



Leicestershire  
County Council

# Starting school for children in care



## Purpose:

The aim of this document is to ensure partnership working so that children access a school placement with seamless transitions.

Agencies involved in supporting the child in starting school are:

- › Parent/ carers
- › Social worker
- › Supervising social worker
- › Independent Reviewing Officer
- › School administration
- › Improvement Advisor
- › Education Children in Care Service – (Leicestershire’s Virtual School for Children in Care)
- › Early Years Provider
- › School
- › Looked After Childrens nurse / HV
- › Other agencies - Early years SEND inclusion service and educational Psychology Service

## Parent/carers:

Parent/carers are encouraged to apply on-line for school places from June until January 15th for a school place. Your social worker will be able to support you with completing this process if necessary.

School admissions will let you know about the allocation of a school place. As soon as this is known, speak to your pre-school or child minder so that transition arrangements to school can be made. As your child progresses from pre-school to school, the pre-school or child minder will make contact with the school and begin to arrange short visits, often they will go with friends. This allows children to get familiar with their new school and teacher in a comfortable setting.

## Social Worker / Supervising social worker

The child in care would already be known to Social Care.

The social worker will invite a representative for the proposed school and education department to the various meetings that they will organise as part of their statutory work.

The social worker can liaise with a school or the education department concerning the school placement.

This can be achieved through formal and informal meetings and correspondence.

The role of the social worker is to safeguard the health and development of the child, and find and support the correct school placement is a part of this role.

## Independent Reviewing Officer:

All young people who are in the care of the Children & Family Service are required to have clear plans about their care, education, health, and contact with their family – their Care Plan. In 2010 the Government issued new Regulations (The IRO Handbook) setting out the duties for Independent Reviewing Officers in reviewing the care plans of young people looked after by the Local Authority.

During these reviews the Independent Reviewing Officer will encourage parents, carers and social workers to work together to seek a school place through the school admissions process to ensure children have their educational needs met and are supported to achieve good outcomes.

## School Admissions:

Children in care have the highest priority when allocating school places. Parents and carers are encouraged to apply using Leicestershire's online application system through the following link: [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-admissions](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-admissions)

The closing date to apply for a primary or infant school place is 15th January\* annually, with decisions being disclosed from 16th April\* annually.

Children In Leicestershire are expected to start primary or infant school from the autumn term. However children do not reach compulsory school age until the prescribed day following their fifth birthday (31 December, 31 March, 31 August).

For more information or to discuss your circumstances you can visit: [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-admissions](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-admissions) and click on school policies and useful information or contact the School Admissions Service on 0116 3052070 or email [admissions@leics.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@leics.gov.uk) with your query.

(Note:\*or the next available working day)

If the deadline of January 15th is missed it is really important that you or your Social Worker contact School Admissions as soon as possible so a school place can be found for your child. The school can then arrange for your child to visit and make a welcoming place for your child to begin their learning.



## Early Learning and Childcare Service:

When Looked After Children are aged 3 and 4 and attend a funded provision they are entitled to the Early Years Pupil Premium. The Improvement Advisors working in the provision will ensure the Early Years Pupil Premium money is effectively used to support the child in making good progress when completing the Personal Education Plan. These usually consist of targets that can be supported at the provision and at home. They will be reviewed to see that children have made progress.

When the Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting is held in the Autumn term the IA will enquire as to whether any application for a school place has been considered or made. The IA will remind attendees at the meeting of the deadline for the application and signpost them to the relevant school admissions web page.

The subsequent meetings will be used to identify if a school place has been allocated and transition arrangements planned.

## Education Children in Care Service – (Leicestershire’s Virtual School for Children in Care):

In the summer term the relevant Improvement Officers within the Education of Children in Care Service are invited to the Personal Education Plan meetings. This is an important meeting as social workers and foster carers are introduced to the Service and have the opportunity to ask questions about their child’s education if they need to.

These meetings allow a co-ordinated approach to transition and ensure that children continue to make progress once they begin school. Once an Education of Children in Care Officer has been identified for the children they will make contact with the school to offer any support required prior to the Personal Education Plan meeting taking place.

In the autumn term, Personal Education Plan meetings are arranged by the Education of Children in Care Service. Once a child starts school a Personal Education Plan meeting will take place at least every six months. Targets will be set and reviewed to ensure children are making progress. Improvement Officers will ensure the Pupil Premium Plus money is effectively used to support the child in making good progress.



## Setting / provider:

The Provider will complete a transition progress summary that will be shared with the school.

The provider will encourage children to visit their new school and share any books / resources that the receiving school send to support and aid transition.

The provider is encouraged to use the Mind the Gap top tips to support transition which reflects good practice, which can be found on the Early Learning and Childcare website.

The key person may support the child’s voice and record any concerns the child may have about starting somewhere new and share these at the Personal Education Plan meetings and with the new class teacher

## School:

Schools are invited to attend the Early Years Summer Term Personal Education Plan meeting if a school place has been allocated to the child due to start in September.

