

## CCS Adoption adoptive parent checklist for primary to secondary school transition

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WHEN	ACTIONS	COMMENTS
YR4 Autumn	<p><b>If your child needs an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) aim to have this in place before the Y4 Autumn term</b> so that the annual review in Y5 includes a transition assessment. Ideally, start the application process for an EHCP as early as possible in primary school as it can take a long time. You can begin visiting schools in Year 4 so that you have a named school for the Y5 transition assessment.</p> <p>If your child is achieving academically, they may still be entitled to an EHCP if they struggle with anxiety, experience mental health difficulties, find the sensory school environment challenging, cannot manage transitions and change, and/or are not achieving their potential in school. Primary schools can be easier environments for a child to cope in; consider how your child will manage with the expectations, constant transitions and change of teachers at secondary school. Consider applying for an EHCP assessment if your child is struggling in primary school; talk to your SENCO or consider a parent application if they are not supportive. For more information, you can look at:  <a href="https://www.sossen.org.uk">https://www.sossen.org.uk</a>  <a href="https://www.ipsea.org.uk/">https://www.ipsea.org.uk/</a></p> <p>It can be valuable to get a post-adoption social worker and therapist to give their views on your child's EHCP assessment. If your application for this is not successful the first time, don't give up as many are successful after appeal.</p> <p>Whether or not your child has an EHCP, you may still want to consider planning for the Y6/Y7 transition and visit schools in Autumn Y4.</p>	
	<p><b>Research a number of schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the school prospectus and website. How much is dedicated to SEN/emotional well-being/pastoral care?</li> <li>• Make multiple visits to your shortlist of schools</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen your search if your child can cope with travelling as the best school for them may not be the local school.</li> <li>• If you have a SEND lead worker, do also liaise with them.</li> <li>• Try to get information about schools from other adoptive parents. Has the support on offer been as the school said it would be?</li> <li>• It is a legal requirement now for schools to hold PEP meetings for adopted children.</li> <li>• A school can change if there is a change in leadership or services available, make sure that your knowledge is current.</li> <li>• Listen to the language that the school uses. Does it reflect knowledge of trauma and attachment?</li> <li>• The schools' websites will have policies such as safeguarding, early help, and pastoral care. A few schools have a policy for previously looked after children which is a very good indication that the school recognises the need for our children to have additional support. A school's policies should be linked to the school's equalities objectives. This can tell you a lot about what the school is struggling with, for example an objective which reads "Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium need to at least reach average attainment..." indicates that currently those pupils are not meeting the average standards.</li> <li>• Check admission pages to find out about the needs of the children attending the school. If there are greater needs, the school is likely to be better informed, however, it might be better for your child if there is more of a balance of needs.</li> <li>• Look at the Pupil Premium spending and strategy report. This tells you more about the prevalence of particular needs and what the school is spending the money on. Will the way the school spends this money benefit your child?</li> <li>• Think ahead: it may seem like a long way off, but ask what adjustments are made for children taking exams in Y10 and Y11. Consider the path your child will take in the future, i.e., Y9, Y10 and Y11. What else do the schools offer that might better suit your child's style of learning? I.e., sports studies, BTECs, etc.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Location</b>  Long journeys getting to school can be dis-regulating for anxious children. It may be that a school further away can better meet their needs, but the rush of getting ready in the morning and the stress of travelling there are also important factors to consider. Also, if the school is far away they will be reliant on you to help them meet up with friends. Consider their friendships from primary school.</p>	
	<p><b>Whom to Contact</b></p>	

