Frequently asked questions about education by parents / carers of adopted children, children subject to a special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangement order (CAO).

Where can I get advice about the best school for my child / the child I care for?

Reading a recent inspection report will give you a good idea of the effectiveness of local schools www.ofsted.gov.uk.

You should also arrange to visit the school, don’t be afraid to ask about their experience of supporting previously looked after children, their pastoral systems, home / school communication and to request any policies that are relevant. PAC-UK have produced a list of questions to ask when looking around schools. These can be found on their website http://www.pac-uk.org/

Each school must publish their pupil premium strategy on their website. This will help you to understand how the school has been making use of this funding and the impact that it has had.

The Virtual School for Looked After Children now have a role of offering ‘advice and guidance’ to families and schools linked to adoption, SGOs and CAOs. We would be happy to discuss individual situations with a parent or carer. Our telephone number is: 01223 699723

My first child was admitted to an oversubscribed secondary school when she was in care. My second child is in year 6 and was adopted last year. Can / will she be able to go to the same school even though it is likely to be oversubscribed and we are not in catchment area?

The School Admissions Code introduced the requirement that in addition to Looked After Children having the highest priority for school admissions, previously looked after children, who left care under a child arrangement order, special guardianship order, or who were adopted from care, should also have the highest priority. In a normal admissions round your child should be granted a place at an oversubscribed school, regardless of whether you are in the catchment area.

I don’t think my child’s small primary school understands some of the difficulties children who have experienced early trauma and disruption face. They say so themselves. What help is available?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states:

The governing body of a maintained school or academy in England must:

- designate a member of the staff at the school (the “designated person”) as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of post-LAC
- ensure that the designated person undertakes appropriate training and has regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

This is the person in school that you should speak to.
Additionally, there are a number of ways the school can access further support:

- The Educational Psychology team offer attachment training which the school can procure
- CORAM Cambridgeshire provide a course on Attachment and Education to which school can send two members of staff

The Virtual School also offer attachment and trauma training which schools can purchase or alternatively one or two members of staff may attend a course offered by the Virtual School at no charge. The details of these courses can be found on the Virtual School Learning Together website: [https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-for-looked-after-children/](https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-for-looked-after-children/)

- There are a number of private providers which offer courses to schools
- If your child is working with CAMHs they may also be able to support the school around your child’s specific needs

There are also resources which have been published to support schools.

- Nicola Marshall has produced a free educational guide and podcasts: [https://www.bravehearteducation.co.uk/resources/](https://www.bravehearteducation.co.uk/resources/)
  
  She has also written a book ‘A Teachers Introduction to Attachment’ which is available via her website.

- NAHT and Adoption UK have also produced information: [http://www.adoptionuk.org/sites/default/files/Understanding-Attachment-Difficulties-flyer.pdf](http://www.adoptionuk.org/sites/default/files/Understanding-Attachment-Difficulties-flyer.pdf)

- Louise Bomber and Dan Hughes are leading authors in the field of attachment. A useful book for schools is ‘Inside I’m Hurting’ by Louise Bomber. The yellow kite website provides lots of useful information and links to relevant reading material: [http://www.theyellowkite.co.uk/](http://www.theyellowkite.co.uk/)

PAC-UK offer a wide range of resources which are available on their website: [http://www.pac-uk.org/](http://www.pac-uk.org/)

  They also offer an education helpline 020 7284 5879. It is available to 10am-12pm on Mondays and Wednesdays (term time only). It is an opportunity to speak to PAC-UK’s Education Service about any issues to do with meeting the educational needs of permanently placed children and young people.

  They have produced a book ‘Creating an Adoption Friendly School’ the link to this is on their website.
Should the Virtual School be supporting me, the child I care for and the school now that he is no longer looked after?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places the following requirements on the local authority and schools.

The local authority must make advice and guidance available to:

- any person who has parental responsibility for the child
- the member of staff at the child’s school
- any other person that the local authority consider appropriate.

The LA must also:

- do anything else that they consider appropriate with a view to promoting the educational achievement of relevant children educated in their area.
- appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the duty

In Cambridgeshire, the Virtual School is a service within the local authority, which is leading on this. The telephone number is: 01223 699723

The email address is: edwina.erskine@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Once contact is made you will be put in touch with the most appropriate person to offer advice and guidance.

What is the difference between pupil premium and pupil premium plus and who is entitled to it?

Pupil premium and pupil premium plus is additional funding for schools in England to raise the attainment of eligible pupils and narrow the attainment gap between them and their peers.