Ideally the receiving school will offer visits with the key person and may wish to share a photo book about the new setting and reference Mind the Gap as good practice transition guidance.

Information will be shared during the PEP. The provider will share the child’s current level of development and this will be used to write the current targets and support how the Pupil Premium Plus will be used to ensure progress will be made.

Once the child has started, a settling in plan may be necessary. It may also be worth contacting the provider to ensure that children continue to make progress, often transferring to school with new routines and making new attachments with members of staff can cause children to be anxious and hinder progress in the first few weeks.



## Other agencies:

### **Transition to school arrangements for Looked after children with SEND (Special Education needs and Disability)**

If the child is attending an Early Years setting then the Special Educational Need Coordinator (SENCO) or key person will take the lead in making good transition to school plans in order to ensure a happy start to school life. The SENCO is encouraged to attend the Summer SENCO network meeting together with the receiving school staff with the focus being on transition and exchanging information. Usually during the Summer term a SEND support /transition to school meeting will take place at either the Early Years setting or receiving school; specialist professionals, social worker, carers and school staff are invited. These meetings provide an opportunity for up to date advice to be shared and recorded to reflect the child's strengths and needs.

For some children during the Summer term, Early Years settings use top up funding to provide extra visits to school in order for children to begin to familiarise themselves with the school environment, develop a relationship with school staff and to help children settle in.

For children who are on the caseload of Early Years Special Educational Needs Inclusion Service (EYSENIS) teachers and practitioners regular liaison takes place with all professional, statutory, and voluntary agencies involved with the child to ensure a holistic approach to supporting the child and carer.

Some children with SEND may have had a statutory assessment and have an individual EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) and their educational needs will be met within a specialist setting such as a unit attached to a school or at an Area Special school. Positive and strong links are actively encouraged between Early Years Settings and all schools

### **Looked after Children's Nurse:**

Looked after Children (LAC) have an initial health assessment (IHA) completed when they first come into care by a Doctor or Paediatrician this forms the basis of a health care plan. Pre-school children have an allocated health visitor linked to the GP of the LAC. The health visitor will ensure the LAC has the services

of health visiting and completes the child health programme offering support to the carer as required. The health visitor will further complete a review health assessment (RHA) every 6 months after the IHA as requested by the social worker of the LAC.

The health visitor transfers his/ her responsibility to the Specialist Looked after Children's Nurse (SPLAC) and informs the relevant school nurse of the children in care.

The SPLAC then takes over responsibility and RHA every year as requested by social care and supports the carer to access health services for the children in care. The SPLAC will also work with the children in care depending on their age and understanding to access health care and maintain or improve their health as required.

### **When children are residing out of county:**

The child's Social workers will play a crucial role in supporting these children in finding school places in the appropriate authorities. They will need to make a school application in the Local Authority where the school is situated.



## Who is involved?

### Admission Process:

- › Parents/ Carers
- › Early Years SEND inclusion Service and Educational Psychology Service
- › Social workers
- › Supervising social worker
- › Independent Reviewing Officer
- › Improvement Advisor
- › Early Years Providers
- › School Admissions

### Transition Process:

- › Parents/ Carers
- › Early Years SEND inclusion Service and Educational Psychology Service
- › Social workers
- › Supervising social worker
- › Independent Reviewing Officer
- › Improvement Advisor
- › Early Years Providers
- › Schools
- › Education Children in Care Service – (Leicestershire’s Virtual School for Children in Care)
- › Parent/ carers

### Starting School:

- › Parents/ Carers
- › Schools
- › Early Years Providers
- › Social Workers
- › Supervising social worker
- › Looked After Children’s Nurse
- › Early Years SEND Inclusion Service and Educational Psychology Service
- › Education Children in Care Service – (Leicestershire’s Virtual School for Children in Care)

| Time Frame |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September  | Personal Education Plan meetings take place. Parent/ carers are encouraged to submit an online application for a school place. IRO and social workers will also support the school online admission process                                                                                                                             |
| October    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| November   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| December   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| January    | All parent/carers and those responsible for children must apply online for a school place by the deadline of 15th January                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| February   | It is really important that parents/carers/ Social Worker contact School Admissions as soon as possible if the school admissions deadline is missed                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| March      | Parent/ carers are informed about the initial requested child's school place                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| April      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| May        | A transition Personal Education Plan is completed by the Early Learning Service and Leicestershire's Virtual School for Children in Care will attend this meeting. Transition visit arrangements are made to support the child into school                                                                                              |
| June       | A Personal Education Plan as above                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| July       | As Personal Education Plan as above                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| August     | Child starts school                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| September  | School Personal Education Plan is written. Discussion takes place to ensure the Pupil Premium Plus is effectively used to support the child in making good progress in the foundation stage. The school will contact the previous setting if any issues arise for advice about the child and to ensure progress continues to be made    |
| October    | School Personal Education Plan is written. Discussion takes place to ensure the Pupil Premium Plus is effectively used to support the child in making good progress in the foundation stage. The school will contact the previous setting if any issues arise for advice about the child and to ensure progress is continued to be made |