

Halton Virtual School

Previously Looked After Children

# Education and Schools

Information for Adoptive Parents

and those with children on a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order

# Guidance 2020-21

**What is this guidance for?**

Children who were formerly in care and have been placed **straight from care** with Adoptive

Parents, on a Special Guardianship Order, or a Child Arrangement Order are known as Previously Looked After and for the purposes of this guide, shortened to Previously LAC, or PLAC for ease.

As part of the Virtual School’s work with Previously Looked After Children, we have put together this booklet for you as a parent/guardian to help you to support and advocate for your child in school. Within it, you should find the answers to frequently asked questions you may have about the education system and processes.

Although some of the information and advice is general, the detail relates to Halton schools only, as the Virtual School in Halton is responsible for providing advice and information for Previously Looked After Children in Halton schools only. If your child attends a school outside of Halton, the Virtual School in that authority will be able to signpost you to services in their area.

You will find information about:

* Halton’s Virtual School’s Local Offer for Previously-Looked After Children
* Admissions
* Attendance
* Exclusions
* Special Educational Needs
* Early Education
* Pupil Premium Plus
* How to raise concerns with school

## Our Local Offer to meet the statutory duties relating to previously looked after children

Halton Virtual School for Looked After Children:

* **will** provide or signpost advice and information on education to the parents/guardians of previously Looked After Children who attend Halton schools to help them advocate for their children as effectively as possible;

* **will** provide training for Halton schools around issues relating to the education of previously Looked After Children, alongside our training around Looked After Children

* **will** provide training / guidance for parents/guardians around issues relating to education

* **will** provide a dedicated email inbox (virtual.school@halton.gov.uk) so that parents/guardians have one point of contact for advice on educational issues. We will endeavour to reply to emails within 2 working days of the request being made.

* **will** signpost any query about a child previously in the care of Halton, but now living outside its boundary, to the Virtual School in the authority where they now live and go to school;

* **will not** be able to advocate or provide casework on behalf of an individual previously LAC as we are not the child’s corporate parent and our local role is not resourced to include this service

* **will not** discuss an individual Previously Looked After Child with a school unless the school has expressly gained permission from the parents/guardians, as we are not the Corporate Parent.

## SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

For Halton schools, all applications must be made online at schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk  Full details of all the admission processes can be found on this webpage.

For schools outside of Halton, each LA has their own Admissions Teams and they will be found on their LA websites.

For children starting Nursery, Reception or Year 7, priority is given to previously LAC (where adopted straight from care or on SGO/Child arrangement order immediately from care). Some faith schools may prioritise children of the faith over looked after children who are not baptised in the faith of that school, but they **must** give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children of the faith before other children of the faith.

For children moving school during the year (in-year admissions), there are priority arrangements for LAC and previously LAC (where Adopted straight from care or on an SGO/CAO straight from care).

Applications for children moving into an adoptive placement will be accepted ahead of the usual timescales given above and places will be held in order to aid the transition process into the new placement. Adoptive parents can make the school application but contact details for the child’s social worker must be provided so that approval can be sought.

**If a child also has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and has a school named in the EHCP, then you should also liaise with the Halton SEN Team** (SEN contact details for Halton below), as the SEN Team must be involved in any decisions about a move of school, and the EHCP may need to be updated.

If your child is refused a place at a school you will be offered the right of appeal. Schools are required to admit previously looked after children unless serious prejudice would be caused to the school. Therefore it is only in exceptional circumstances that a previously looked after child would be refused a place.

Halton School Admissions Officers can provide further information on admissions, schools moves and appeals.

 **Useful Contacts:**

**School Admissions** schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk

Tel: 0151 511 7338

**SEN and Disability Information and Advice Support** <https://sendiasshalton.co.uk/>

Tel: 0151 511 7733

**Halton SEN Team:** SENAT@halton.gov.uk

Tel: 0151 511 5266

 **EXCLUSIONS**

We have included some outline information here, as a quick guide, but it must be used in conjunction with the full information above.

