Children and Families Service

One Minute Guide

When a cared for child without an EHCP needs a change of school

What is it?
A guide for staff on the processes for a smooth transition between schools.

Why are we doing it?
Sometimes children need to change schools because of a placement change or because the current school is not able to meet the needs. This guide aims to minimise disruption and maximise educational engagement and achievement.

Where is it happening?
Everywhere that cared for children and young people are placed.

Who are the key players?
Children and young people, social workers (SW), carers, Special Educational Needs (SEN) staff, Virtual School (VS) staff.

For children without SEN
1. SW/VS to agree that school change is needed giving notice when possible
2. Identify local schools to be considered – check Ofsted rating- agree choices
3. VS to contact school to alert and confirm admissions system – via LA or direct
4. SW/parent to submit application stating why the school meets the specific needs of the child. VS to support with this
5. Carers/SW/VS to arrange to visit identified school and assess suitability (without child initially)
6. Once place is confirmed carer/SW to arrange visit with child.
7. VS/SW/Carer/school to agree integration plan and PEP date

NB – policy of the VS is to place in good/outstanding (unless there is a strong positive reason otherwise) and these may be full. Just naming a school will not automatically secure a place, particularly if it is not the closest. Schools can be directed to admit by the LA or DFE or an appeal can be made but places are only granted when it is demonstrated that the school is the best for the child. It is really important that carers visit prospective schools as it helps to establish a positive relationship between the school and home which will strengthen the case for allocating a place and makes a successful admission more likely.

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For children with SEN
System is more complex because SEN departments have to consult with prospective schools which then have 15 days to respond. Some SEN depts. will not start the consultation until the child is resident in the LA which can delay the process for a child moving placement

1. SW/VS to inform SEN dept. that a move is planned and reason
2. SW/VS to identify preferred schools
3. VS to inform CE SEN team of the plan and liaise with other SEN if appropriate
4. SEN to consider requests and consult – inform VS of progress
5. VS to liaise with SEN about direct contact with schools and visits (policy varies between LAs)
6. Once place is confirmed carer/SW to arrange visit with child.
7. VS/SW/Carer/school to agree integration plan – can be PEP or PEP to be held soon after child starts school

When SEN consider requests for new schools they will first consider in borough schools (mainstream or special) then neighbouring borough special schools. Independent schools will only be considered if these are considered not suitable and will only be consulted with agreement from Head of SEN Children and Families Service. Transport is only provided by SEN to the schools identified by them as being nearest for need. Agency foster carers are responsible for the first 20 miles.

If residential provision is to be considered there should be a multi-agency meeting and agreement gained from managers before any requests for consultation are made to SEN.