	<p>Start to build relationships with local schools very early on. You may want to arrange to meet with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated teacher</li> <li>• Head</li> <li>• Head of YR7</li> <li>• SEND lead</li> <li>• Transition teacher (this may be head of Y7)</li> <li>• Pastoral care lead</li> <li>• Other adoptive parents but bear in mind your child's needs may be very different to theirs, as they may differ from that of an older sibling.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>What to look for when visiting schools &amp; talking to staff</b></p> <p>Talk to as many key staff members as possible. As well as looking at body language (i.e., are they willing to listen or are they alarmed by your questions/scenarios given?) also look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude of senior leadership and SENCO: A number of staff will work with your child in secondary school so the attitude of the head teacher and SENCO will be vital. Do they have some understanding of trauma and attachment? Ask to speak directly with the SENCO/ASD team about your child's needs and the support the school will offer.</li> <li>• Designated Teacher (has this teacher or another member of staff undertaken attachment and trauma training? Is there a willingness to understand the needs of the adopted child in school?)</li> <li>• Strong pastoral care with an understanding of trauma and attachment. Have any specific pastoral care staff had training such as training from the Virtual School? When was the last time? Is it a tick box or integrated into the core of what they do?</li> <li>• A trauma and attachment-informed school. Are they a 'thrive' school or do staff have access to Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)? Look closely at what underlies their claims to be trauma or attachment aware. For example, only one member of staff needs to have undergone training for the school to label itself as 'Thrive' or ELSA trained. How many staff have had training? Ideally, all staff will have had training in attachment.</li> <li>• Lunchtime clubs and support around un-structured times</li> <li>• Give the school scenarios and see how they respond, e.g., "What if they go into a fight or flight response and run? Who would be there to support them? Is there a safe sensory space for them to go to?"</li> <li>• A safe space such as a Learning Support Base can be helpful, but who is the key adult there? Who will be their emotionally available adult?</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions speak louder than words. Do they give up time to speak with you? Do they listen?</li> <li>• Does the school have a relationship policy which teaches children to learn from their behaviours?</li> <li>• Schools are bound by some statutory policies but have choice policies which will tell you a lot about the ethos of the school.</li> <li>• Choosing a school that supports children with a range of learning needs may help your child feel more ‘blended’ as well as the school being more likely to meet their needs.</li> <li>• Listening to your child...A child may want a fresh start, a chance to not be judged for previous behaviours or they may want to be with their friends; be careful not to make assumptions.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Behaviour Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour policy of the school is an important factor. Are they willing to differentiate the behaviour policy in line with your child’s needs?</li> <li>• Ideally look for a behaviour policy which has a Restorative Justice approach and is relationship-based.</li> <li>• “Zero tolerance” policies are prevalent in many Secondary schools and can be challenging and shame-inducing for many adopted children. Such schools often send children to “isolation rooms”.</li> </ul>	
Y6 Autumn term	<p><b>Adopted children have priority status</b></p> <p>Make sure you confirm that your child has been adopted or is looked after when completing the application form to ensure that they are given priority for a place at your chosen school.</p>	
Once you have accepted a secondary school place for your child	<p><b>Transition and communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for a longer transition. The new school should understand that your child might need a longer transition and the primary school should support this. For example, your child may benefit from attending the new school for one afternoon per term in addition to a normal transition.</li> <li>• Ask if the school would consider a ‘meet the teacher and key staff’ Zoom with your child. Several Zoom sessions could be really helpful to help build trust and familiarity.</li> </ul>	
Once your child has started school	<p><b>Provide proof that your child is adopted</b></p> <p>To ensure the school receives Pupil Premium Plus (currently £2,300 per year) to help close the gap in your child’s learning. Some parents do not wish schools to know that their child is adopted. If this is the case and the school can guarantee that this information will remain confidential, it may be worth considering as schools will use pupil premium plus money to offer extra tuition, free music lessons and contributions to school trips away to adopted and looked after pupils.</p> <p><b>Coffee morning for adoptive parents</b></p>	

	If there isn't one already ask if you can organise a termly meeting with other adoptive parents at the school. The group should ideally have a strong link with the designated teacher and be able to support the school in deciding how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is best spent. For guidance on spending PP+ see <b>Appendix 1</b> .	
	<b>Resources</b> PAC-UK's Education Service has developed a range of resources to support families, schools and local authorities in meeting the educational needs of adopted children. See <b>Appendix 2</b> .	
	<b>Additional support if needed</b> <b>Social workers</b> may be able to meet with members of staff to offer advice and guidance  <b>Therapists</b> can offer a consultation with the school as part of a therapeutic package funded by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).  <b>Team Around the Family (TAF)</b> Don't be afraid to ask for a TAC meeting to help support a transition. This might include your CCS social worker, the virtual school, a SEND lead worker, SENCO and teacher from primary school and SENCO/Designated teacher from the secondary school.	
<b>If the school doesn't seem right for your child</b>	<b>Changing schools</b> If things go wrong and your school of choice doesn't work out, don't be afraid to consider a change to support your child. You have not failed, nor has your child.	

