

Getting it right for every child

A parent's
guide
to working
with schools

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Foreword



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Education reform is our national mission. Only by everyone working together will we ensure that our young people have an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards. For some there will be additional challenges that require careful, but robust, support and intervention.

This is especially true of those children who may have experienced being in care. Many – over 47% in 2016 – looked after and formerly looked after children who have been adopted from the care system in the UK will have experienced at least four adverse childhood experiences. As a result of these early life experiences, many of these children will face additional barriers which might prevent them from fulfilling their potential as adults, either in education, employment or in the relationships they form through the rest of their lives.

We know that significant adults who play a part in the life of children and young people who have been adopted from care have an extremely important role in helping these young people realise their ambitions and aspirations.

Your role as an adoptive parent is absolutely crucial as you provide them with the most stable family environment whilst you support them through their very important journey in education. This support and encouragement that you give to your children about their education is crucial for their future success.

This guide is the second in a series of education resources co-produced by the Welsh Government and Adoption UK (Cymru), following *Getting it right for every child: a school's guide to working with adoptive families*.

This resource is designed to help you work effectively in partnership with education professionals, particularly those in school, and to help equip you with the knowledge and skills to do so. You can help identify the learning and emotional needs of the children in your charge, to ensure the right services are in place at important transition points to build resilience and support them in achieving improved outcomes.

We want you to gain confidence to work on an equal footing with your partners in education and to feel empowered to challenge schools when things are not going as you think they should.

This guide is an important step towards equipping you with a common language and confidence to do exactly that and to ensure that your children are able to access the right support in school when they need it. Without that support, children and young people will continue to face barriers in achieving their true potential.

We are grateful to Adoption UK (Cymru) in its continuing commitment and hard work in producing this guide, but also to the adoptive parents that have worked with the organisation to share their experiences and help support adoptive parents of the future.

We are all unified by the single goal of ensuring that children and young people who have been adopted perform as well as all other children in Wales and achieve the very best they can and reach their full potential in life.

Introduction

Learning can only take place if children feel safe. That does not come naturally for children who have had bad experiences with adults in their early years. Research tells us that around 60 % of all children have unmet attachment needs which impact on their experience in the classroom¹. 100% of adopted children have experienced loss of their primary attachment figure and some will have had several moves in the care system before being placed in their adoptive families.

The booklet is informed by recommendations from internationally renowned experts on trauma and attachment. It is written by Ann Bell, who is an adoptive parent and Director of Adoption UK in Wales. The content is based on contributions from other adopters, adopted children and young people, teachers and those responsible for looked after and adopted children in local authorities. Adoption UK would like to thank all those who contributed to the production of the booklet.



The Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

In 2017 changes were made to the PDG including a change of name from the Pupil Deprivation Grant to Pupil Development Grant and an increase in the size of the grant to children in the early years. The portion of this grant which is available to provide additional education support for looked after and previously looked after and now adopted children is administered by the regional education consortia (details of the consortia are given in the first booklet in this series). Each consortia uses the grant in different ways to meet their priorities for these learners but across Wales funding has been used for training to increase the skills, knowledge and understanding of teaching and support staff in schools so that they are better able to meet the needs of children who have attachment difficulties or who have experienced early trauma.



1 Sloan, S., Winter, K., Lynn, F., Gildea, A. & Connolly, P. (2016) *The impact and cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation, Queen's University Belfast.

Choosing a school

As parents we have to make a number of key choices on behalf of our children. The choice of a suitable school is one of those. For some parents the choice will appear obvious - they may, for example, live close to a primary school with a good reputation and all the other children in the area attend that school. For others, there may be a number of possible options. If children are placed for adoption when they are already of compulsory school age - that is the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday- then decisions about which school the child will attend will need to be made in consultation with social workers who are involved in the adoption as there is still shared parental responsibility at that point. If the child is placed and the adoption order granted when they are still very young, all the decisions are for the adopter to make.

