

Educational Information for foster carers in supporting the education of looked after children

Spring 2008

Background to this Information

This pack aims to provide information to assist foster carers in supporting looked after children through their education. It was produced by the Haringey's Children in Care Education Team.

Contents

I. The UK Education System

- Checklist for responsibilities of social workers and carers p.3-4
- What happens and when? p.5-6
- Assessments and qualifications p.7-8
- Role and responsibilities in schools p.9
- Guidance on school rules p.10
- Helping with homework p. 11
- Additional information (attendance, exclusions, Personal Educational Plans, term dates) p.12-14

The UK Education System

The following checklist identifies the responsibilities of social workers and carers in supporting the education of children in public care.

The coloured rectangles by each item show the level of responsibility for social workers and carers.

	Red indicates who has prime responsibility
	Yellow indicates a shared or negotiated level of responsibility

	SOCIAL WORKER	FOSTER CARER
Who		
initially chooses a school/early years place?		
chooses a school at normal transfer times?		
applies for a place?		
appeals for a place?		
asks the LA to provide education while a child waits for a place?		
Who		
buys the uniform?		
pays for school transport?		
signs the home school agreement?		
Who		
ensures good time-keeping and attendance?		
contacts the school if the child is sick?		
checks homework diaries?		
provides a quiet place for homework?		
helps the child with homework?		
helps the child join the library?		
attends parents evening?		
fixes up work experience?		
agrees support and targets on the PEP?		
Who		
collects a child from school/early years place?		
clarifies arrangements for signing permission slips?		
pays for school trips?		
buys computer equipment?		
can become a parent governor?		
can vote in parent governor elections?		

can attend the governors' annual meeting?		Yellow
can get involved with the PTA?		Yellow
complains about bullying?	Yellow	Red
Who		
asks for help for a child with special educational needs?	Red	Red
checks their individual education plan?	Yellow	Red
contributes to statutory assessment?	Red	Red
attends their annual review?	Red	Red
appeals to the SEN and Disability Tribunal?	Yellow	Red
Who		
contributes to a pastoral support programme?	Red	Red
makes representations about an exclusion to school governors?	Yellow	Red
appeals against an exclusion to the independent appeal panel?	Yellow	Red
asks the LA to provide education for a permanently excluded child?	Red	Yellow
asks the school to provide homework for a temporarily excluded child?	Yellow	Red

The UK Education System
What happens and When?

The following table gives general timescales for progression through the education system and identifies points at which foster carers can support a child through this system:

THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON	AGE	FOSTER CARERS TO:
Take up early years place	age 3	Support child in settling in
Take up primary school place	age 5	Support child is settling in
Key Stage 1 SATs	age 7	Support child through test period
Move from Infant School to Junior School (where appropriate)	age 9	Support child through transition phase; Check child is settling in
Key Stage 2 SATs	age 11	Support child through test period; celebrate success
Move from primary to secondary school	age 11	Support child through test period; check child is settling in
Become eligible for Connexions Service	age 11	Check whether child is working with Personal Advisor
Key Stage 3 SATs	age 14	Support child through test period; celebrate success
Choose options for Year 10	age 14	Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice
GCSE examinations including completion of coursework	age 16	Check coursework completed; check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate success
Decide to stay in school or go to college; take up training/apprenticeships	age 16	Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice
Choose A/AS Level subjects/vocational course	age 16	Discuss options; help with selection; careers advice
Take AS Level examinations	age 17	Check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate success
Choose university course	age 17	Discuss options; support with application process
Take A Levels	age 18	Check revision is being done; support revision process; celebrate

YEAR GROUPS SEPT. 2007 – AUG. 2008

YEAR BORN													
MONTH BORN	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03
JAN (1)		Y 11	Y 10	Y9	Y8	Y7	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3	Y2	Y1	R
↓													
AUG (8)													
SEPT (9)	Y 11	Y 10	Y9	Y8	Y7	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3	Y2	Y1	R	
↓													
DEC (12)													
KEYSTAGE	4		3			2				1			

Assessments and Qualifications

Foundation Stage: up to 5 years

Key Stage 1: 5 to 7 years

Key Stage 2: 7 to 11 years

Key Stage 3: 11 to 14 years

Key Stage 4: 14 to 16 years

Assessment and examinations in Key Stages 1 - 3

Pupils are assessed by National Curriculum tests at the end of each Key Stage. Key Stage 1 assessments are taken at age 7, Key Stage 2 assessments are taken at age 11 and Key Stage 3 assessments are taken at age 14. The following are performance levels for children, compared with expected levels for each age group:

	7 years	11 years	14 years
Above level 8			
Level 8			
Level 7			
Level 6			
Level 5			
Level 4			
Level 3			
Level 2			
Level 1			

	Exceptional Performance
	Exceeded targets for age group
	Achieved targets for age group
	Working towards targets for age group

Performance levels for children, compared with expected levels for each age group

Key Stage 4 and onwards.

