Are babies and younger children given outdoor experiences? Is free flow in operation for children, where they can independently move between inside and outside where the building permits?
- Are staff responding to the individual needs of the children around them? Can you hear lots of language and communication from both staff and children? Are staff and children respectful of individuals, culture and families?

- Do you and your child receive eye contact and a warm welcome in all areas that you go? Do the staff use your child's name when chatting with you both?

What questions could I ask during my visit with regards to quality?

- What are the ratios of staff to children? How many children do you care for? What are your qualifications? Do you offer a key person system and what will this mean to my child?

Depending on the setting, staff to child ratios are currently: age 0 to 2 – 1:3 ratio; age 2 to 3 – 1:4; age 3 to 5 – 1:8. The key person will be responsible for your child's individual needs, planning and assessments.

- What are the daily routines? How will my child's individual needs such as weaning, nappy changes and toileting be catered for during the day?
- How do staff deal with unwanted behaviour? What are the nursery's policies around discipline and behaviour? Ask if the policy is available for you to see and read.
- If your child has additional needs what will the nursery do to facilitate your child? What links with outside agencies has the nursery experienced? Is there a designated member of staff that could help you? *The nursery should have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) who will liaise with you and other agencies if required, to provide support and care for your child's individual needs.*
- What opportunities and initiatives over and above the curriculum does the nursery offer and how will these help your child's development and learning? Does the nursery provide activities, for example to support language, communication, mathematics over and above the curriculum?
- How does the nursery communicate with parents/carers regarding a child's development and learning? Can parents/carers be involved in the child's life at nursery? *Parents can be involved in numerous ways, parents' evenings, home observations, conversations about your child's development and interests at home.*

For more information, please visit the [PACEY](#) website (*Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years*)

For information in relation to funding and tax-free childcare, please visit: [Childcare Choices](#)

5. Choosing a Primary School

Choosing the right school to meet your child's needs isn't always an easy decision. Arrange a meeting with the head teacher of the school you are considering for your child so you can explain the issues they might have and the kind of behaviours the teacher might see. Be upfront about any difficulties so the school can work out whether they will be able to manage. If it baulks at this point, you will know that it is not the right place for your child.

PAC UK (www.pac-uk.org) have identified some key questions you could ask schools, where appropriate, when you visit them. Please see below:

What is the behaviour management policy?

- *Does the school apply the policy flexibly to best meet the needs of each child e.g. if they use a yellow/red card system or a sunshine – storm clouds system for moving children 'up' and 'down' based on their behaviour, will they use a different non-shaming strategy for your child? Does the school see behaviour as communication and focus on meeting those needs? What is the school's approach to exclusion?*

How does the school provide structure and consistency?

- *For example: sticking to timetable at Christmas and ends of terms; letting parents and children know as soon as possible about staff changes and supply teachers; providing a timetable for parents to prepare the child at home; using visual timetables to let children know about upcoming change.*

How does the school share the information you give them about your child's background and needs?

- *For example: systems; meetings; policies... If 'need to know' basis, how is this decided and clarified with everyone including parents?*

How does the school share information with parents?

- *For example: does the class teacher speak to parents at the end of the day, or call home? Are staff able to email parents if needed? Is there a text message system e.g. to notify parents about snow days? How does the school connect adoptive parents and special guardians together? Do they provide a coffee morning? Are they willing to have a standing item in their newsletter letting everyone know about any meetings convened by parents themselves?*

How has the school used its Pupil Premium Plus for adopted and special guardianship pupils?

- *Social and emotional interventions or only learning? Is the PP+ clearly differentiated from the overall pupil premium pot for children entitled to free school meals? Does the school meet with parents to identify children's needs, or consult adoptive parents as a group about use of the grant?*

Have staff received training on attachment and the impact of early trauma and loss?

- *Who was involved in the training? Did SLT attend, were teaching assistants included? Was it cascaded to playgroup supervisors? What has been the impact throughout the school?*

How does the school provide consistent key relationships for children with attachment needs?