Priority Access

Children who are looked after or who are previously looked after, perhaps as a result of being adopted, have been given priority for school admissions both during and after the timetabled admissions process. This doesn't mean that they have an absolute right to attend a specific school that is expressed as a preference, but it does give them priority in the admissions process. It also allows such children to access a school place part way through the school year if necessary and in some cases even if the class is full. The current statutory guidance about school admission in Wales can be found at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130715-admin-codes-en.pdf>

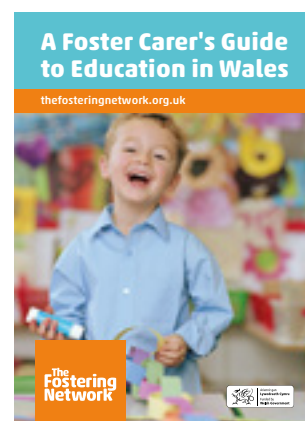
The 7 top things to look for when choosing a school for your adopted child.

- 1 A good understanding of attachment and the impact of early trauma on learning
- 2 Friendly and approachable senior staff
- 3 Support for social skills
- 4 Extensive use of nurture groups
- 5 Small classes
- 6 A relationship based discipline system
- 7 Small school

Most of these things will not be set out on a school website, nor commented on in an inspection report. The only way to find out if your local school can offer these strengths is to arrange to visit and speak to the head teacher and the staff. You can ring the schools you are interested in and arrange to visit each of them in the year prior to the term when the school admission forms need to be completed. It's a good idea to go armed with a number of questions based on this table, so you feel prepared. Remember this is going to be one of the most significant choices you make for your child so it is worth doing your research.

Call the AUK Wales helpline on 02920 230319 if you want to talk to someone about this further.

The Fostering Network has recently produced a very useful **booklet**. This guide sets out the school stages; what is covered in the curriculum in each stage and how your child's progress in school is assessed.



New Curriculum for Wales

In October 2015, the plan for realising a new curriculum for Wales was announced. This followed the publication of *Successful futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales* in February 2015. The new curriculum is being developed through a Pioneer Schools Network to co-design, consult, inform, support and build capacity in schools across Wales. They are working in an all-Wales partnership with the Welsh Government, Estyn, Higher Education, international experts, business and other key partners.

The new curriculum proposed in *Successful Futures* is broad, balanced, inclusive and challenging with the four purposes outlines at its heart to ensure that children and young people develop as:

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical, informed citizens
- Healthy, confident individuals

Starting school

All children in Wales are entitled to a free part-time, good quality, early education place the term following their third birthday as part of the Foundation Phase – the Welsh curriculum for 3 to 7 year olds. The majority of these places are made available in a school nursery, but many will also be available in private and voluntary sector nurseries which local authorities have approved to deliver early education. The minimum requirement is that children should receive 10 hours of education a week before they start statutory schooling in Reception Year, the year they turn 5. However, local authorities will often provide more than this, with some providing full – time education from the term following a child's 4th birthday. Local authorities will also vary in terms of the extent to which they place children in private sector or voluntary sector nurseries or in n

more information on what schools/settings in your area are approved as early education providers please contact your local Family Information Service (FIS) who will be able to offer help and advice.

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en>

Adopted children are likely to be less emotionally mature and will almost certainly have had breaks in their primary attachment relationships. It is therefore often helpful to prioritise the relationship between the child and the adoptive parent over the potential new relationships which the child will make with teachers and other children. Every child and parent relationship is different, but most adopters will say that the time they spent with children at home before the additional pressure of school allowed them to build stronger attachment bonds with their children which paid off in the longer term. If you feel that your child is not ready to start early education, at the same time as other children of the same age, it is recommended that you speak to the head teacher of the school or the leader of the nursery who can make alternative access arrangements, such as delaying entering education until later in the school year or allowing your child to go part time for a bit longer.