Key Stage 4 is assessed by levels of achievement acquired at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. Having completed GCSEs, pupils have a choice of whether to continue with further education at school or college or to undertake employment.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are several types of examinations and qualifications:

- **GCSEs** are usually taken at age 15 to 16 in a wide range of subjects. Grades are issued on a scale from A* to G (A* being the highest grade), these are based on assessment throughout the course with an examination at the end of the course. GCE A-levels are assessed mainly by an examination at the end of the course and are usually taken by those who are 18 years or over. GCE AS levels are of the same standard as GCE A-level but cover less content. These were introduced to help pupils cover more subjects thus increasing the breadth of their education.
- **Vocational courses** Many pupils continue with further education either at school or at further education institutions, i.e. colleges. Schools are increasingly offering a range of vocational courses, as well as academic courses. However, it is more common for those wishing to pursue vocational courses to join further education institutions. Further education institutions offer a wide range of both academic and vocational courses. Pupils wishing to pursue a higher educational level usually transfer to a higher education institution (College or University) at age 18 years.
- **General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs)** These are an alternative educational path for those entering further education at college or school. GNVQs combine general and vocational education with employment. GNVQs are based on the skills required by employers combined with the development and understanding of skills needed in vocational areas. Vocational areas covered include business, health and social care or engineering.
- **National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)** (in Scotland — Scottish Vocational Qualifications, SVQs), these qualifications are based on skills, knowledge and competencies required by specific occupations set out by industry defined standards.
- **Higher National Certificates (HNCs)** and **Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)** are modular courses of vocational study mostly taken at college or school.

The UK Education System

Roles and responsibilities in schools

SENCO	A teacher who monitors and oversees provision for children with special educational needs (SEN)
Designated Teacher	A teacher who is responsible for overseeing LAC within a school
Head of Year	At teacher who is responsible for overseeing academic and pastoral needs of a year group (secondary schools)
Education Welfare Officer	An officer (not teacher) who is responsible for attendance in school
Form tutor	A teacher who usually registers a class each morning and may have additional time with this class (secondary schools)
Learning Mentor	Works in schools to help underachieving pupils overcome barriers to learning (not usually a qualified teacher)
Teaching Assistant	Works under the direction of a teacher to support children's learning (rarely a qualified teacher)

The UK Education System

Guidance on School Rules

While all schools have rules, each school has their own rules, particular to them. For this reason, when a young person changes school, it is very important for an adult at home to read through the new school rules **with the young person**, going through the rules, point by point.

The school rules are usually found in the school booklet. If you do not have them, ask the school for a copy.

A young person may change school at the following times in their education and may need to learn new rules:

- Nursery to Infant school (Foundation – Key Stage 1)
- Infant to Junior school (Key Stage 1 – Key Stage 2)
- Junior to Secondary school (Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 3 / 4)
- Secondary to sixth Form College (Key Stage 4 – Post 16)
- Moves outside these times due to changes in care or educational placement

Generally, the older the young person, the higher the expectation of the school, that the young person will understand the rules. Therefore, it is **particularly important** that **Secondary age LAC know the school rules and understand the sanctions / consequences**.

School Uniform

Schools usually have rules about uniform. For example:

- jewellery is usually not allowed
- hairstyle is sometimes considered part of the school uniform
- a shaved head is sometimes disallowed
- shaved patterns may be against the rules

A young person should always wear school uniform if they are going to school. This shows a commitment to the school, and a desire to be part of the school community.

This is particularly important if the young person is attending a meeting at the school, following an exclusion.

Zero Tolerance

Schools sometimes have zero tolerances on some rules.

If there is a zero tolerance on a rule, breaking that rule will lead to automatic exclusion. **This exclusion could be permanent.**

For example:

- carrying a weapon (carrying a knife in a packed lunch box, to cut up an apple, is considered as carrying a weapon)
- misbehaving off school premises can lead to exclusion

