

Permanently Placed Children: Key Questions for Secondary Schools

Parents often tell us that they don't know what to look for when choosing a school. In consultation with experienced adoptive parents, we've identified some key questions for parents and schools to consider. Not all will be relevant for every child. It's unlikely that any school will be doing all of these; look for flexible schools which are willing to listen and learn and are proactive about developing support to meet each child's needs.

Have staff received training on attachment and the impact of early trauma and loss?

Who was involved in the training? E.g. were Teaching Assistants included? What has been the impact throughout the school?

How does the school provide consistent key relationships for children with attachment needs?

E.g. Vertical from tutors; nurture time/group; non-teaching pastoral staff available throughout day; learning mentors; for children who receive 1:1 support, is support organised by child (i.e. 1 consistent TA) or by subject (i.e. up to 10 TAs)?

Where is the safe base for children when they need to calm down or regulate?

How does this work? Drop-in basis? Does the child need specific permission to attend? How is it staffed?

What is the behaviour management policy?

Does the school recognise that cause-and-effect consequences may not be effective for children with histories of trauma and loss? Does the school apply the policy flexibly to best meet the needs of each child? How does the school moderate its use of detention or Isolation for children who may be re-traumatised by these approaches?

What support is in place for children who find unstructured times difficult?

E.g. lunch club; drop-in base; structured games on playground; social skills groups...Are any drop-in spaces staffed consistently?

How does the school provide structure and consistency?

E.g. year 7 in permanent base; lockers for children's belongings; vertical form tutor; approach to staff sickness and supply teachers; advance warning of timetable changes; building work etc.; timetable on website so parents can prepare child at home.

How does the school support the Year 6 to Year 7 transition?

E.g. extra visits for vulnerable children; opportunities to see the school both empty and busy; maps and photographs; summer club to get used to the school and key staff?

How does the school share the information you give them about your child's background and needs?

E.g. systems; meetings; policies... if 'need to know' basis, how is this decided and clarified with everyone including parents?

How does the school share information with parents?

E.g. what equipment/kit is needed; homework timetable. Is there a web-based supported learning environment? Is this used by all staff? Do parents have log-ins?

How has the school used its Pupil Premium Plus for adopted and special guardianship pupils?

Social and emotional interventions or only learning? Is the PP+ clearly differentiated from the overall pupil premium pot for children entitled to free school meals? Does the school meet with parents to identify children's needs, or consult parents as a group about the use of the premium?

How does the school support children who find it difficult to manage their feelings?

E.g. nurture group; calm boxes; a calming zone within the school; emotion regulation skills teaching and coaching; anger management training; empathy from all staff.

How does the school manage curriculum hotspots? i.e. issues which might trigger your child

E.g. liaise with parents about sex, alcohol, drugs education; pass on information about any particular triggers to members of teaching staff.