

Adoptive Parents, Special Guardians and Kinship Carers Education Information Pack 2024

Guidance on educational matters for parents/carers of adopted children or those living with a Special Guardian under a court order

(For ease in this information I have used the term parent to cover carer and guardian)

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

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

There are a number of things to consider when thinking about your child's school.

What does the term "Previously Looked after" mean?

The term is applied to children who have previously been looked after (PCLA for ease) by the Local Authority in England and Wales. The children need to have left care of the Local Authority through:

- an Adoption Order (AO)
- Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Order (CAO)
- or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales

You will read this term and hear it spoken by professionals/schools etc. This term is specifically used, in terms of eligibility, to access funding via Pupil Premium grant and advice/guidance from the Virtual School.

Choosing a school

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

(For advice on transition please see the guidance on our website in the resources section and the book list of stories to share to help children moving into their new family)

When choosing a school, it is useful for parents/ guardians to ask:

If staff are trained on the impact of early trauma, loss and attachment?

How are children supported during transitions i.e. change of year group, teacher, when they move from primary to secondary school, between lessons and from lessons to unstructured time such as from class to dinner time?

How does the school help children build relationships between key adults and between peers?

If there is a whole-school strategy to support children with attachment issues and is this built into the Schools Behaviour/ Relationships Policy?

Enquire how they spend pupil premium for previously looked after children? Is this different to the strategy for disadvantaged pupils?

Ask about the facilities the school has – do they for instance have a nurture room, pastoral base or safe bases? How are they accessed by the young people?

Ask if/ how any one-to one time is built into children's timetables with a key adult and how friendship-building is supported.

Parents should recognise that different schools may have different approaches to spending the pupil premium, but they may be equally effective. Pupil Premium is not an individual grant which is ring fenced for a child, it can be pooled to fund a staff member or a resource, but the key here is how this then supports PCLA.

Once a school is found, good communication with the child's school is vital. Parents should take an active role in meeting their child's named teacher in person together with the Designated Teacher for Previously Looked After Children. This is to help ensure their child is getting the support they may need and so that important information can be shared.

Schools and education settings have a statutory duty to support previously looked after children. The statutory duty applies to children from aged two, in a funded education place up to the end of Year 11, who are educated in a maintained school or academy.

Parents role in supporting school:

Parents are not legally obliged to let the school know that an Adoption Order or Special Guardianship Order is in place but without this knowledge school will be unable to claim the funding to support your child and may lack the understanding to the child's situation/lived experiences which may result in the correct support not being made available.

Other school staff that might be able to offer extra support will include: The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or ALNCo in Wales, the pastoral team, emotional learning support assistants and learning mentors.

You may find the following publication from PAC- UK (Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently Placed Children) a helpful starting point. There is a guide for parent/carers and school: please click [here](#) to view the guide

Pupil premium plus:

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

To help overcome the impact of their early experiences, children who were previously 'looked after' (those who have left care on a court order of adoption or special guardianship order) are entitled to the highest level of the pupil premium (pupil premium plus).

Please note only those children who have had at least 24 hours in care and with the above court orders are eligible for PP+ funding.

Pupil Premium plus is available for children from reception age to Year 11. It entitles schools to access £2,530 per pupil per academic year and can be used for a variety of purposes but the way school utilise the funding must benefit previously looked after children. It is **not ring fenced** for individual children and many schools pool this money so they can fund staff or purchase specific resources.

Pupils must be attending either:

- An early year's 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 where the place or provision **is funded by the local authority**.

Children who are educated at home or attend private independent schools are **not** currently eligible.

Wales Pupil Premium:

There is no pupil premium in Wales. The Welsh Authority support children who have experienced care through the Pupil Development Grant. The grant is made payable regionally with schools making a claim for the funding. The grant can be used for to provide bespoke interventions based on the need of the learning. A small proportion of the grant can also be used to provide individual bursaries for bespoke education needs of learners. Eligibility: learners aged 3-15 who are:

1) Currently Looked After

2) Formerly Looked after that includes - Adoption Order / Special Guardianship Order/Child Arrangement Order/Residence Order

Scotland Pupil Premium:

There is no Pupil Premium in Scotland. However, children may be able to benefit from support funded from the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund. The term 'care experienced' is specifically used by the Scottish Government guidance rather than the statutory term 'Previously looked after children'. Guardians/carers are encouraged to speak with school and/or local authority to find out how this funding will be used at school or authority-wide level.

Guidance on Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund can be found: www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment

How is Pupil Premium in England accessed?

For schools to access the funding, parents must declare their child's status directly to the school **before the school completes the October census.**

Parents 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.

Please be aware you will need to self-declare from primary to secondary school if you have not given permission for primary school to share this information.

With regards to the Early Years Pupil Premium the grant is payable at £310 per academic year. The child is eligible for the funding the term after their 3rd birthday. Again, for Nurseries etc to access the funding, guardians/carers must declare their child's P CLA status directly to the provider.

Designated Teacher

Maintained schools and academies must have a Designated Teacher responsible for previously looked after children and this must be a qualified teacher.