Whatever your decision about starting school, it is a good idea to spend some time preparing both your child and the school so that the first experiences are good ones. When a child has had changes of care givers they are more likely to experience separation anxiety when they are away from their current main attachment person. In order to feel safe and confident they need to feel that the adults around them understand them well from the start. One way to do this can be to develop an 'all about me' document. This one sided profile which tells the adults what things the child likes, doesn't like, is interested in and what they would like the adults around them to do to support them. There are lots of templates on the internet which can be used and you can tailor it to the needs of your child. Excellent communication between parents and schools /nurseries is essential. Some parents find the use of a home school booklet helpful or the direct email address of the teacher/nursery so that contact can be made easily. Don't be afraid to ask the school for these things as experience tells us it can make a big difference to your child.



Elen's Story

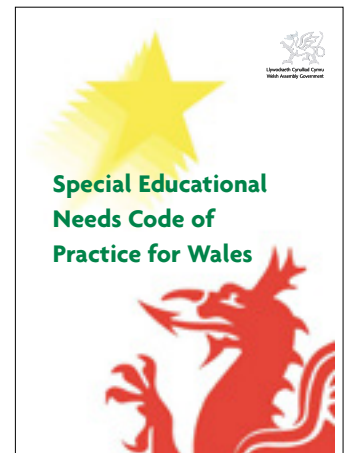
Elen age 3 was placed with her adoptive mum, a single adopter in May and was able to spend the summer settling in, beginning to process her grief from leaving her good foster placement and build new bonds with her new mum. Following discussions with the local primary school, and the support of the adoption support social worker, they helped the school understand what Elen had been through and how that might affect her sense of security. A slow, phased introduction to the nursery class took place during the September term starting with two half days a week and building up to five half days by November by which time she was 4 years old. As Christmas approached it was clear that Elen was becoming distressed and clinging to her mum and not wanting to go into school. Both school and her mum felt that this was due to memories of past Christmases with her foster parents so they made a decision to go back to two mornings a week over December and start to build up again in January. This worked well. By March Elen was attending for five half days again and by the following September she felt really positive about school and was attending full time.

Special educational needs



We know that children who have experienced early neglect, trauma and less than ideal pregnancies are much more likely to have additional needs, some of which will impact on their school life. The Children in Need Census for 2016 shows that around two thirds of looked after children in Wales have some sort of special educational need. This is well above the Welsh national average of 22% in the pupil population². Evidence from the specialist CAMHS service³ for looked after and adopted children in London suggests that the special educational needs of this group of children are often complex and with overlapping symptoms suggestive of a range of neurological disorders such as ASD, ADHD, Anxiety disorders, Sensory Processing difficulties and attachment difficulties as well as more usual learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The picture can be a complex one and symptoms often change as the child gets older.

Wales is currently revising the way in which children with special educational needs are supported and a summary of the changes which will be taking place over the next few months and years can be found here <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/161212-aln-factsheet-5-en.pdf>. Until such time as the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill becomes law and the necessary provisions within it are implemented, the existing legal framework remains in place. Therefore schools must have regard to the SEN Code of Practice for Wales. See <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf>



Children are identified as having a special educational need by class teachers who would discuss this with the schools SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator). If you have concerns as a parent you should discuss these initially with the class teacher or the SENCO. It is not unusual for children to appear to cope well in school but for parents to see behaviour at home which is triggered by stress associated with school - reluctance to attend school, rows over doing homework etc. Good communication between home and school is essential.

Schools use a graduated response to supporting children and each level of support is outlined in the table below. Each local authority is required to publish their policies on supporting children with special educational needs and this is updated regularly and can be found on the local authority website. They will also provide a parents guide which explains the details for your local authority.

2 <http://www.assembly.wales/Research%20Documents/RN15-013%20-%20SEN/RN15-013.pdf>

3 Baldock, E and Woolgar, M.(2015) Attachment Disorder versus more common problems in adopted and looked after children. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Vol 20, issue 1.

Special educational needs

When some additional need is identified and following a conversation with the school SENCO the school should begin to put in place a graduated response. The stages of this graduated response are outlined in the table below. The IEP (Individual Education Plan) is the key document which sets out the actions to be taken and the goals which are being aimed at. Parents should be involved in agreeing and monitoring the contents of that plan.