- *For example: named members of staff as key workers for children, with quality 1:1 time scheduled into the child's day or week, with particular attention to the times when the child is most vulnerable? Staff who are aware of how to let the child know that they are held in mind? Ways to help children stay connected e.g. a postcard in the holidays?*

Where is the safe base for children when they need to calm down or regulate?

- *Is there a nurture group, and how do they prioritise children to be part of this? Is it used as a planned daily intervention? Is there a nurture space or calming zone which children can access as and when needed with a key member of staff?*

What support is in place for children who find unstructured times difficult?

- *For example: Is there an indoor lunch club for more vulnerable children, where they can develop their social skills, or calm down and relax? Do the midday supervisors organise structured games on the playground? Are there systems for children who want to play with friends e.g. a buddy system or a friendship bench?*

How does the school support children who find it difficult to manage their feelings?

- *For example: nurture group; calm boxes; a calming zone within the school; emotion regulation skills teaching and coaching; anger management training; empathy from all staff; social skills groups.*

How does the school manage curriculum hotspots?

- *For example: issues which might trigger your child e.g. liaise with parents about baby photos and family trees; cards for mothers and fathers day; subjects such as evacuees in WW2 in English and History; NSPCC and 'Children in Need' assemblies.*

6. Supporting your child through transitions

Your child will experience many transitions in their school life from daily to yearly transitions. It is important that each transition is planned for and managed well, to ensure that your child feels safe. Major transitions, such as the start of a new year or moving to a new school, as well as minor transitions such as moving from classroom to classroom or from school to home at the end of the day, can be challenging for many children. When a child has had times in their life when they have felt unsure or unsafe and lacked a sense of a 'secure base'; a transition can trigger the anxiety and fear they have felt before.

The following suggestions can help with minor transitions within school:

- Ask the teacher to give you prior warning, for example, if there is going to be a substitute teacher or change of classroom, so that you prepare your child by talking it through with them in advance.
- If there is going to be a school trip, your child could take a 'transitional object' with them. Ask staff if the itinerary can be adapted to meet their needs e.g. perhaps she could join the class for the daytime activities only, rather than staying overnight. (Please see: [Reducing Trip Trauma](#) by PAC UK.)
- You may be able to prepare your child for a trip or sports day by showing them photos or taking them to the actual place where they will be going.
- Ask the teacher if it is possible to provide your child with signs or a storyboard, showing what the class will do and when.
- Have a school timetable or a visual representation of the school day in a prominent place at home, so that your child can see what is going to happen day by day.
- If you can, get involved with school life, for instance, if you help out on school trips and fundraising events, your child will see that you are working together with the school.

(Information put together with thanks to The Adopter's Handbook on Education, getting the Best for your Child by Eileen Fursland.)

PAC UK have produced an excellent information leaflet containing information and ideas in relation to transitions: [Goodbye and Transitions.](#)

7. Transition to Secondary School

(Information taken from The Adopter's Handbook on Education, getting the Best for your Child by Eileen Fursland.)

An 11 year old starting secondary school will meet and have to interact with many more children. Year 7 students are suddenly the youngest in the school, with many physically bigger, brasher, young people in the years above them in school, which can be daunting.

Children have to get to know lots of new teachers – ones who don't understand them yet – and they have several different teachers in the course of a day. There are new subjects and previously familiar subjects are taught in different ways. There's a bigger school to find your way around, more classrooms to navigate, more noise and crowds to contend with in the school corridors, more things to take with you in the morning, different school rules to remember and organise and more homework to do.

All of these things are potential triggers for many adopted children. They are likely to be completely out of their comfort zone for quite some time.

