

Education Advice for Parents, Guardians and Carers of Children who have left Care through a Permanency Order

EDUCATION

Virtual Schools (South East Region) Published July 2022

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Introduction

This guide is a collaboration between the Virtual Schools in the South East Region, listed on the back cover.

Virtual Schools exist within all Local Authorities across England. They have a duty to offer advice and information to parents, guardians and carers of children who have left care in England and Wales through an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement/Residence Order (we will refer to these orders as ‘permanency orders’) or were adopted from state care* outside England or Wales. This duty lasts until the end of statutory education. Throughout this document we will refer to these adults as ‘you’.

The Government publications refer to these children as Previously Looked After Children, whilst some Local Authorities may say previously in care or care experienced children. In this document we will simply say ‘your child’ i.e., the child you have responsibility for.

We trust that the information contained in these pages will be helpful to you as you navigate the education system.

**State care is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society (DfE)*



Stages of Education and Assessments

The table below shows year groups and key stages, based on your child's age and which national assessments take place in those years.

Age	Year Group	Key Stage	Assessment
2-3	Nursery/Pre-School	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)	Progress Check at Two
3-4	Nursery/Pre-School (Foundation stage 1)		
4-5	Reception (Foundation Stage 2)		EYFS Profile Assessment 17 areas
5-6	1	Key Stage 1	
6-7	2		End of KS1 SATs*
7-8	3	Key Stage 2	
8-9	4		
9-10	5		
10-11	6		End of KS2 SATs*
11-12	7	Key Stage 3	
12-13	8		
13-14	9		
14-15	10	Key Stage 4	
15-16	11		GCSE Exams
16-17	12	Key Stage 5/ Post 16	
17-18	13		A-Levels, T-Levels NVQs / BTECs

*Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) measure children's educational achievement in years 2 and 6)

Early Years

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The Early Years covers children from birth to 5 years old. You may choose to use a nursery, child minder and/or preschool to help your child develop and grow. The early years foundation stage (EYFS) sets standards for the learning, development, and care of your child.

All schools and Ofsted-registered early years providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries, and school reception classes.

A comprehensive and helpful guide can be found here: [What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf) [foundationyears.org.uk](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk)

I've heard my child can get funding to attend an Early Years setting (nursery/preschool). Is that the case?

Yes, you can apply online via the government website. 15 hours of funding is available for your 2-year-old (from the term after they turn 2).

Help paying for childcare: <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

All 3-year-olds receive 15 hours funding (from the term after they turn 3 years old) but an additional 15 hours is available depending on whether you meet the working and income criteria. Funding can be spread over the year (not just term time) so long as your chosen setting offers this. You do not have to use all the additional 15 hours.

[30 hours free childcare - GOV.UK www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/30-hours-free-childcare)

What is Early Years Pupil Premium and is my child eligible for it?

Early Years Pupil Premium is available for your child and claimed by the early education provider, if a child at their setting is accessing [free early education](#) and the child is:

- aged 3 or 4 (but not 4-year-olds in reception class at school)
- living in England
- has left care under a permanency order or the child's parent or carer is in receipt of a qualifying benefit

The nursery or pre-school settings will ask you to self-declare that your child meets the eligibility for the Early Years Pupil Premium. It is not compulsory, but it helps the provider if you are willing to provide this information. The provider will need to see supporting evidence of your child's eligibility – usually a copy of the court order (any sensitive information can be obscured).

<https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding>

How can my Virtual School support me with my child during the Early Years?

Your Virtual School can offer information and advice and signpost you to a directory of local settings and those settings can gain a better understanding of your child by attending specific training on attachment and trauma offered by the Virtual School.

Choosing a School



How do I choose the best school for my child?

Every child is different as is every school. It will be important to consider your child's needs and explore a number of schools to determine which will be the best match. You can review a school's prospectus or website, their latest Ofsted report, take a tour of the school, ask for personal recommendations, and arrange to meet key staff such as the Designated Teacher to ask specific questions.

You may wish to consider:

- the distance to school and how your child will manage this
- whether an infant/junior/primary or through school would best meet your child's needs to reduce transitions
- what support is available in each school and if this matches your child's current or future needs
- whether the school is trauma or attachment aware and how they can support your child
- social connections and where peers are applying

PAC-UK's Education Service offers a range of services to enable schools, parents and guardians and education and social care professionals to meet the needs of children who have experienced difficult starts in life. PAC-UK have also developed a range of FREE resources to support families, schools and local authorities in meeting the educational needs of adopted and special guardianship children.