Action	Who is involved	What happens next
School Action	This is additional help within the school.	An Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be created which sets out what action will be taken, by whom and what the target is for that action. The plan should be agreed by parents and children and reviewed at least twice a year.
School Action Plus	This involves some support from outside of the school such as regular visits from a member of the behaviour support team, or some specialist reading and writing support which is bought in by the school	This will usually be a targeted and time limited intervention which is reviewed during and after it has been completed. The IEP is continued and reviewed.
Assessment by Educational Psychologist	Schools are able to refer a very small number of pupils to one of the educational psychologists who work for the local authority. Usually only one or two children a year can be referred by each school so schools may have to make difficult choices about who gets a referral. It is possible to pay privately for assessments. The educational psychologist will do a number of assessments with your child and then talk to you about the results and what they may mean. A report will be produced and shared with you as the parents.	The report will make recommendations for further action to be taken by the school and if appropriate for other action to be taken. This action may involve other agencies such as the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) if the tests suggest that the child may be on the ASD spectrum or have ADHD for example.
Statement of Special Educational Need	For more information about the process of assessment for a statement of special educational need refer to the Code of practice http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf	

For support and advice about special educational need provision, and the additional learning needs provision when that comes into effect, contact Adoption UK on 029 2023 0319 or your local authority website under the section on special educational need or your local Parent Partnership.

Future Plans

The Additional Learning Needs system which is going through the legislative changes covers learners (0 years to 25 years of age) and emphasises the importance of children and parents being engaged fully in the process of developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for children which set out the additional learning provision they will need and how they will get it. The IDPs will replace statements of special educational need and other non-statutory plans, such as Individual Education Plans, which are currently used.

In addition to school based support, there are other sources of support for families and, for example, there is some financial assistance available for parents whose children require more than normal amounts of support to find out more about Disability Living Allowance: <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children/overview>

Abbreviations

As with any specialist area, there is a lot of jargon which goes along with supporting learners who have special educational needs and this page aims to introduce you to some terms which you may come across. They are all taken from this document:

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/guidance-for-school-information-management-systems/?lang=en> which gives other useful information about different types of educational provision.

Abbreviations

SEN	Special Educational Needs
LA	Local Authority
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
EYA	Early Years Action
EYA+	Early Years Action Plus
SA	School Action
SA+	School Action Plus
DYSL	Dyslexia
DYSC	Dyscalculia
DYSP	Dyspraxia
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
GLD	General Learning Difficulties
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
SLCD	Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
HI	Hearing Impairment
VI	Visual Impairment
MSI	Multi Sensory Impairment
PMED	Physical and/or Medical Difficulties
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
IEP	Individual Education Plan
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LSA	Learning Support Assistant

There are lots of organisations out there to help parents whose children have special educational needs. Some really useful links are provided on page 16.

Transitions – small

We all find change difficult. Just think about how unsettling a reorganisation at work can feel. For children who are anxious and who view the world as an unsafe place, even a small change or transition can be hard to cope with. Moving from home to school in the morning is a transition, moving from class to class during the day and from one activity to another can feel really unsettling for adopted children. To help children we can use a number of strategies including:

- Prepare the child using visual and written prompts so they know what is coming next and know what to expect.
- When something happens which is unusual – school trips, supply teachers, changes in the normal curriculum for example, it is helpful if children can be warned in advance and told exactly what will happen and who they can turn to for support.



Some children may find even small transitions really difficult to cope with and those are the children who will need additional support. Generally the most useful approach is to acknowledge that the child finds transitions difficult but then go on to explain how they will be supported to cope with the change. Denying their reality and telling them not to be silly, or that it will be fine doesn't tend to be effective.

Some families find that funny rituals can help with transitions – a funny dance to get out the house, or turning getting dressed into a race or a game, can help children move onto the next thing.