As a parent you could consider the following prior to starting secondary school:

- Ask your child how they feel about going to secondary school and talk through any of the issues that are worrying them.
- Take them to visit the school at busy and quiet times. Photos and a map of the school might help some children to understand the new layout.
- Ensure you go to the Christmas fair, summer fair or any events organised by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- If your child is anxious about public transport, have several practice runs together.
- Try to cultivate your child's friendships with children who will be going to the same secondary school (and do the same with the parents!).
- Talk to your child about why they might want to keep their adoption story private, and role play how they might respond if it comes up.
- Ask your child what they would like class teachers to know about them.
- Be positive and enthusiastic about the new opportunities that the secondary school will offer – the range of sports, school facilities, the extra-curricular clubs, bands, trips and other exciting things it has that primary school didn't.
- Plan a treat for the first weekend after they have started at a new school, so that they have something nice to look forward to once they have got through the first week.
- Remind your child of other times when they have been a bit nervous about going somewhere or doing something and have ended up really enjoying it.

Key questions to ask the school/suggestions:

- It may be appropriate for the school to provide a book for the child with photos of key adults and areas of the school to share at home. It may be possible for the child to take home the class teddy. For older children it may be helpful for the class teacher to create an 'all about me' sheet for the child to have. This can help the child feel more comfortable with the teacher.
- The school can provide the family with information on the themes/topics that are being covered and ideas of how the family could support pre-learning, ready for when the child starts school.
- Ask the school if they are able to organise a 'buddy' to be with the child in the first few days. The buddy could provide an 'all about me' sheet for the child.
- Check that your child will have access to a key adult who will touch base with them regularly.
- Ask the school to put you into contact with a parent of a child in the same class as yours, or to contact the PTA. This could be useful to help you settle into school life and enable you to feel part of the community.
- Ensure the school have helped you to understand the school's approaches to reading, phonics, writing, maths etc., and how parents can best support learning at home.
- Ask the school how they can ensure strong home/school communication – although the PEP process stops after the child is adopted, it is best practice for the school to

continue the lines of communication with the family and continue to set up-to-date targets.

8. Choosing a Secondary School

Many of the questions you may need to ask overlap with those recommended for choosing a primary school. That said, several additional points relating to secondary education need to be considered when you are visiting schools to make your decision. Here are some of the key questions compiled by PAC UK (www.pac-uk.org).

How does the school support the Year 6 to Year 7 transition?

- *For example: extra visits for vulnerable children; opportunities to see the school both empty and busy; maps and photographs; summer club to get used to the school and key staff?*

What is the behaviour management policy?

- *Does the school recognise that cause-and-effect consequences may not be effective for children with histories of trauma and loss? Does the school apply the policy flexibly to best meet the needs of each child? How does the school moderate its use of detention or isolation for children who may be re-traumatised by these approaches?*

How does the school provide structure and consistency?

- *For example: year 7 in permanent base; lockers for children's belongings; vertical form tutor; approach to staff sickness and supply teachers; advance warning of timetable changes; building work etc.; timetable on website so parents can prepare child at home.*

How does the school share the information you give them about your child's background and needs?

- *For example: systems; meetings; policies... if 'need to know' basis, how is this decided and clarified with everyone including parents?*

How does the school share information with parents?

- *For example: what equipment/kit is needed; homework timetable. Is there a web-based supported learning environment? Is this used by all staff? Do parents have log-ins?*

How does the school provide consistent key relationships for children with attachment needs?

- *For example: vertical form tutors; nurture time/group; non-teaching pastoral staff available throughout day; learning mentors; for children who receive 1:1 support, is support organised by child (i.e. one consistent TA) or by subject (i.e. up to 10 TAs)?*

Where is the safe base for children when they need to calm down or regulate?

- *How does this work? Drop-in basis? Does the child need specific permission to attend? How is it staffed?*

What support is in place for children who find unstructured times difficult?

- *For example: lunch club; drop-in base; structured games on playground; social skills groups...Are any drop-in spaces staffed consistently?*

How does the school support children who find it difficult to manage their feelings?

- *For example: nurture group; calm boxes; a calming zone within the school; emotion regulation skills teaching and coaching; anger management training; empathy from all staff.*

How does the school manage curriculum hotspots?