‘Informal’ or ‘unofficial’ exclusions, such as sending a pupil home ‘to cool off’, are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time (eg half a day), must be formally recorded. Your child’s register should be marked as ‘E’ for the duration of the exclusion.

There are two types of exclusion: Fixed Term and Permanent. Both types have to be formally notified by the school to the parent and the Local Authority Exclusions Team. The notification can be by letter, email or text but **must** include the length of exclusion, the reason for exclusion, the parent’s right to make representations/appeal and details of how to do this. The notification is usually in a letter, and usually preceded by a phone call to parents.

Fixed Term Exclusions are for a set number of days, between 1 and 15.

A Headteacher could lawfully fixed term exclude for:

* Repeated failure to follow academic instruction
* Failure to complete a behavioural sanction, eg a detention
* Repeated and persistent breaches of the behaviour policy. Even if the incident that has led to the exclusion would not have normally constituted a serious enough breach on its own a child can still be excluded if it is part of wider pattern of behaviour.

Schools should take reasonable steps to set and mark work for pupils during the first five school days of exclusion; alternative provision **must** be arranged from the sixth day of exclusion.

There should always be a re-admission meeting on the first day back after exclusion, and the parent should be invited. A school cannot refuse to re-admit a pupil on the grounds that a re-admission meeting has not happened.

Permanent Exclusions are where a pupil cannot return to a school due to the seriousness of an incident, or for repeated breaches of the school’s behaviour policy.

For both Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions, there is a right of appeal and this must be clearly laid out in the exclusions notification letter.

Preventative Action/Support for behaviour

Where your child is experiencing difficulties with behaviour in school there are various options:

* For Primary aged children, the class teacher is usually your first port of call for any issues. School should let you know the details of how to make arrangements to see the class teacher.

* For secondary aged children, the Head of Year, or similar would usually be your contact in school for issues around behaviour.

* Ask for a meeting in school with the Designated Teacher for Previously Looked After Children. Every school has to have one by law. Discuss any triggers and how they can be avoided and ask about adjustments that can be put in place by the school. Explore with them whether any Pupil Premium Plus can be used to purchase additional support, assessments or resources for education.

* Ask the school to explore the possibility of starting Statutory Assessment for an EHCP if the issues are longstanding (see section on SEND)

* If your child already has an EHCP, ask to speak to the SENCO at school. For additional support, you could liaise with Halton SIASS (Halton Information Advice and Support Service) to see whether sufficient support is in place in school.

* For Primary aged children in Halton schools, the school could make a referral to the Primary Inclusion Team.

* The school could ask for an Educational Psychology assessment to provide some strategies for the child or the school. This should be via the school EP.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

If your child has SEND, or you think that they may do, there is lots of useful advice on the Halton Borough Council website <https://sendiasshalton.co.uk/>

Many pupils have special educational needs at some time during their education. These might already be known when a child is very young, or they might be identified at any time after a child has started school.

The great majority of children will have their special educational needs met in their local mainstream school, sometimes with extra help. For a small number of children Halton Borough Council may make a statutory assessment of their special educational needs. Only a few children have special educational needs which are so severe that they need a very different type of school to other children.

For initial advice and information about provision for children with special educational needs, you should contact the child's school directly. This would usually be the school SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator. Their details should be on the school website.

Additionally, you can contact Halton SIASS (Halton Information Advice and Support Service) who offer free and impartial information, advice and support to children, young people and parents about special educational needs and disability. They can explain how special educational needs are identified and assessed and who you should talk to. They can also tell you what your rights and responsibilities are.

**Useful contacts:**

**Special Educational Needs and Disability Information and Advice Support Services:**

<https://sendiasshalton.co.uk/>

Tel: 0151 511 7733

**Halton SEN Team:** SENAT@halton.gov.uk

Tel: 0151 511 5266

**Early Education**

Some 2 year old children and all 3 and 4 year old children are entitled to 15 hours per week of early education for 38 weeks of the year. You can get your entitlement at any Ofsted registered early years provider such as preschool, day nursery, childminder or school nursery.