## Appendix 1: Pupil Premium Plus

For up-to-date information on how much Pupil Premium Plus funding is available for each of the qualifying groups please check the Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

### Pupil Premium Plus

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is allocated to support the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including adopted children. It currently stands at £2,345 per year, per eligible child. While PP+ for looked-after children is administered by the virtual school in each local authority, the PP+ for previously looked-after children goes directly to schools. Part of the new statutory duties for Designated Teachers for Previously Looked After Children includes involvement in planning for the use of PP+, and supporting parents and carers to be part of the decision-making process.

### How is funding accessed?

In order for schools to access the funding, parents and guardians must declare their child's adoptive status directly to the school before the school completes the January 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.

## **What is the money for?**

The Department for Education (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 focus on children's social and emotional and wider needs is in contrast to the Pupil Premium for children eligible for free school meals, which is focused on closing the attainment gap. 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. In deciding how to use the Pupil Premium Plus, schools will want to understand and take account of the particular needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, as these may be additional to or different from the needs of children who attract the Pupil Premium because they are from financially deprived family circumstances; for example, financial subsidies such as school trips and clubs may not address the needs of previously looked after children.

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 additional support using 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.

The DfE says that schools are also encouraged to seek advice from national organisations that specialise in adoption support. The DfE commissioned BAAF to gather examples of good practices in spending the Pupil Premium Plus. This review can be found [here](#).

## **Who decides how the funding is spent?**

It is up to each 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 a 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. Schools must act transparently and publish their pupil premium spending on their websites.

Schools should separate their pupil premium and pupil premium plus spending in these breakdowns since the needs of the two groups are different. Virtual Schools should be able to offer guidance to schools to help them to decide how pupil premium funding can be best spent.

## **Spending it wisely**

PAC-UK Education Service Guide recommends that every spending decision begins with a good understanding of each child's needs. Personal Education Plans (PEP), a format used for children in care, are ideal for gathering the views of the child, parents, school and social worker (where the adoption/special guardianship support service is involved). This shared understanding of the child's needs makes it possible to identify the intervention needed to support the child's needs, which then informs Pupil Premium Plus spending. The PEP is also an excellent conduit for the school and family to work together. In some instances, an Educational Psychology assessment of the child's strengths and needs may be helpful to inform this process. It might be possible to use Pupil Premium Plus to commission such an assessment from LA's Educational Psychology Service. PAC-UK also has a specialist Educational Psychology Service.

The DfE has suggested that the funding could be partially used for training members of school staff on how to support children who have experienced trauma and loss. CCS Adoption is able to provide trauma and attachment training for school staff. Our experience is that permanently placed children can particularly struggle with Attachment relationships with adults | Managing their peer relationships | Managing their feelings and behaviour | Coping with transitions | Developing their executive functioning skills.

PAC-UK Education Service Guide suggests that schools consider using the funding to...

**1. Provide nurture and relationships through:**

- A nurturing 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. More information about the Nurture Group Network can be found here.
- 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 practice 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:

- Develop a school policy for previously looked after children. Ensure adoptive parents and their children meet with the designated teacher for previously looked after children.
- Provide six monthly PEPs for previously looked after children as a proactive message to minimise issues rather than being reactive when issues have escalated.
- 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 needs and progress.

## Appendix 2: Resources

### Posters/flyers for the staffroom

- We want you to know <https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PAC-UK-Poster-We-want-you-to-know.pdf>
- Supporting adopted children in school <https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PAC-UK-Flyer-Supporting-adopted-and-permanently-placed-children-in-school.pdf>

### Case studies

<https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PAC-UK-Case-Studies.pdf>

### Cards 4 up

<https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PAC-UK-Cards-4-up.pdf>

PAC UK's guide for school staff '[\*Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children: A guide for school staff\*](#)'

Adoption UK's guide '[\*Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children - A guide for adoptive parents\*](#)' includes information about Virtual School Heads (VSHs), Designated Teachers (DTs), Priority School Admission, Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)