- *For example: issues which might trigger your child e.g. sex education, alcohol, drugs education; pass on information about any particular triggers to members of teaching staff.*

9. Understanding the previously Looked After funding school receive for my child

(Guidance taken from pac-uk) <https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Pupil-Premium-Plus-Guide-booklet-V1.4.pdf>

In 2013 the Department for Education (DfE) introduced Pupil Premium *Plus* for Looked After and Previously Looked After children. In doing this, the DfE acknowledged the enduring impact of trauma and loss in children's lives and the key role of schools in supporting children who have had a difficult start in life.

Pupil Premium Plus is currently £2,345 per child per year.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was introduced in April 2015 as additional funding for early years settings, children will be funded at a rate of 53p an hour which equates to £302.10 per annum.

Who is eligible for Pupil Premium Plus?

Pupil Premium Plus is available to pupils from reception age to Year 11 in state-funded education **in England** who:

- Are in local authority care in England.
- Have been adopted from care in England or Wales.
- Left care under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- Left care under a Child Arrangement Order (formerly known as a Residence Order).

Pupils must be attending either:

An early years provider - this includes any organisation offering education for children aged under 5, including nurseries, school nurseries and childminders.

A local authority maintained school or maintained special school.

An academy or free school.

A non-maintained special school, an independent school and other alternative provision (e.g. home education) where the place or provision is funded by the local authority.

Children who are educated at home or attend private schools are not currently eligible unless these placements are funded by the local authority.

How do schools access the funding?

In order for schools to access the funding, parents and guardians must declare their child's adoptive, SGO or CAO status directly to the school before the school completes the October census. Parents and guardians must provide evidence, for example, a copy of the legal order, or a confirmation letter from the local authority which placed their child. Parents should not need to declare their child's status again until the child changes school.

With regards to the early years funding, Children do not have to take up the full 570 hours of early education. Providers will receive EYPP funding that is proportionate to the number of hours that a child is taking up.

Who decides how the funding is spent?

It is up to each individual school to decide how to spend the money. The DfE has clearly stated that it is good practice to consult parents and guardians when making the decision. Some schools are consulting with individual parents and guardians, while others have invited adopters and special guardians to group consultations or task groups about how to spend the funding.

The DfE has said that it intends the funding to be spent on:

'...helping adopted children emotionally, socially and educationally by providing specific support to raise their attainment and address their wider needs'.

The money is not ring-fenced and does not have to be spent on the individual child. The DfE has said that it has introduced this flexibility so that schools can get maximum impact from the funding and so that children who change schools are not disadvantaged.

The DfE has clearly said that the funding should not be used to supplement the general school budget, or to support other groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs or who are low attaining. Some children who are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus will have special educational needs or low attainment, but these are needs which should anyway be met through the usual or additional funding streams available to the school.

The DfE encourages schools to use robust evidence when making decisions about how to spend the funding to support Previously Looked After children and recommends seeking advice from the local authority, the Virtual School and the designated teacher for Looked After Children, as the impact of abuse, neglect, trauma and loss does not disappear overnight. Schools must act transparently and publish their pupil premium spending on their websites.

The DfE has suggested that the funding could be partially used for training members of school staff in how to support children who have experienced trauma and loss.

Suggested ways schools can use the funding:

Pac-UK recognises that permanently placed children can particularly struggle with: attachment relationships with adults, managing their peer relationships, managing their feelings and behaviour, coping with transitions and developing their executive functioning skills.

It is therefore suggested that schools consider using the funding to:

1. Provide nurture and relationships through:

- A nurture breakfast club which allows children to settle into the school day.
- Providing meet and greets for children at the start of the day.
- A nurture room and group.
- Training and supporting staff to provide key attachment relationships with regular 1:1 'attachment time' built into children's timetables.

2. Scaffold children's social skills and peer relationships, for example through:

- Social skills groups or Circle of Friends interventions.
- Lunchtime clubs with opportunities to practise social skills.
- Training midday supervisors to provide structured play at break times.
- Friendship groups.
- Facilitating friendships e.g. through a buddy scheme or peer mentoring initiative.

