



THE ADOPTERHUB

Online support for the adoption community

Education toolkit

For adoptive parents



Starting school and transitions

Choose the right primary school

Do your research. Ensure you speak to the designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children at the school.

Use the *Choosing the right primary school* webinar on The Adopter Hub to find out what you need to ask and what's important.



If you are a PACT adopter, you can contact the PACT education lead to ask for support. You can find out more at www.pactcharity.org/education

Work with the school to establish a transition plan

If your child is still looked after, this will happen with support from social workers but if your child is already adopted, you will want the school's help to give your child the opportunity to meet key staff, see the classrooms, try on the uniform (children with sensory difficulties might find this a real challenge) and *some* children may need a staggered start into the school to build up to a full day.

Take a look at the *Helping your child with school transitions* webinar on The Hub.



Plan for transition...every year!

However happy your child is at school, transition will always be a source of anxiety. Moving on from teachers they are familiar with or the possibility of friends leaving may add to their sense of loss. Work with the school to plan for this from just after the summer half term.

Be aware of common pinch points

The move between different key stages can be a big one as expectations change, even if they stay within the same school.

Choose the right secondary school

You have a lot more choice than most so start gathering information and listening out early. Really think about it from the beginning of Year 5 onwards.



Access the *Choosing the right secondary school* webinar on The Hub for useful information and key questions to ask.

Get your primary school on board

Get your primary school on board to support the transition to secondary and get your team lined up at the new school in advance. Get in touch with the designated teacher in the secondary school and ask for meetings. If you've chosen the right school, they will be open to supporting you.

Be curious when schools say they are 'trauma informed' or 'trauma aware'

Dig into this with schools using key questions from The Adopter Hub webinars to ensure this has not been a box-ticking exercise but is a continuous part of the school development. Even the most trauma-informed schools still have something new to learn.



Getting everything in order

Make sure school claims the pupil premium plus funding

This does not happen automatically once your child is adopted. Make sure you speak to the person in the office who is responsible for the census. There have been situations when the head knows, the SENCO knows, the class teacher knows but the bursar doesn't and if the bursar doesn't know, then the funds won't be claimed.

Search 'pupil premium' on The Hub to learn more about how pupil premium plus funding works.



Keep notes – right from the beginning

Keep any observations of behaviour after school, particularly if your child appears to be managing in school but is falling apart once they get back to you. This will all come in useful when working with your child's school and if you get to the point where further intervention is needed via an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Also note any times of the year that are more challenging as you may start to see a pattern after a couple of years and note down what does work too.

Visit the 'Education support and EHC plans' topic on The Hub for more information about Education and Health Care Plans.



Create a system with your child's class teacher for them to give you updates

If you find you're the parent who the teacher is always calling over to have a word with in the playground, ask for a meeting and agree on a system to prevent your child or other parents overhearing. It might be as simple as a thumbs up for "all good today" and a little wobbly thumb for "I need to speak with you" and then arrange for a call or ask the teacher if they would be happy to send an email.

Being prepared

Curriculum

Ask school to share as much about the upcoming curriculum topics as possible and discuss any areas of concern. Topics such as 'My Family' often come up in early years whereas some children in later primary find studying about evacuees during WWII triggering. A number of GCSE texts may be problematic for adopted children; one that crops up frequently is *Blood Brothers*. These don't have to be avoided but a conversation at home in advance and some preparation goes a long way towards helping children to handle them.



School trips

Who will be a safe person for the child to be in a group with? For overnight trips, what will make them feel safe when they are away from home? Is it feasible for you to stay somewhere nearby with the agreement of school if that's needed? The same can apply to sleepovers at a friend's house.

Wet play time and towards the end of term

Schools often show films towards the end of term as a treat or during wet play. Some adopted children can find certain films triggering with frightening characters, loss and being abandoned or left alone as common themes - here's [an example from Adoption UK](#) about the Cruella movie. Let your child's school know a list of safe films to watch.

Safeguarding

School plays

Adopted children sometimes face being sidelined when it comes to safeguarding during things like plays or events. Discuss with schools how you can keep your child's identity safe while still permitting them to take part, such as using creative costumes. If you feel able to, explain to other parents in the class why photos shouldn't be shared on social media if they take them. They are more likely to be empathetic to you and your child than to a rule laid down by school.

I need somewhere or someone safe

Discuss with school a system for your child to let the teachers know when they are moving out of a regulated state and may need to be somewhere safe with someone safe for a while: perhaps a small ticket or something on the desk. Agree something that the school can easily use.



Listen to your child's worries

Quite often, particularly with younger children, they begin to open up about their day at school and things come out just as you are putting them to bed. This often seems like a delaying tactic but in actual fact it usually takes until this time for their brains to process the day and be ready to be able to talk about it. Build some listening/chatting time into the bedtime routine and listen actively. This is often when worries about someone or something at school come out.

Visit the 'Keeping children safe in education' topic on The Hub to access resources about safety and wellbeing for children at school.



Getting the right support

Ask for help

If you are finding things hard at home but all appears well at school, ask for a meeting. If you don't get anywhere with the class teacher, go back to the designated teacher. If you're not feeling heard, contact your social worker or, for PACT adopters, get in touch with the PACT education lead.



You can chat anonymously to other adopters or the PACT team on The Hub forum or use our confidential webchat service.

Be open

As much as you feel comfortable, share what you can about your child's early experiences. Staff don't need to know every detail but by giving them information, they are likely to be more empathetic to your child's needs. If you've noticed a pattern with certain times of the year being more challenging than others, share this and make a plan with school. Also let them know of any potential triggers.

Think in emotional age

Remind yourselves and school that although your child may be a certain chronological age, they are much more likely to be a younger emotional age and accordingly need an emotional age-appropriate response.

Understanding perception

Stories often get tangled in the minds of children so active listening is really important. It's also key for everyone to recognise and understand perception. For example, your child may say someone is bullying them but when you speak with the class teacher about this they respond that the children are all being silly together and your child is not being singled out. It's important to remember your child's perception and that they, and the other children need support to make sure everyone feels happy.

What if it's not working?

Get help by going back to the adoption support team in the relevant local authority; contact the local virtual school for support; use The Adopter Hub and, for PACT adopters, contact the PACT education lead.

Support available on The Adopter Hub

If you are a member of The Adopter Hub, we have a range of resources and services available to support you including anonymous adopter forums, peer support through our live webchat, webinars, resources and eLearning modules.

To access The Adopter Hub visit www.theadopterhub.org

Support available to PACT adopters

If you adopted through PACT, you can contact the PACT education lead to request support. The PACT education lead can provide support with:

- Phone conversations with the school
- Meetings with the class teacher or specialist teachers within each unique school setting
- A range of different inset day training opportunities for all school professionals
- Tailor-made training for the school to be able to further support adopted children; for example, helping a school to devise an individualised curriculum for a specific adopted child
- Signposting to further support and/or other services

To contact PACT's education lead, email adoptionssupport@pactcharity.org



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