

The Virtual School educational placement (school or other) transfer protocol - 1 minute Guide

*Department for Education
Promoting the education of looked after children
Statutory guidance for local authorities
July 2014*

Securing appropriate education – page 11

When a child becomes looked after his or her local authority will arrange a suitable placement. In doing so, the child's allocated social worker should do everything possible to minimise disruption to the child's education, whatever the child's age but particularly at key stage 4, and this should involve the VSH.

If it is not possible to maintain the child's existing education placement, the child's new education placement should be arranged in consultation with the VSH at the same time as the care placement. The VSH has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all children looked after by the local authority. Their views should be given appropriate weight as part of decisions on placement moves. There should also be appropriate consultation with the VSH in another local authority where out-of-authority placements are planned and made.

In the case of an emergency placement, the authority that looks after the child, should secure a suitable new education placement within 20 school days.

In arranging a school placement the child's social worker (working with the VSH and other local authority staff, where appropriate) should seek a school or other education setting that is best suited to the child's needs. That could be a selective, non-selective, maintained or independent, boarding, day or alternative provision.

The following principles should apply:

- educational provision should mean a full-time place*
- schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for looked after children in need of a new school. Unless there are exceptional evidence-based reasons, looked after children should never be placed in a school judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate'*
- the choice of the education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child. It should be based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make the maximum progress*
- the child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child. Where a looked-after child would benefit from attending a boarding school, either in the state or independent sector, VSHs and social workers should be proactive in considering this option. This decision is usually based on the care placement needs of the child and the boarding school's ability to meet these needs*

Therefore the Virtual School must be consulted on all decisions regarding a change of educational placement.

How do we implement this in Kirklees?

Whenever a pupil is moving educational placement (school or other) the following points will be considered by the Virtual School before taking a decision about the new placement to ensure that the decision is evidence based.

Information about the educational provision.

Where the school has an Ofsted report

Was the overall effectiveness good or outstanding?

- If so admission can be processed.

Was the overall effectiveness judged to require improvement?

If so the following should be considered and documented:-

- Has there been a recent HMI visit?
- What does this say about safeguarding / vulnerable learners / progress in the school?
- If the provision is in Kirklees, contact should be made with the Kirklees Learning Partner – do they feel a placement would be appropriate here?
- What has been our previous experience of working with this provision with our pupils?
- Should this placement be identified as in the best interests of the child, they should be placed on the Virtual school enhanced support package.

Was the overall effectiveness inadequate?

- If so we cannot continue with this admission and an alternative must be found.

Where the school has no Ofsted report

The following should be considered and documented:-

- Why is this education provision being considered? For example – secure provision/CSE.
- Should this placement be identified as in the best interests of the child the Virtual School will monitor the provision.

Information about the impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of the pupil

When considering an application for a place in a school judged to require improvement the following should also be considered and documented:-

- Is the school within walking distance?
- Are all the peers / friendship group of the child moving to this school?
- Are siblings / foster siblings attending the school?
- Are there any other reasons why the pupil should attend this provision – for example special educational or medical needs?

Background administration

- School admissions will require the Social Worker and Virtual School to work together as Corporate parents to sign any request for admissions forms..
- If you have any issues relating to this please contact the Virtual School and they will help you.

As the Social worker and IRO you will :

- Work with the carer to agree the choice of the new educational placement.

As the child's social worker you will need to:

- All Social Workers should contact the Virtual School for advice as soon as they are aware that there might be a need for a change of educational placement.
- Work with the Virtual School, Carer and IRO to agree the best choice of education provision as early as possible during the process.
- Work with the virtual School and SENACT if the child has an EHC plan or statement to ensure that this placement will be able to meet the needs of the child so that SENACT can undergo a formal consultation process if necessary.
- Complete all necessary admissions paper work and submit to the Virtual School to sign prior to the application being processed.

As the IRO you will need to:

- Ensure that the move is considered as an integral part of the care planning process.
- Ensure the carer and Social Worker and are in agreement with the choice of educational placement as soon as possible in the process.

Janet Tolley 10/10/2017