3. Support emotional literacy and emotion regulation through:

- Emotional literacy and emotion regulation groups, including anger management.
- Appointing and training an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA).
- Providing calm boxes and staff to spend 1:1 time helping children to regulate themselves.
- Providing calm zones in classrooms and centrally within the school.

4. Support children to cope with transitions and change by:

- Providing additional structure during break and lunchtimes.
- Providing safe spaces for children to come to throughout the school day.
- Appointing a transition worker to support children through the Year 6 to Year 7 transition.
- Identifying a group of staff who can provide cover for absence, reducing the need for external supply staff.
- Spending time preparing children for change in advance e.g. using social stories or visual timetables.
- Liaising closely with parents and guardians who can help their children prepare for and cope with change.

5. Develop children's executive functioning skills through:

- Training staff in understanding and supporting executive functioning skill development in the classroom and on the playground.
- Providing individual and group sessions which focus on scaffolding the skills needed.
- Providing coaching for children who struggle to plan and organize e.g. check-ins to ensure they have books and equipment, have recorded the homework etc.

6. *Address barriers to information sharing and joint working by:*

- Developing policies and procedures which ensure that key information about children's needs is shared with all key staff coming into contact with them.
- Identifying a named member of staff who liaises with the parents or guardians and facilitates regular meetings to discuss the child's need and progress.

Within every school there is a designated member of staff who has responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously Looked After pupils who are no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order, or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales; this person should be your key contact if you have any queries.

10. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Information from www.pac-uk.org.

Local Offer

Every local authority must outline all education, health and social care services in their local area for children and young people who have SEN or disabilities and include them in an information directory called the Local Offer. The Local Offer also needs to include details of services provided outside your local area that local people are likely to use. You can view your local offer on your local authority's website. Every school must have a copy of their SEN Information Report on their website. The report will outline what universal, targeted and specialist services the school provides for children with SEN.

SEN Support

SEN support replaces school action/school action plus (in schools) and early years action/early years action plus (in early years settings). Schools will use the graduated approach at this level of support. This means that children's support plans are revisited, refined and revised, leading to a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and what supports the pupil to make progress. This cycle is sometimes called Assess, Plan, Do, Review. Your child will have a specific SEN Support Plan (sometimes called Individual Education Plan – IEP) outlining their support and specific targets. Your child may also have a Pupil Passport, where they are able to express their own thoughts and feelings about the support they want.

Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan):

If your child's needs cannot be met through SEN Support they may need an EHC plan. An EHC plan is a legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs. It explains the extra help that will be given to meet those needs and how that help will support the child or young person to achieve their goals in life. EHC plans replace Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulties Assessments.

The EHC plan process is as follows:

- The parent or school asks the local authority to carry out an EHC assessment, providing evidence of the child's needs.
- The local authority reviews the existing evidence of the child's needs and either agrees or declines to carry out an assessment.
- Professionals, school staff, family and the child all contribute to the assessment.
- The local authority reviews the assessment evidence and either agrees or declines to grant an EHC plan.
- If the plan is granted, the local authority writes this in partnership with the child and those that know them best.
- The parent or guardian tells the local authority which school they wish their child to attend.
- The local authority consults with the school about whether it can meet the child's special educational needs. There are statutory timelines for this process. If you as the parent or guardian disagree with the local authority at any stage of the process, you have the right to appeal at the SENDIST tribunal.

11. The Independent Schools System

Different settings at a glance:

Independent schools and private schools: all schools that are not funded by the state but by tuition fees, gifts and endowments. These terms tend to be used interchangeably for schools ranging from grand public schools to highly selective day schools to tiny local junior schools.

Public schools: historically the most exclusive – and expensive – of boys' private (mainly boarding) schools.

Boarding schools: schools with facilities for pupils to have a home from home on a termly, weekly or flexible basis, often with superb facilities and a multitude of extracurricular activities. Most now also accept a proportion of day pupils who can benefit from everything on offer but go home to sleep in their own beds.

Prep and pre-prep schools: short for preparatory and pre-preparatory schools. Private primary schools for children aged 3 to 7 or 8 (pre-preps) or 7 to 11 or 13 (preps). They prepare pupils for entry to mainly independent secondary schools of all types. Sometimes called junior schools.

