

Information leaflet

How special guardians can work with their child's school

Schools play a major role in a child's life. They can help them deal with the difficulties they have faced and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.

Research shows that children with early experiences of poor attachment or neglect are less likely to do well at school than their peers. The child's school should actively support their emotional wellbeing and help them overcome past experiences.

There are a number of things professionals can help special guardians to consider and be aware of when thinking about their child's school.

Choosing a school

Past loss, neglect or trauma can mean a child may be more likely to struggle to manage relationships with teachers and peers and/or find it more difficult to cope with transitions such as moving schools or class.

When choosing a school it is useful for special guardians to ask:

- If staff are trained on the impact of early trauma, loss and attachment?
- How are children supported when they move from primary to secondary school?
- How does the school help children build friendships?
- If there is a whole-school strategy to support children with attachment issues?

It is important for a special guardian to let their child's school know about their situation and the Special Guardianship Order (SGO). It is a good idea for special guardians to meet the school's Special

Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and ask them about the support they can offer. Other school staff that might be able to offer extra support will include: the pastoral team, emotional learning support assistants and learning mentors. Professionals should encourage special guardians to talk to their child's school and explore what support may be available.

Special guardians should talk to the school about the provision that they have and what may be available or useful for their child. Each school is also legally required to have a designated or named member of staff who is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of previously 'looked after' children. This member of staff will understand the child's situation and the support they are likely to need.

If a child was 'looked after' before coming to live with the special guardian they will be viewed as high priority by the local authority school admissions department and this will help get the child into the right school for them.

Pupil premium plus and pupil premium

The pupil premium is additional funding available for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of children with disadvantaged backgrounds and help to close the gap between them and their peers.

To help overcome the impact of their early experiences, children who were previously 'looked after' are entitled to the highest level of the pupil premium (pupil premium plus).

Pupil premium plus is available for children from reception age to Year 11. It entitles state schools to access £2,345 per pupil per academic year and can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- part-time teaching assistant support
- training around attachment issues, managing transitions, emotional regulation and anger and aggression.
- specific resources such as timers and creating visual timetables.
- communications or passport book
- extra resources such as lessons, special school trips and even residential trips.

If a child was not 'looked after' but is entitled to free school meals, the school can access pupil premium. This is aimed at closing the gap between children on lower incomes and their peers. Pupil premium is currently £1,345 per pupil for primary schools and £955 per pupil for secondary schools. It is up to the school to decide how the pupil premium is best spent.

It is up to the school to decide how the pupil premium is spent. The school should publish the amount of pupil premium it receives, outline how it is spent and the effect it has had.

Free school meals

A child might be able to get free school meals if their carer is receiving any of the following benefits:

- Income Support

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on
- Universal Credit

All children in infant schools receive free school meals.

If a special guardian meets the criteria outlined, they can apply for free school meals.

Tools to help a child progress

If a child was previously 'looked after' a Personal Education Plan (PEP) would have been written for them and termly updates about their progress would have taken place. Some schools will continue to use the PEP once an SGO has been granted.

Another tool that the school might use is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This will help to identify and meet any early additional support that a child might need and will involve a range of agencies. If a carer is concerned about how their child is developing they can ask the school if there is a CAF in place or request one. There may also be 'Team around the Child' (TAC) or 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) meetings which special guardians should be invited to. Again they should ask the school what is planned for their child.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in schools

- A child's school will offer a range of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A report describing the full range of their SEN services should be posted on their website. Common support includes:
 - SEN Support Plan or Individual Education Plan. This describes each child's support and specific targets. Its 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle means a picture is gradually built up over time about the best way to help the child progress.
 - Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan. If a child needs extra help over and above what is in their SEN support plan they can be assessed for an EHC Plan which a special guardian can apply for through their local authority. The process should work to a statutory timeframe, with school staff, external professionals, family and the child contributing to the assessment if it goes ahead.
 - Pupil Passport. This gives a child a chance to voice what support they want. Including a photo, this acts as a summary that can be used a starting point for discussing the child's needs. It also helps all teachers to be immediately aware of the child's needs. Although they are

recommended not all schools have them.

- Each local authority must also provide 'The Local Offer', a directory of education, health and social care services for children with SEN and disabilities

Virtual schools

The educational achievement of 'looked after' children is overseen by a 'virtual' school head teacher in all local authorities. The law changed in April 2017 so that all virtual heads must include within their care children living under a SGO arrangement.

Virtual heads offer advice to families, track children's progress and help identify extra needs they may have. They work closely with teachers and social workers to ensure support is provided.

A child's school will be able to put a special guardian in contact with their child's virtual head.

How special guardians can support their child in school

- When choosing a school special guardians should ask how they spend pupil premium. They should ask about the facilities they have and look for a nurture room and group, ask if one-to-one time is built into children's timetables and how friendship-building is supported. Carers should recognise that different schools may have different approaches to spending the pupil premium but they may be equally effective.
- Good communication with the child's school is vital. Professionals should encourage carers to meet their child's named teacher in person to help ensure their child is getting the support they need. They should also encourage their child to talk about things that they are finding hard and where some extra help would be useful.
- In addition to parent's evenings it can be helpful for special guardians to arrange half termly review meetings if their child has additional needs. These can be useful even when things are going well.
- Special guardians should talk to their child to find out what they would like them to tell other parents and children about their situation. This will be helpful for them both especially during school drop off and pick up times.

Key points

- It's important that special guardians let the school know about their situation and that they are aware of the Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- The pupil premium is additional funding available for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of children with disadvantaged backgrounds and help to close the gap between them and their peers.
- Schools will offer a range of support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A report describing the full range of their SEN services should be posted on their website.
- The educational achievement of 'looked after' children is overseen by a 'virtual' school head teacher in all local authorities.



Useful links

Adoption UK

www.adoptionuk.org

A range of resources and training for parents, teachers and SENCO designed to make education a successful environment for children who h

Child Legal Advice Centre

childlawadvice.org.uk

Tel:03003305485

Coram Children's Legal Centre specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people.

Educational Trusts Forum

www.et-foundation.co.uk

A community of organisations which provide grants to help vulnerable children. Includes a search function to search for educational grants that meet your needs as some trusts target families in specific situations

Independent Parental Special Education Advice

www.ipsea.org.uk

IPSEA offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

Nurture Group Network

nurturegroups.org

The Nurture Group Network exists to promote the development of nurture groups through accredited training programmes and research on effective practice.

Nurture groups are small classes of children or young people in early years, primary or secondary schools supported by the whole staff group and parents. Children remain an active part of their main class group but spend time within the nurture group according to their need and typically return full-time to their own class within two to four terms. Nurture groups assess learning, social and emotional needs and use whatever help is needed to remove the barriers to learning

Pupil Passports

www.pupilpassport.co.uk

Pupil passports help give children voice what support they need and are highly recommended.

Scope

www.scope.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 800 3333

Scope provides advice and services for children and adults with learning disabilities or a physical impairment.

Family Action Head Office 24 Angel Gate, City Road, London, EC1V 2PT

T: 020 7254 6251 F: 020 7249 5443 info@family-action.org.uk www.family-action.org.uk

Registered as a Charity in England & Wales no: 264713. Registered as a Charity in the Isle of Man no: 1206.

Registered Company Limited by Guarantee in England and Wales: 01068186.

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen. Chair: Bryan Portman MBA FCCA FCIS. Chief Executive: David Holmes CBE.

Vice Patrons: Christine Davies CBE. Dr Andrew McCulloch. Dame Denise Platt DBE. Katie Vanneck-Smith. Professor Harriet Ward CBE.