Early Years pupil premium (EYPP) is available to 3- and 4-year-olds in state-funded early education. Pupil premium for school aged children is allocated according to the following:

- those who are registered for free school meals
- children whose parents are in the armed forces

Schools receive pupil premium plus for children in reception (FS2) through to year 11 who were adopted from care in England or Wales, subject to a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order provided that you have given prior consent and have shared evidence that your child meets these criteria.

How much pupil premium plus funding is allocated to schools for children adopted from care / SGO / child arrangement order?

For the financial year 2017/18 £1900 per annum is passed directly to the school by the Education Funding Agency (from reception to year 11). From April 2018 this will increase to £2300.

£300 per annum is available to settings where a child is eligible for EYPP.

What if the school are not aware of my child’s adoption status?

The school needs to record the number of adopted, SGO or child arrangement orders on their January census to trigger the funding. You need to inform them of your child’s status and to provide written evidence in order for the school to receive the funding.

Is the funding ring fenced for the specific child?

No. Pupil Premium spending should take account of the specific need of eligible pupils but is not ring fenced. The funding is managed by the school and is in contrast to the funding schools receive for looked after children. Further information is available in the Pupil Premium Conditions of Grant and The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

My child is not progressing well and I feel that he is not benefitting from the pupil premium the school receive because he is adopted. What can I do?

School leaders are accountable for monitoring the impact of the pupil premium grant on the progress of all children in their school. As with any concerns, in the first instance, you should speak to the class teacher or tutor about your concerns. If you feel you have already tried this, arrange to meet with the SENDCo, Designated Person for post-LAC or head teacher. Should you continue to be dissatisfied, your next step would be to contact the governing body.

Your Post Adoption Support team may be able to support you in approaching the school and helping them to understand your child’s individual needs. The Virtual School is happy to have a conversation with you regarding your situation.

The head teacher is saying the pupil premium plus must be spent on English and Maths but I would like it to be used to pay for a trip. Can I challenge this?

The pupil premium is not a personal budget. Parents can’t insist on how the pupil premium is spent. However it is reasonable for any parent to ask for information about how the school is addressing their child’s needs. It is also worth remembering that the pupil premium is designed to impact on the educational attainment and progress of the pupils in the school, in order to close the attainment gap between vulnerable groups and their peers. This doesn’t rule out the use of pupil premium funding for trips, but consideration would need to be given as to how the trip could impact on educational progress and whether this is the highest priority for the child and school.
My child moved schools after the census and therefore the school haven’t received pupil premium plus specifically for him. Is it still reasonable that the school should be supporting him with pupil premium plus funding?

The funding isn’t tied down to individual pupils, which gives the school flexibility to direct pupil premium plus towards your child should they see fit.

I am the carer for a child on an SGO and I am a governor at the school of the child I care for. Should the pupil premium plus for the various groups of children be reported separately on the pupil premium strategy on the school website? We only have 2 children with SGOs and I am concerned about confidentiality.

Safeguarding is of primary importance. The public do not need to know the number of children and nothing should be published which could identify individual pupils. However, as governors, you are responsible for providing challenge to the school about the attendance, attainment and progress of individual groups and therefore, you may request additional anonymised information, to enable you to fulfil this role.

When my child was looked after they were having Personal Education Plans (PEPs), will these meetings continue now that they are no longer looked after?

PEPs are statutory for looked after children. They cease when a child is no longer looked after. It is important that schools recognise that when a child becomes adopted, or leaves care under a special guardianship order, or child arrangement order, it does not change their early experiences and the impact this may have on their education. The Cambridgeshire Virtual School have produced an Education Support Plan document, which can be used when a child is no longer looked after, if this is felt to be of benefit by the school and family.

I want to help the child I care for at home but I am not sure how best to do this. What should I do?

Arrange to meet with the class teacher / tutor. You do not need to wait for a parents’ / carers’ consultation to do this. They will be able to talk to you about your child’s / the child you care for, strengths and needs. They should be able to advise you on the next steps. Lots of schools are happy to lend resources and should be able to direct you to websites and apps, which may support home learning. Don’t be afraid to ask teachers to explain jargon, or to show you how they would teach a certain skill. Things change quickly in education and the methods may be different to from when you last experienced education. Working in partnership is the best way to support any child in achieving their potential.

NB: FAQ adapted from First4Adoption and Oxfordshire VS document. Modified and added to by Cambridgeshire Virtual School