Read more here: http://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/ca_xC59x0iM5AP7fOUzcc?domain=pac-uk.org%E2%80%9D%20www.pac-uk.org/education

and here <http://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/2Bw3C7LzJiz4LXKfNm8Ec?domain=pac-uk.org>"
www.pacuk.org/education/education-resources

Does the Ofsted inspection rating of a school matter?

Ofsted generally inspect every school every 2.5 to 4 years. The inspection report will show how the school is performing at the time of the inspection, although much can change between inspections. The report can show you the school's strengths and weaknesses based on the quality of education provided, the behaviour and attitudes in the school, personal development and the leadership and management. You would need to consider these in line with your child's individual needs.

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

School Applications



When do I need to apply for a school place?

You must apply for a primary school place by the 15 January the year your child is due to start in the subsequent September. You must apply even if you attend pre-school or nursery at the current school site. These applications and deadlines are all set nationally. Applications are online or via your local school admissions service within your residing Local Authority.

You can click on the following link to learn more about school admissions:

www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/how-to-apply

Secondary school places need to be applied for by 31 October the year before your child is due to start.

Will my child have priority admission?

Yes, as long as your application is submitted on time, your child will be a priority for school admissions. But don't forget to share your child's care status by ticking the appropriate box on the application. You will have to provide some form of evidence such as a copy of the permanency order.

Can I send my child to any school?

You have a choice of school but please do your research in terms of which school would best meet the needs of your child. Also, make sure you understand the admission policies of your chosen schools. Although your child will have priority in the admissions process, there may be circumstances in which they will not get a place at their first-choice school, so it is always worthwhile providing a second and third choice in your application.

If my child is adopted from outside England, do they get priority admissions?

When applying oversubscription criteria, children adopted from outside England will also get priority, if it can be shown that they were adopted from state care.*

How do I access a late school place?

You will need to check with your local authority about their process, complete and submit the required application form without delay. Late applications are always dealt with after all on time applications and appeals have been resolved.

How do I appeal for admission to a school?

How to appeal can be quite different from school to school. If the school declines to admit your child, the admission authority is required to explain in their decision letter how to appeal.

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School Transitions



How do I support my child through a transition between schools?

Natural transitions happen throughout schools at certain years: these are from Nursery to Primary school; Infant to Junior school; Primary School to Secondary School; Secondary to Post 16.

It is important to view transitions as a process and not an event. The provision your child attends currently will have their own structure in place to support the process, but it is important that you continue to support this with your child at home.

Some top tips to ensure a smooth transition for your child are:

- Contact the school to arrange a visit for you and your child beforehand, this will allow you both to gain a 'feel' for the school and help familiarise yourselves with the surroundings.
- Plan the route to the new school and practise this beforehand, again familiarising yourselves with the new environment and surroundings.
- Talk to your child about the transition, making it a part of everyday conversation and using open questions to promote conversation. Make a list of any unanswered questions you may both have and liaise with the school around these.
- Try the new school uniform on before starting, so that your child is familiar with what they will be wearing.
- If you are concerned about what support will be in place, contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Designated Teacher to discuss the support plan.
- If you feel you would benefit from further support and guidance, please contact your Virtual School.

If you ever have concerns about issues related to school and education, please do make contact with your child's school.

It might be you need support and help from the class teacher, Designated Teacher, Special Education Needs Coordinator or Year Leaders. Start with the class teacher or form tutor in the first instance or, if you are unsure, call the school reception who will direct you to the most appropriate member of staff.

Have conversations as soon as you can, don't leave issues or concerns unaddressed. There are some common themes listed below, which schools would be happy and able to support.

- School Changes and Transitions to Secondary School
- School Day Issues
- School / PE Uniform
- School Transport
- Repairing relationships
- Friendships
- Bullying Issues
- Exams
- Stress and Anxiety
- E-Safety
- SEN Needs
- Homework

School Support

What is a Designated Teacher?

Every school has a Designated Teacher has a duty to promote the education of your child. You might be concerned about learning, or how your child is getting on with their friends. Whatever your concern, the Designated Teacher is there to communicate with you and plan what needs to happen. You should feel fully involved in decisions that affect your child's education. If you want to learn more about Designated Teachers, please have a look at the following government guidance:

[The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children \(Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities\) February 2018](#)

What support can I expect from school?

You should be able to meet with specific members of staff within a school to discuss any concerns or support you feel your child may need. The first port of call would usually be your child's class teacher (primary) or form tutor (secondary). The more information you can provide about your concerns the better! You should expect good liaison between yourself and a Designated Teacher and feel comfortable to be able to ask for help if needed. Each school will have different support systems and interventions, but all should be able to offer advice/suggestions to help support your child if needed.