The designated Teacher has a responsibility to:

Promote a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of the child are met.

Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand what can affect the learning of the child owing to their lived experiences. The designated Teacher can support with the following:

- special educational needs (including speech, language and communication needs), which the SENCo can also help support
- attendance and exclusions
- homework
- choosing GCSE options
- understanding and managing any challenging presentation
- promoting positive educational and recreational activities, and supporting previously looked-after children to be aspirational for their future education
- understanding the link between emotional wellbeing and being able to make educational progress

- training and employment and career planning
- Direct and day-to-day work to promote the child's educational achievement
- Developing and reviewing whole school policies and procedures

The Designated Teacher may seek the advice of the Virtual School about meeting the needs of individual children with the agreement of the parent. It is, therefore, important that the Designated Teacher establishes a good working relationship with the Virtual School for their area.

[Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children on GOV.UK](#)

[Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked-after children on GOV.UK](#)

In addition to parent's evenings, it can be helpful for parents to arrange termly review meetings if their child has additional needs. These can be useful even when things are going well. The termly meetings will provide opportunity to:

- discuss the child's educational strengths and needs
- record all agreed actions
- Understand how Pupil Premium is being spent within school to support.

Meetings with parents of previously looked after children could be recorded on a P CLA PEP form.

Unique Pupil Number

It is standard practice for children adopted from care to be issued with a new Unique Pupil Number (UPN) to break the link between the pre-adoption and post-adoption record.

Free school meals

A child might be able to get free school meals if their parent is receiving any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- eligible for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and the household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) is not more than £16,190. Please note: anyone eligible for

Working Tax Credit, or if you have a partner and they receive it, regardless of Income, you will not qualify

- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the 4-week run on of working tax credit (this is where someone becomes unemployed or reduces their hours and so is no longer entitled to working tax credit but will continue to receive it for a further 4 weeks and is entitled to free meals during that time)
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned household income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods). Your net earned income is your household income after taxes and deductions and does not include income from Universal Credit or any other benefits you may receive.

Free school meals for reception, year 1 and 2 children

From September 2014, if you have an infant age child (those in reception, year 1 or year 2) they can receive free school meals even if you don't meet the entitlement criteria and without completing an application for them. For more information contact your school.

2-Year-old funding

2 funding is an entitlement for 15 hours nursery funding from the term date following the child's 2nd birthday. Funded places should be taken at a good or outstanding Ofsted rated setting to ensure the best care and learning opportunities for your child.

Two-year-olds are eligible if they:

Have a current statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC)

Attract Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

They are Looked after by their Local Authority

Have left care through special guardianship or through an adoption or residence order

Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in English schools

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

SEN Support Plan or Individual Education Plan.

This describes each child's support and specific targets. Its 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle means a picture is gradually built up over time about the best way to help the child progress.

Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

If a child needs extra help **over and above** what is in their SEN support plan they can be assessed for an EHC Plan which a special guardian/carer can apply for through their local authority or the school/setting submits the request for assessment. The process should work to a statutory timeframe of 20 weeks with school staff, external professionals, family and the child contributing to the assessment if an assessment is agreed within the first 6 weeks of application.

For more information on the Local Offer and SEND please see:

Live Well Cheshire West: www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

For advice and support with the SEND process you can contact:

ipsea- who offer free advice for sen families and free downloadable guides www.ipsea.org.uk/

IASS – Independent Advisory and Support Service – iasservice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
0300 123 7001

In Wales there are no EHCP's these are called Independent Development Plans. Please speak to ALNCo at the school for support.

One Page Profile.

This gives a child a chance to capture your child's voice. Including a photo, this acts as a summary that can be used a starting point for discussing the child's needs. It also helps all teachers to be immediately aware of the child's needs. A One Page profile can be really helpful when children are moving schools/ setting.

Virtual schools

The educational achievement of 'looked after' children is overseen by a 'virtual' school head teacher in all local authorities. The law changed in April 2017 so that all Virtual Heads must include advice and guidance for previously looked after children living within their authority. **The local authority where the child is being educated holds this responsibility and this should be the point of contact for parents.**

Whilst the child is looked after to the Local Authority, prior to the Adoption Order being granted, the Virtual School will assist new parents with the educational process and aid planning for when the Adoption Order is granted. It is essential that a Personal Education Planning Meeting is held, where parents attend. This will allow for the Virtual School to give advice and guidance and access funding via Pupil Premium where required. Cheshire West Virtual School can also put you in touch with the Virtual School in your area, should the child move out of Cheshire West and Chester.

Virtual Schools have a duty to give advice and guidance to the person with parental responsibility for the previously looked after child and the Designated Teacher when requested.

In summary Cheshire West and Chester Virtual School will, provided the child is on roll to an education setting in the area;

- Respond to parental requests for advice and information regarding education
- Signpost parents/carers to other services that can offer advice and support
- Respond to requests for advice and information from providers of early education, Designated Teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative provision in their area in respect of individual children supported by the local authority
- Make general advice and information available to early years settings and schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children. This should include promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus

Cheshire West and Chester Virtual School will provide advice, guidance and signposting to Special Guardians and Kinship Carers irrespective of whether the child has been in care.