Homework

Homework is often a source of great friction for adopted children, with parents feeling that they must ensure that children do their homework even if it causes real difficulties at home. For children who find school challenging, the idea of having to bring some of the school home with them in the form of homework can feel just too much. There is little evidence that homework makes any difference to children's overall attainment educationally and some primary schools have stopped giving homework as a result. If children find school work interesting and stimulating they will want to find out more when they are at home or practice the skills they have learnt in school. Many adoptive parents have decided not to fight homework battles and in these circumstances it is important that you discuss your concerns with the school and the difficulties that completion of homework is causing. Some children will find it easier to do homework in a homework club since that keeps the home/school boundary clearer.



Transitions - large

Starting school, moving between primary and secondary school and moving on to further or higher education are massive transitions for all young people and particularly scary for adopted children who have already experienced transitions from one primary carer to another in their lives. Preparation is the key to making it effective, and for children who are anxious in school that preparation needs to start at least a year before the move takes place. As when choosing a school in the first place, the choice of secondary school or Further Education provision needs a good deal of research and consideration. Don't be afraid to visit the possible schools, colleges and other learning providers and discuss your choices with the SENCo or Educational Psychologist well in advance of putting in applications. Children and Young people should be welcomed for visits over the months before the move and it is important to acknowledge that leaving behind one school community and joining another one will bring with it both sadness and joy. Adopted children may well have unresolved grief from the previous moves they have made in their lives and this can come to the surface when facing another move.

Different local authorities organise their secondary provision for young people with additional learning needs in different ways – some use mainly special schools and others have most of the provision in units within mainstream schools. You can find out from your local authority web site what provision is available in your area and then ask staff in your child's existing school and other parents their opinion about the provision which would be most suitable and make appointments to visit. It is at least as big a choice as moving house so expect to spend a lot of time planning it.

Katie's Story

Katie coped fairly well in primary school but once she started in secondary school she found it much harder and began to say she hated school.

Katie struggles to organise herself. She often forgets or misplaces essential equipment. When the class is set a task, Katie finds it hard to keep focused, and seems to lose her way. She often misses deadlines and hands homework in late or not at all. Even regular activities, such as getting changed for PE, can be difficult for her to complete unsupported. Following discussions between her parents and the SENCo it was recognised that Katie has poor executive functioning skills. Executive function is very much like a manager in the brain that allows individuals to complete higher level tasks that require analysis, organisation, planning and decision making. These skills develop from infancy, but with a particular boost around puberty. We expect younger children to need some support in managing complex or multi-step tasks, but children with poor executive functioning skills may need support throughout their school life. Life in secondary school demands far greater executive functioning skills and Katie needed more support than she had in primary school.

Once that was understood the school provided visual timetables, checklists and at home her parents helped her to check the contents of her bag each morning. With more scaffolding and support than other children her age Katie was able to manage better and to enjoy school again.



Social life in school

Being successful in school is not just about keeping up academically. We expect children to get on with up to 29 other children in their class, cope with team sports, team projects and unstructured time in the playground. All of that takes a very high level of social and emotional skills and we know from research that children who have had attachment breaks and early trauma and neglect are often highly anxious and emotionally and socially behind their peers⁴. For many adopted children the emotional and social challenges of school cause them more difficulties than the academic part and this is the area in which they will need most support.

Finding a passion or hobby that children and young people enjoy can create an outlet that reduces negative feelings and helps stabilise mood. The relationships which develop with others around a shared passion are very important too.

Participation in sporting or cultural activities can have a dramatic impact in increasing the confidence, motivation and aspirations of young people, and it's a proven means of helping disaffected young people or those who do not see themselves as academic to actively engage with learning. It can also be an extremely effective way of helping young people to improve their communication skills and their ability to work in teams. The advice is to go slowly when considering enrichment activities, and work with the school to find an idea or ideas that work for your child. Let your child have a say in what they enjoy doing and what makes them feel good. The ideas they suggest may surprise you or be unconventional, but praising and supporting their efforts, and helping to create a fun, rewarding and enjoyable learning environment will help them engage in the education more widely.