In addition working parents of 3 and 4 year olds may also be eligible for a further 15 hours of childcare, 30 hours funded childcare in total. To claim 30 hours funded childcare, you must first create a Childcare Account and get an eligibility code from HMRC.

Some early years’ providers offer you the option to stretch your 15 or 30 hours entitlements over 52 weeks of the year meaning fewer hours per week, but over more weeks.

All places start from 1st January, 1st April or 1st September after your child’s second or third birthday.

Further information

**2 year old children eligible for free early education**

Children who have left care through an adoption order, SGO or CAO are eligible to a free early education place. You will need to provide a copy of your order as evidence to the local authority to enable them to issue you with a 2 year old code. Once confirmed, you will receive a letter, which contains the code reference to take to your chosen childcare provider.

Further information:

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/EducationandFamilies/FamiliesInformationService/lookingforchildcare.aspx>

**PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS (sometimes referred to as PPP or PP+)**

Schools receive additional funding in the form of grants from the Department for Education. They award the grants for the specific purpose of: “raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to reach their potential.” Pupil Premium, Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After Children, and Pupil Premium Plus for Previously Looked After Children are three such grants which schools can claim.

Pupil Premium Plus for Previously LAC is a grant given to schools based on the number of Previously LAC they have on their school census. It amounts to £2365 per year, paid directly to the school. **It is vital that you ensure that the school knows about your child’s legal status, otherwise they cannot claim the Grant**. You need to let the school know by each January, as that is when schools have to submit their official census to the DfE for funding. The Local Authority cannot inform the school, as we do not have parental responsibility.

It is important to note that all queries regarding the school’s use of the grant must be directed to the school, usually to the Designated Teacher for Previously Looked After Children.

The Virtual School Headteacher does not receive, manage or allocate this funding, has no role in defining school policy on how it is spent, and has no control over a school’s decisions about the spending of PP+ for previously-LAC. We do, however, provide general advice to schools about their use of PP+ in the same way as we do for Looked After Children.

The PP+ is not a ‘personal budget’ for individual children. It is, however, good practice for the school to discuss its plans for spending the PP+ with the child’s parent, and establish whether there are any specific uses which could be helpful to your child. It is important to note that, although it is not ring-fenced to an individual child, the school must ring-fence the PP+ Grant for previously-LAC it receives for the cohort of Previously Looked After Children. The school is required to publish its Pupil Premium Strategy online and this should include the principles under-pinning the spending of previously-LAC PP+.

The DfE have issued the following broad guidance for the effective use of PP+:

|  |
| --- |
| Getting the most from PP+  |
| **Approaches that are:** * **Individually tailored to the needs and strengths of each pupil**

* **Consistent: based on agreed core principles and components, but also flexible and responsive**

* **Based on evidence of what works**

* **Focussed on clear short-term goals which give opportunities for pupils to**

**experience success** * **Include regular, high quality feedback from teaching staff**

* **Engage parents/guardians in the agreement and evaluation of arrangements for education support (e.g.**

**via the PEP)** * **Supporting pupil transition (e.g.**

**primary-secondary/KS3-4)** * **Raising aspirations through access to high-quality educational experiences**

* **Promote the young person’s awareness and understanding of their own thought process (metacognition) and help to develop problem-solving strategies**
 |  Which emphasise:  * Relationship-building, both with appropriate adults and with peers

 * An emotionally intelligent approach to the setting of clear behaviour boundaries

 * Increasing pupil’s understanding of their own emotions and identity

 * Positive reinforcement

 * Building self-esteem

 * Relevance to the learner: relate to pupil’s interests where possible - make it matter to them

 * A joined-up approach involving social worker/guardian/VSH and other relevant professionals

 * Strong and visionary leadership on the part of both of the pupil’s head teachers

 * A child centred approach to assessment for learning
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### Complaints about a school

If you have a complaint about your child’s school, every school should have a complaints policy available on their website. This will explain what you need to do and who to contact in order to submit a complaint.

Generally, if the complaint is about a member of staff, the person to write to about the complaint is the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you should write to the Chair of Governors.

There is further information on making a complaint on the Halton website:

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Schoolscomplaints.aspx>