

A New School or Setting

When looking for a new school or setting for your child it can be helpful to look at the OFSTED report, talk to local parents as well as the Virtual School. Settings should be at least 'GOOD'. Arrange to have a look around to get a feel for the setting and ask questions. Some questions might include:

- Have staff received training on attachment and the impact of early trauma and loss?
- How does the school provide consistent relationships for children with attachment needs?
- What is the behaviour management policy?
- Where is the safe base for children when they need to calm down or regulate?
- What support is in place for children who find unstructured times difficult?
- How does the school provide structure and consistency?
- How has the school used its pupil premium plus funding?
- How does the school support children who find it difficult to manage their feelings?

Working with schools

- Work with the school to decide the best way of communicating.
- Be proactive-do not be afraid to ask questions to aid your understanding of the situation.
- Understand the many pressures on schools whilst being an advocate for your child.
- Pick your battles-getting the balance right is the key to good communication with school.
- Home/school books can be helpful, but be mindful that it doesn't become a 'diary of doom'. Consider whether the child could read it /if it got lost and another child read it and how it would make them feel.
- Don't let school walk into the trap of the 'walk of shame.'
- Termly meetings between yourselves and school can be helpful and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions.

Other useful links and websites

30 hours free childcare

<https://www.gov.uk/30-hours-free-childcare>

Find an OFSTED report

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

Children Previously in Care: Supporting Education and Transitions

Children who have previously been in the care of an English or Welsh Local Authority are entitled to:

- Up to 15 hours of free childcare and early education from the term after their 2nd birthday.
- 15 hours of free early education the term after their 3rd birthday.
- Up to 30 hours if both parents are working and earning at least minimum wage for 16 hours a week and not earning more than £100,000.
- Priority Admission to a school of your choice (if previously looked after in England.)

Supporting Transitions and Change

Children who have been in care often find change difficult as the changes they have experienced have not been good.

Possible educational changes include:

- Change of Teacher/staff in the room
- New environment-e.g school, classroom, dinner hall, playground
- Change of routine
- Change of journey
- Different peer group

Change causes fear and anxiety and so children often need extra preparation and support to regulate their emotions and behaviour at these times.

Sharing information around the Adoption Order, SGO or CAO can support the school in planning for your child and their possible triggers including finishing an activity they enjoy, topics in the curriculum or specific times of the year.

Learn about the Child as an Individual

It is vital that information is shared effectively to support all transitions.

- All staff need to have an understanding of attachment and trauma; training should be put in place to ensure this. Staff need to understand how early adverse childhood experiences impact on behaviour and learning and how this may present in an educational setting.
- Staff need to be aware of triggers and sensitive issues specific to individual children, this may include information they wish to share about experiences prior to care, including positive experiences they might have had.
- Consider individual needs to allow time for processing transitions. Does the child or young person need to finish something early to provide necessary transition time or perhaps they may need a higher level of warning before an activity or task ceases?
- How does the individual child communicate anxiety or fear through their behaviour? For some children this may be increasingly noticeable behaviour whilst others may withdraw – distress presents differently in different children.
- Differentiate expectations for transitions.
- Offer individualised resources (visual cues, adult prompts, checklists...)

Strategies to Support Transitions

- Information is shared between home and school and all staff in the setting are aware of the child's individual needs.
- Provide extra time for the child to process transitions.
- Transition books to include photos to share with familiar adults.
- New staff to visit child in current setting.
- Child to visit new staff and setting.
- Transitional objects.
- Pre teaching and pre warning.
- Key member of staff to support in times of need.
- Use of daily checklists and visual timetables.

The Transition out of Care

Wherever possible pupils should be kept in the same school, in familiar classes and in the same school environment in order to increase their feelings of stability. We need to do everything we can to foster permanence. There will sometimes be a need for a child to move on – perhaps as part of a standard phase change or perhaps to a new school or care placement. Communication, reflection, preparation and follow-up are essential in line with the child's developmental age and stage. If developmentally appropriate, it may be helpful to have a conversation with the child to think about:

- Things they are looking forward to.
- Things they want to leave behind.
- Things they want to take with them.