Social and emotional skills can be taught and learnt as can academic subjects. Nurture Groups are one example of an intervention which has been proven to be effective in teaching those skills.

<https://nurturegroups.org/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/ngn-commissioned-research/nurture-group-census> this link shows you the local authorities and schools which have nurture groups and which completed the 2014 census about their groups so you can look for the nearest school in your area.

There are other interventions such as that offered by the specialist behaviour support staff from the local authority who will come out and work with pupils on a one to one basis in some situations. To access any specialist provision the school will first need to evidence the need on the child's IEP and then show that they have tried to meet that need from within the school. As a parent you can ask that the child's emotional and social skills are identified along side academic skills as being in need of support during the IEP discussions.



4 Biehal, N., Ellison, S., Sinclair, I., & Baker, C. (2010). *Belonging and permanence: Outcomes in long-term foster care and adoption*. London: BAAF.

Schools trips and residential



Most primary and secondary schools encourage children to take part in school trips and residential courses each year. Adopted children may find these fun and exciting or they may present a level of uncertainty that makes already high levels of anxiety unbearable. Preparation and a shared understanding amongst the adults of what each child finds scary and what helps them to feel safe is key to enabling all children to enjoy the additional activities.

Don't be afraid to ask the school to make some modifications to the trip plans to make it possible for your child to enjoy at least some of the activity - if they find the coach trip there too stressful you could arrange to take them in the car and they can join in the activity after that for example. Or they may need to be assigned to a particular teacher or TA for the trip, someone they feel safe with who will understand that they may need more reassurance.

When children find over night residential trips too hard to manage it may be possible to arrange for parents to stay in a nearby hotel and children to join them for sleep but still access all the day and evening activities.

Accepting that some things will seem really challenging to our children then enables us to find ways to overcome those challenges.



Post 16 options

Compulsory mainstream school stops at the end of June in the school year when a young person is 16. However, most young people continue in some form of education or training programme until they are at least 18. Options available to young people include continuing into a sixth form, going to a Further Education (FE) college, or it could be through an apprenticeship (where learning takes place in the workplace) or a traineeship (which is designed to develop skills and help young people progress into employment).

Post-16 learning providers can offer a lot of additional support to children who have had time in the care system or who have an identified additional learning need. It is worth looking carefully at the UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) form when applying to higher education, and ticking the box which says that they have spent time in the care system; this information will be taken into account when the university considers applications, and will be a gateway to additional support if it is needed. Universities and other post-16 learning providers have a duty to protect learners' personal information, so young people should not feel that they will be stigmatised or singled out as a result of providing this information.

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF)

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) has been developed to support those at risk of not making a positive transition when they leave school. The framework brings together key elements of effective practice, proven to help deliver positive outcomes for young people and provides a systematic mechanism for local authorities to identify those in need of support, establish the support available, and to track progress of young people as they make the transition from compulsory education into further education, training or employment.

Each local authority has put in place an Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator (EPC).

The EPC plays a critical role in implementing the YEPF working closely with Careers Wales to provide the operational leadership needed to identify the level of risk of young people and the specific support needed to help them make a positive progression.



What if they refuse to go to school?

There is a clear distinction between truancy and refusal to attend school which is due to anxiety. Truancy, where parents/carers do not actively attempt to get the children or young people into school can become an offence with consequences and court appearances. School refusal, where parents/carers are working with the school and the education authority to get the child/young person into school should be treated as a special educational need or a mental health problem and may require assessment by an educational psychologist to understand why they do not want to go to school. Children with ASD, for instance, can find the school environment particularly challenging and sometimes refuse to attend. If children or young people are frequently reluctant to attend and display real distress when attending this can lead to more serious mental health difficulties if they are pushed too far. There are support groups for parents whose children refuse to attend school and lots of resources and case studies which can help provide ideas and solutions.