[How is a prep school different to a primary school?](#)

Prep schools are all fee-paying, whilst state primary schools are funded by the state. Pre-prep schools usually start at age 3 or 4 and feed into prep schools at 7 or 8.

Preparatory schools do just what they say on the tin; prepare pupils for entry into private secondary schools via exams known as common entrance taken at age 13. As nothing in the English school system is totally straightforward, almost all girls' preparatory schools finish at the end of year 6 (nearly all girls' senior schools start at year 7) as do – increasingly – some co-educational preps that feed independent day or grammar schools starting in year 7. And far from keeping the pressure off until it's time for common entrance in year 8, many senior schools now demand an 11+ style pre-test in years 6 or 7, offering places up to two years ahead of entry which are then secured by common entrance. Most pupils at a state primary school move on to their local state secondary school, though some will take exams at 11 for fee paying secondary schools.

What is the difference between public schools, private schools and independent schools?

Private schools are any that are not financed by the state but largely by school fees paid by parents/carers. They can cater for any age group and charge a wide variety of fees. All independent schools are private schools, and these terms are often used interchangeably, but technically independent schools are all overseen by a board of governors or trustees, whilst other private schools may be run by their owner with no governing body. Public schools are, confusingly, also private schools: mostly the oldest and most expensive of boarding secondary schools.

These schools really only share the common ground of charging fees and having the independence to operate outside of government regulations, although they do have to conform to official standards of education, health and safety, are regularly inspected (by the Independent Schools Inspectorate either as well as or instead of by Ofsted) and – at secondary level – prepare pupils for the same GCSEs and A levels as state schools.

12. Exclusions

Occasionally a head teacher may decide that a child can no longer attend the school either permanently or for a specified period of time (fixed-term exclusion), because of their behaviour. Children can be fixed-term excluded for up to 45 school days in one school year. If a child has been excluded for a fixed period, the school should set and mark work for the first five school days. If the exclusion is longer than five school days, the school must arrange full-time education from the sixth school day. When the exclusion ends, the school must invite you and your child to a reintegration meeting. This meeting should be used to plan how to support your child to avoid further exclusions.

Permanent exclusion means that your child is expelled. The local authority must arrange full-time education from the sixth school day. You are entitled to appeal against a permanent exclusion with the board of governors.

13. Home Schooling

You can teach your child at home, either full or part-time. This is called home schooling.

Write to the head teacher if you plan to take your child out of school. They must accept if you're taking your child out completely. They can refuse if you want to send your child to school some of the time.

If you are considering home schooling due to a disagreement with the school, try to resolve it as soon as you can.

It is not wise to take your child out of school and educate them at home without exploring a resolution to the disagreement.

We would advise you to speak with the head teacher or contact your local authority to help you broker a discussion and agree the best way forward which is acceptable to you and in your child's best interests.

If you are feeling pressured into starting home education, speak to your local authority so support can be provided.

Things to consider

Educating your child at home is a big decision and will require a huge amount of energy and commitment from all parties.

You won't receive any financial help to home educate so it would be wise to consider how you can provide the following:

- teaching resources including books
- examinations if you want your child to gain qualifications
- access to the internet and IT equipment
- educational trips/visits
- tutors
- careers guidance.

You should also consider:

- how you would ensure your child is able to socialise with other children
- how friendships will be encouraged
- how you will support the development of their communication skills and learn from others
- how you will encourage and develop physical activities such as sport.

Try to locate other home educators in your area and talk to them about friendship groups and support.

Talk to your child about home education – it is a big step for a child and the family.

Useful websites

[Education Otherwise](#)

[Home Education Advisory Service](#)

[Home Education UK](#)

Useful reading

The Adopter's Handbook on Education – Getting the best for your child. Eileen Fursland
(ISBN: 978 1 910039 70 0)

The Adopter's Handbook – Information, Resources, Services. Amy Neil Slater

<https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/education/education-resources/>