Does my child need a Personal Education Plan?

It is considered good practice to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) to support your child's progress in school but it is not a legal requirement in the same way as for children who are still in care. A PEP allows you, the school and other relevant professionals to meet together and review your child's progress. The meetings should include your child's views to make sure the plan reflects their hopes and wishes. These plans also provide opportunities to evaluate and assess the need for pastoral support and an opportunity to discuss how Pupil Premium is being used. It is important to note that some Virtual Schools have developed a bespoke PEP document, so it may have a slightly different name in your area.

What adults are there in school which might help me?

All schools are set up slightly differently. Here is a list of staff who may be able to help you:

DT - The Designated Teacher is responsible for promoting the wellbeing and education of your child.

CLASS TEACHER – This member of staff is responsible for teaching your child. In Primary schools, this is usually just one teacher to each class. In secondary schools, the number of teachers increases as your child will have different teachers for different subjects studied.

TUTOR – This member of staff will see your child daily for registration in secondary schools. They will have a good overview of how your child is coping in school.

TALSA – Teaching Assistants / Learning Support Assistants provide extra support in lessons alongside teachers. Some are designated to specific pupils with additional needs, but others are placed in classes to support the group.



HEAD OF YEAR – This member of staff is responsible for the whole year group. Although they may not know your child personally, they can direct you to the correct member of staff if needed or meet with you about any concerns you may have.

DSL – Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for safeguarding within the school.

PASTORAL TEAM – this is a team of people who aim to provide the wrap around care for pupils. They can help with emotional wellbeing, friendship issues, identity, confidence, self-esteem issues and much more.

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator – this member of staff can help you if you are worried your child may need more support with their learning.

ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistants work with pupils in the school to specifically support emotional wellbeing and development. Not all schools will have an ELSA.

Learning or Inclusion Mentors – these can be the key adult for your child and a link person for you, making sure the support agreed is provided to your child.

There may be times where your child may need additional support with services who work alongside schools, and the school can make a referral for these services such as an Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Local Authority attendance and inclusion services, etc.

My child is struggling at school. What should I do?

If your child is struggling at school (or at any point in their education), please talk with staff at school about this. There should be lots of opportunities to support your child with their education and it will be helpful to ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns. Please see the list of staff who you can approach for a meeting in the section on School Support above.

The school has suggested my child should be on a reduced timetable. What does this mean and what do I need to know?

A reduced or part-time timetable means that a child attends school for part of each day or part of the week. Legally all children are entitled to a full-time education, so a reduced or part-time timetable should only be considered in exceptional situations. A part-time timetable should always be created with your agreement, be time limited and clearly show how the timetable will support your child back to full-time education. Any risks to a child being out of school should also be considered.

Exceptional situations could include a plan to help a child back in to school after a period of absence, because they have been unwell, for example. It might also be helpful for a child to be on a reduced timetable temporarily as part of a pastoral support plan if they are struggling in school.

Remember that you can seek information and advice from your virtual school, before agreeing to a reduced or part-time timetable, to help you to think through whether this is the best approach for your child.



I'm worried my child may be suspended or excluded from school. What do I need to know?

If you are concerned your child may be suspended or permanently excluded from school, the first step is to talk to the school about your concerns.

It is usually best to talk first with the member of staff who you normally link with, or talk with the Head, Deputy Head, Head of Year, SENCO, or Designated Teacher. You can ask them for a meeting with key staff to discuss the situation. This meeting could again be a review of the Personal Education Plan (see page 8 above).

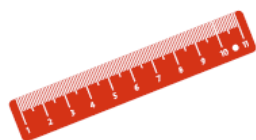
It is important that the Designated Teacher is aware of your concerns, as they are responsible in school for promoting the educational achievement of your child. You can ask for them to be made aware of the situation if they are not already involved.

Ideally, you will be able to work with the school to understand what the difficulties are and to make a plan of action together to respond to them.

You might agree with the school that there is a need for better understanding of what is causing the difficulties for your child and what will best support them. There are a range of different 'assessments' that might help with this. The members of staff responsible for 'inclusion' (that is - making sure all children whatever their challenges can do well in school) will be able to advise on which assessment will be most helpful (see also Additional Needs below) and what support it identifies that can be included in the plan of action.

Together with key staff you can agree a plan to support your child to avoid suspension or permanent exclusion. However, if your child is suspended or permanently excluded there are rules/laws that must be followed by the school and by you.