Please contact: **Alison Ismail: Deputy Head, Primary SEND Adviser and P CLA Adviser Cheshire West Virtual School** alison.ismail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk Telephone: 07920 547 662

School Admissions:

The Local Authority will have an Admissions Team within your area who are responsible for school admissions where you live.

Cheshire West and Chester local authority has a Schools Admissions department, and they are responsible for ensuring a child gets a school place. Since September 2013, Looked After Children and children who left UK care on an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order (formerly Residence Order) have the highest priority.

The admissions code states:

All schools must have oversubscription criteria for each 'relevant age group' and the highest priority must be given, unless otherwise provided in this Code, to looked after children and all previously looked after children. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order) immediately following having been looked after. Oversubscription criteria must then be applied to all other applicants in the order set out in the arrangements.

For more information: Telephone: 0300 123 7039

Email: admissions@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/admissions>

Ofsted

[Ofsted](#) is the inspectorate for children and learners in England. It is their job to contribute to the provision of better education and care through effective inspection and regulation. This link takes you to the area of the Ofsted website where you can search for copies of school inspection reports.

Key points

It's important that parents let the school know about their situation and that they are aware of the Adoption Order or Special Guardianship Order.

The pupil premium is additional funding available for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of children with disadvantaged backgrounds and help to close the gap between them and their peers. Parents will need to advise school that an Adoption Order or Special Guardianship is in place in order for school to claim the funding.

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

Whilst the child is looked after to the Local Authority, prior to the Adoption Order being granted, the Virtual School will assist new parents with the educational process and aid planning for when the Adoption Order is granted. It is essential that a Personal Education Planning Meeting is held, where parents attend. This will allow for the Virtual School to give advice and guidance and access funding via Pupil Premium where required.

Cheshire West and Chester Virtual School will provide advice, guidance and support to Special Guardians and Kinship Carers irrespective of whether the child has been in care.

Useful links & Resources

[Adoption UK](#): national charity providing support and information for adoptive families and resources for schools

[Coram BAAF](#): organisation providing information, resources and training to agencies, individuals and professionals on matters relating to adoption. Some services are for members only.

[Adoption Support Centre](#): runs workshops and training for professionals, therapy and support

[PAC UK](#): information and advice about previously looked after children for education settings

Child Legal Advice Centre childlawadvice.org.uk Tel: 03003305485

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

Independent Parental Special Education Advice www.ipsea.org.uk IPSEA offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

Nurture Group Network nurturegroups.org The Nurture Group Network exists to promote the development of nurture groups through accredited training programmes and research on effective practice.

Nurture groups are small classes of children or young people in early years, primary or secondary schools supported by the whole staff group and parents. Children remain an active part of their main class group but spend time within the nurture group according to their need and typically return full-time to their own class within two to four terms.

Scope www.scope.org.uk Helpline: 0808 800 3333 Scope provides advice and services for children and adults with learning disabilities or a physical impairment.

Adoption Support Fund <http://www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk/Parents>

The Adoption Support Fund How it's Working for Families (including SGO carers) - guide with info about the Fund and how it is used, including case studies

Beacon House [Resources \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](http://Resources.beaconhouse.org.uk)

What Survival looks like in Primary school and Quick Reference Guide info and tips

What Survival looks like in Secondary School – info and tips

What Survival Looks Like at Home - parallel resource for parents and carers

Plus lots of other resources to help understand and heal the impact of trauma

Northstarp - [Module-Three.pdf \(northstarp.com\)](http://Module-Three.pdf(northstarp.com))

Strategies to help reducing stress and calm before co regulation with your child.

And <http://northstarpaths.com/visuals/>

Growth Mindset & Inclusion/Regulation – two resources that illustrate how we can think differently about the challenges presented by children •

Reframe behaviour - Won't vs Can't – useful graphic for thinking through how behaviour can be framed differently

More free downloadable graphics - such as Behaviour is Communication, 8 Magic Keys (planning for children with FASD), My Inclusion ABC's, Self-Regulating Learning etc.

PAC UK [PAC-UK | Adoption & Permanency: Advice, Support, Counselling & Training](#)

Their purpose is to provide anyone who has been affected by adoption or other forms of permanent care, as well as the professionals who support them, with expert, independent advice and counselling.

National PAC-UK Advice Line is available on **0300 1800 090** and is staffed by qualified and experienced PAC-UK counsellors/social workers who can provide advice and information on all aspects of adoption and other forms of permanent care.

Kinship [Homepage - Kinship - The kinship care charity](#)

0300 123 7015 – open Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9.30 and 12.30pm

Leading kinship care charity who support all kinship care families, including special guardians regardless of the child's care order. They run Kinship Compass – an independent online information, advice and support hub just for kinship carers and online workshops and peer support groups.

Transitions Page – on Cheshire West Virtual School website

Suggested book list to aid transitions – link on Cheshire west and Chester Virtual School website.