Ideas about how to help with homework

- Make sure you are familiar with any school guidelines on homework.
- Ask the school for copies of any leaflets about supporting children at home.
- Watch out for newsletters advertising parents' subject sessions. These are really useful for learning about modern teaching methods.
- Nominate somewhere at home as a homework area. It needs a flat surface, a good light source and resources such as pens, pencils, rulers, scissors, glue, dictionary and notebook to hand.
- Set up a daily routine. Plan a homework timetable so you both know what your child needs to do and when. If your child is at secondary school she will probably be told which subject teacher will set homework on each day.
- It's a good idea if your child has a break and something to eat before starting on homework.
- Ask your child to explain the homework task and how it follows on from what she has been studying at school.
- Be interested and be on hand to talk to your child about what she has learnt so far.
- Help your child to be an independent learner. Explain how to look up information or find a word in a dictionary rather than simply giving an answer in order to get the task finished.
- Don't be tempted to teach your child methods you used at school.
- Turn off the television while homework is underway but do let your child listen to music if she finds it helpful.
- Use home/school books to note how your child tackles the task, what is done well and where she has difficulties. (Remember, your child is probably one of 30 so keep your comments brief!) Read carefully any comments that your child's teacher makes in return.
- Discourage your child from copying when she's asked to do research tasks. Talk about the information together, work out the key facts and help your child to write these down as brief notes.
- Be positive about your child's attempts. If you have concerns about her progress, make an appointment with the school.

Homework clubs

If you feel your child needs more help than you are able to give, do contact the school. Many schools offer an after-school homework club staffed by teachers or learning support assistants.

Additional Information

Term Dates for Schools

It is for each Local Authority (LA) to decide these dates and these do vary between authorities. In the most cases the school year is divided into three terms with an extended summer break. The following section contains the term dates for Haringey schools 2007/2008 and 2008/2009.

Attendance

By law, all children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) must get suitable full-time education. Being in school full-time gives children the best possible chances to succeed. As well as learning subjects in class, they develop routines and understand about timekeeping. Missing school makes it harder for them to catch up what they miss.

Exclusions

A decision to exclude a pupil should be taken only:

- a. in response to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- b. if allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

Only the head teacher (or, in the absence of the head teacher or teacher in charge, the most senior teacher who is acting in that role) can exclude a pupil.

A **fixed term exclusion** means a pupil is not allowed to attend school for a stated period of time. This period of time will be fixed before the exclusion starts and may not be extended.

A decision to exclude a child **permanently** is a serious one. It will usually be the final step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences following a wide range of other strategies which have been tried without success. It is an acknowledgement by the school that it has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the child and should normally be used as a last resort.

Social workers should contact LAC Education team for advice if a child has had a series of fixed term exclusions or is at risk of permanent exclusion.

Personal Education Plan

All looked after children must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place to ensure that support is given for these children to participate in education and achieve their potential. This should be initiated by the child's social worker in partnership with the child, designated teacher, parent or relative, carer and/or other professional. The designated teacher or representative should lead on the identification and setting of education targets. The social worker needs to provide information on legal status and update the school on care planning. This should be done at least every six months, and ideally termly, and actions to meet identified needs must be followed up. Education targets from the IEP may be used as appropriate.

For further guidance refer to the *Statutory Guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004* (paragraphs 42-52.4). Copy attached.

Education in Haringey Term Dates 2007 – 2008

Spring Term 2008

Term	Starts	Ends	Days
Spring 1	Thursday 3 January	Friday 15 February	32
Holiday	Monday 18 February	Friday 22 February	
Spring 2	Monday 25 February	Friday 4 April	28
Holiday	Monday 7 April	Friday 18 April	

Summer Term 2008

Term	Starts	Ends	Days
Summer 1	Monday 21 April	Friday 23 May	24
Holiday	Monday 26 May	Friday 30 May	
Summer 2	Monday 2 June	Wednesday 23 July	38
Holiday	Thursday 24 July	Friday 29 August	

Bank Holidays

- 1 January 2008
- 21 March 2008
- 24 March 2008
- 5 May 2008
- 26 May 2008
- 25 August 2008

Education in Haringey Term Dates 2008 – 2009

Autumn Term 2008

Term	Starts	Ends	Days
Autumn 1	Monday 1 September	Friday 24 October	40
Holiday	Monday 27 October	Friday 31 October	
Autumn 2	Monday 3 November	Friday 19 December	35
Holiday	Monday 22 December	Friday 2 January	

Spring Term 2009

Term	Starts	Ends	Days
Spring 1	Monday 5 January	Friday 13 February	30
Holiday	Monday 16 February	Friday 20 February	
Spring 2	Monday 23 February	Friday 3 April	30
Holiday	Monday 6 April	Friday 17 April	

Summer Term 2009

Term	Starts	Ends	Days
Summer 1	Monday 20 April	Friday 22 May	24
Holiday	Monday 25 May	Friday 29 May	
Summer 2	Monday 1 June	Monday 20 July	36
Holiday	Tuesday 21 July	Monday 31 August	

Bank Holidays

- Thursday 25 December 2008 & Friday 26 December 2008
- Thursday 1 January 2009
- Friday 10 April 2009 & Monday 13 April 2009
- Monday 14 May
- Monday 25 May 2009
- Monday 31 August 2009

