Protocol for ‘Requires Improvement’ and ‘Inadequate’ Schools and Settings

The guiding principle of Cambridgeshire Virtual School and the wider Local Authority is that all Looked After Children and Young People (CYP) will be placed in good or outstanding schools or settings.

The Virtual School receives updates from the local authority regarding in county OFSTED ratings and these are disseminated within the team. Additionally, the VSH attends LA ‘schools causing concern’ meetings and there is collaboration with LA partners including SEND and school improvement. Where a CYP is placed in a school judged by Ofsted to be requiring improvement or inadequate, the CYP’s RAG rating may be adjusted accordingly.

When a CYP becomes looked after and is already attending a school judged by Ofsted to be requiring improvement or inadequate

OR

When a looked after CYP is already attending a school which is then judged by Ofsted to be requiring improvement or inadequate

The Virtual school will monitor closely the quality of the provision offered and will ensure education remains a paramount consideration in care planning.

A decision may be taken to maintain the existing school placement considering a variety of factors including:

- Possible safeguarding needs and care proceedings outcomes (including return to birth parents/family)
- Travel time and transport arrangements alongside capacity of the CYP to manage these
- The educational stage of the CYP, where possible avoiding any moves within KS4
- The capacity of the current school to support the CYP through the transition into care whilst maintaining attainment and progress
- If the CYP is settled and whether a further transition could be expected to negatively impact on emotional health and wellbeing
- Specific needs of the CYP, including SEND/EHCP
- The views of the CYP
- Wider LA knowledge of the school’s capacity for improvement

Where a school move is deemed necessary either due to placement move or concern with existing provision, schools judged by Ofsted to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ should be prioritised for looked after children in need of a new school.

In arranging a new school placement the virtual school, social worker and other local authority staff (where appropriate) should seek a school or other education setting that is best suited to the child’s needs. This could be a selective, non-selective, maintained or independent, boarding, day or alternative provision.

Where a CYP has an EHCP this decision will be led by SAT (Statutory Assessment Team).

Where relevant this will be in liaison with out of county LA staff, including other virtual schools.

The following principles will apply:

- Educational provision should mean a full-time place
- The choice of the education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child
- The choice of school should be based on evidence that the educational needs of the child can be met and that the child will make maximum progress
- The child’s wishes and feelings should be taken into account and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child where appropriate
Where a school application is to be made to a school requiring improvement.

Whilst applications to ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ schools are to be prioritised, it is recognised that in a minority of cases this may be not be appropriate. A decision may be taken to make an application to a school requiring improvement where:

- The school requiring improvement has already demonstrated significant capacity for improvement as evidenced through LA or Ofsted measures, including recommendations from out of county VSHs
- This is the catchment school
- A CYP is moving from a primary feeder into a secondary school
- The child already has siblings attending the school
- There is no alternative in reasonable travelling distance
- The school has significant capacity to support specific SEND (inc SEMH)

Unless there are exceptional evidence-based reasons, looked after children should never be placed in a school judged by Ofsted to be ‘inadequate’. A decision to place a child in an ‘inadequate’ school should always be ratified by the VSH.

**Early Years Settings**

The above principles apply to all EY settings. In addition to this, further consideration may be given to those settings able to offer the required number of hours a child is entitled to. Funding guidelines also stipulate that provision for 2-year olds in receipt of free places should be delivered by providers who have an overall rating of ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ unless there is none accessible.

**Post-16 Settings**

The above principles apply to all Post-16 settings. In addition to this, further consideration may be given to those settings able to offer the chosen/most appropriate courses within proximity to care placement; this is particularly relevant for unaccompanied asylum seeking minors requiring ESOL provision.