Remember that you can contact us at the Virtual School either if you are concerned about the risk of suspension/exclusion or if one has actually happened. We can offer you information and advice.



Additional Needs



Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Your child's educational journey may need some extra provision along the way. Providers use a graduated approach to support all children. The graduated approach starts with high quality teaching and the teacher will talk to you about how your child is progressing at information sharing evenings. If you have any worries outside of these occasions do book a time to talk to your child's class teacher, tutor, or head of year. You may also like to speak to the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) or inclusion manager.

You can read your provider's SEND policy to gain more understanding of their approach and read the SEND report on the provider website for more information. A useful parent/carer guide is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers%0D>

How will my child's education setting offer support?

If your child's setting has identified an area of need, they will put in place interventions and monitor the impact of these using the 'assess-plan-do-review' process.

You will be involved in the planning and review of interventions designed to support your child achieve agreed outcomes. This process will be recorded on an individual plan, provision map or Personal Education Plan (see page 8 above).

If concerns remain and your child needs further support to make progress, you may wish to request an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Assessment. You can do this as parents or ask the provider to do this with your agreement. An EHCP is a legal document that outlines your child's needs and what is expected of the school.

Some children may need specialist provision (a special school) to meet their needs. Sometimes this is from the start of the child's education and sometimes at a later point.

What is involved in an Education, Health, and Care Plan assessment?

Your local authority SEND team will consider whether there is evidence that your child has not made expected progress, despite the education setting having taken action to identify and meet their special educational needs.

When all the information is gathered, everyone who has been involved in the assessment stage will determine the support needed for your child/young person to achieve what they want from life. This will be recorded in a proposed Education, Health, and Care Plan. Once finalised, the EHCP will outline your child's needs, how those needs will be met and will name the school or education provider they will attend. The EHCP can bring additional funding and is reviewed at least annually.

Please refer to your local authority "Local SEND Offer" for more detailed information.

Where can I get help?

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This service is also offered directly to young people.

The service is free, impartial, and confidential. Search online for your local SENDIASS team.

Pupil Premium



What is Pupil Premium?

Pupil premium is additional funding set aside by the Department for Education (DfE) to improve the educational and personal outcomes of specific groups of pupils.

[Pupil premium - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

How does my child's school access pupil premium?

You would need to share your child's status with the school for them to be able to access this funding. The school will need to see a copy of the permanency order and evidence of having been in care before the order was granted. The funding is paid directly to the school on an annual basis.

What can pupil premium be spent on?

Pupil premium spending is managed directly by your child's school, but guidance encourages the Designated Teacher to work with you to decide how this funding is best spent. The funding should be directed to ensure the specific needs of identified children in the school are met. This could involve individual support for your child or collective support for a group of children. It is important to understand that the money is not a personal budget, and it is ultimately the school that decides how it is spent.

Post 16 Education

What are the choices for post-16?

All young people should continue in education, training, or employment until they are 18. This does not necessarily mean staying in school. They may be able to choose one of the following routes:

- stay in full-time education, for example at a college, sixth form college, sixth form or university technical college
- start an apprenticeship
- start a traineeship
- spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training

How do I help them choose the right pathway?

Every young person is different – and not every pathway works for everyone.

Every young person is entitled to independent personal guidance in Year 11 to help them make sense of their options and the opportunities available and find a pathway that suits them but also their long-term career and aspirations. This should be supported by careers education, information, and advice throughout their education.

You may want to speak to the careers leader at school to arrange any additional support that might be needed in helping them choose the right pathway.

You may also wish to consider:

- the distance to their provider and how they will manage this, particularly as home to school
- transport does not always continue post 16.
- the type of provision available locally and how this will best meet their needs
- the transition support available between school and their next provider
- what support is available in each provider and if this matches their current or future needs
- social connections and where peers are applying
- additional support available from the provider to support their transition to adulthood

You can also contact the National Careers Service for additional support
<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-choices-at-16>

When do I have to apply by?

Every pathway is slightly different. Some sixth forms require applications before December of Year 11. Some apprenticeships schemes have a recruitment window of December to January of Year 11 – for a start in September after they have sat their GCSEs. It is worth liaising with the careers leader to ensure you know any specific local variations.

What additional support is available?

Additional support, including financial support, can be available for young people in education or training. You should speak to the school or college for additional information.

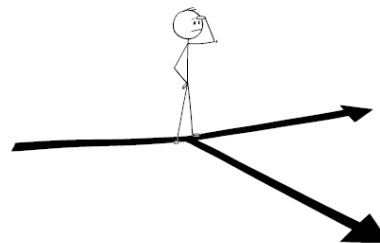
What else is available?

Soft skills, such as social or vocational skills are valued by employers. Young people can gain these through organisations such as the Prince's Trust, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and National Citizenship Service. You can talk to the school about these options.

Often young people choose to work or volunteer alongside studying further education.

Your local authority or youth services may also have a range of options available to help identify these opportunities.

Post 18 Education



What are the choices post-18?

There are a lot of options for 18-year-olds. What's right for young adults will depend on their situation, the career or job they have in mind and their qualifications. They may be able to choose one of the following routes:

Continue with studies

Continue further education through a college, sixth form college, sixth form or university technical college

Enter higher education through a university or college

Study online or part time alongside learning through the

Open University or similar

Combine work and study

Start an apprenticeship, higher apprenticeship, or degree apprenticeship

Start a traineeship

Start a supported internship

Start a job alongside part time education or training

Go into employment

Work full time

Work part time

Start an internship

Gap Year

Many young adults want a break after 13 years of education and before entering employment, further training, or higher education. This is called a gap year and can be really useful to help them build skills, develop interests and gain some experience to help inform career choices.

What support is available for young people aged 18?

The further education or training provider will be able to provide some guidance around their choices at 18. This can include personal guidance to help identify potential avenues and pathways to explore, as well as directing further research for them.

Some of this research can start as early as Year 12 – organisations such as the Sutton Trust support Year 12 students exploring Higher Education options through their summer school program

<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-programmes/uk-summer-schools/>

You may also find the National Careers Service website useful:

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-choices-at-18>

Virtual School

Can I get help from the Virtual School?

If your child was in care before their permanency order was granted, then you definitely can seek advice and information from your local Virtual School.

Remember to contact the Virtual School in the area that your child is being educated. This may be different from the area where you live.

What help can I get?

You can check the local authority's website to check what support is available or contact the Virtual School direct. Although each area will differ in exactly what they offer, all areas will give you useful advice, as Virtual Schools have a wealth of experience in supporting parents, children, and schools. If you want to learn more about Virtual Schools, please have a look at the government's guidance:

[Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children \(Statutory guidance for local authorities\) February 2018](#)

Contact Details

The contact details for the Virtual School where you live are below. If your child is educated in a different local authority, then you will need to make contact with that Virtual School to request advice.

Each partner has a virtual school which supports previous looked after children. For more information, please contact the Virtual School in the local authority where your child attends school. Or contact us on 03000 422 373 or at adoption.partnership@kent.gov.uk

Bexley's virtual school: vsb@bexley.gov.uk

Medway's virtual school: virtualschool@medway.gov.uk

Virtual School Kent: VSKPLAC@Kent.gov.uk

Additional Information

Adoption Partnership South East is the regional adoption agency, delivering adoption services for the London Borough of Bexley, Kent County Council, and Medway Council.

We will be by your side - supporting you at every step of your adoption journey, from your first thoughts about adoption, the application process and once you have adopted. Bringing together our expertise, we are committed to achieving the best for all our children across the region.

For advice, support, and information on adoption services, including development and training:

Call our advice line on 03000 422373
Email adoption.partnership@kent.gov.uk

General Enquiries

Call us on 03000 420508 to speak to a member of our team about your enquiry.
Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AdoptionPartnership>

Virtual Schools

A Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or who have been in care so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Ensuring that they receive a high-quality education is the foundation for improving their lives.

Virtual Schools are simply an organisation which has been created for the effective co-ordination of educational services at a strategic and operational level.

For advice on education, please contact the Virtual School in the local authority where your young person attends their education setting:

Bexley Virtual School
Email: vsb@bexley.gov.uk
Website: <https://bexleylocaloffer.uk/Services/2293>

Medway Virtual School
Email: virtualschool@medway.gov.uk
Website: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200137/schools_and_learning/1041/education_of_looked-after_children

Virtual School Kent
Email: VSKPLAC@Kent.gov.uk
Website: <https://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/>



EDUCATION

The South East Region includes the following Virtual Schools:

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Virtual School
Portsmouth Virtual School
Southampton Virtual School
East Sussex Virtual School
West Sussex Virtual School
Brighton & Hove Virtual School
West Berkshire Virtual School
Kent Virtual School
Medway Virtual School
Buckinghamshire Virtual School
Milton Keynes Virtual School
Surrey Virtual School
School Slough Virtual School
Reading Virtual School
Bracknell Forest Virtual School
Wokingham Virtual School
Windsor and Maidenhead Virtual School
Oxfordshire Virtual School

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