The key is to work closely with the school and other appropriate agencies (e.g. the Education Welfare Service) to identify and support school-refusing children. Schools will be flexible and understanding when they know that parents are doing their best to get their children in school. Schools have the discretion to agree a flexible time table with some days or half days of the week being times when parents can educate their children outside of the school. There is no obligation for schools to agree to this but it can be considered as an alternative to removing the child completely and home schooling them.

What happens if schools exclude children or young people?

A pupil can be excluded from a school or a pupil referral unit if they have seriously breached the school's behaviour policy or if they pose a risk to the education or welfare of other learners. There is clear guidance provided by Welsh Government outlining the procedures to be applied in these situations. These procedures apply to all maintained schools, including nursery schools and PRUs, and all learners in them, including any who are below or above compulsory school age. They do not apply to independent schools or sixth form colleges, as they determine their own exclusion procedures.

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/010415-exclusion-from-schools-and-pupil-referral-units-en.pdf>

Self Care for Parents

Parenting is challenging for everyone and parenting children who have had a difficult start in life can be exceptionally challenging. That is why it is essential that parents get support for themselves and take time to look after themselves. Adoption UK offers support group, courses and suggested reading for friends and families of adoptive parents to help them understand

and support families. Don't be afraid to ask for support and ensure you get some time off to relax so that you are able to keep going.



Mindfulness can really help to reduce stress and anxiety and there are lots of useful apps and videos available to help you learn how to practice mindfulness during your busy days. Developing a good understanding of the way in which our children's brains have developed and the way this effects how they view and interact with the world is probably one of the most useful things we can do as adoptive parents. Adoption UK and After Adoption provide a range of parenting courses which will help with this.

Call the Wales Adoption Support Helpline

029 2023 0319 – open Monday to Friday from 10am until 2.30pm for support, advice or just to have a chat and unload to someone who really understands what it is like to be an adoptive parent.

There is support for families of children with disabilities in Wales to help financially with things like short breaks from the responsibilities of caring or family holidays where there is enough support for everyone to be able to relax. Details can be found through this link to the Family Fund website:

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/FAQs/wales-what-can-we-apply-for>

Education consortia



The GwE consortia covers the six North Wales local authorities of Ynys Mon Gwynedd, Conwy, Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham.

www.gwegogledd.cymru/



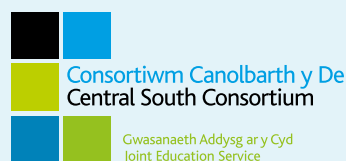
ERW is the consortia which covers the six authorities of Carmarthenshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

www.erw.wales/about-us



The EAS consortia covers the five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen and Monmouthshire.

www.sewales.org.uk



Central South Consortia covers the five authorities of Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend, Merthyr and the Vale of Glamorgan.

www.cscjes.org.uk/

Contact points and links

The Welsh Government's Families First programme operates in all local authorities in Wales and aims to help families build resilience and confidence through holistic, multi-agency systems of the support. More information on your local Families First teams are available from your local authority or through your local Family Information Service, details of which can be found here:

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en>

Cerebra is a charity supporting families where children have brain conditions. They have lots of useful advice and support including detailed support in completing DLA applications.

<http://w3.cerebra.org.uk>

SNAP Cymru provides support for parents with school issues and works right across Wales.

<http://www.snapcymru.org/help-for-families/parent-partnership-service>



This is a new website for anyone who needs to know more about children or adults who have ASD. It is full of resources including videos to help explain the difficulties that people with ASD face. Many of the strategies will be useful for children who do not have a diagnosis of autism but who have high anxiety, difficulties with transitions and sensory difficulties.

<http://www.asdinfo.wales.co.uk/home>

Your regional adoption service can provide information and support to your family and if your needs are adoption specific you can ask for an assessment of need to be carried out which should then lead to some additional services being offered.



The National Adoption Service website has contact details for each of the regional adoption teams and the voluntary organizations who can offer support.

<http://www.adoptcymru.com/adoption-support>



The Adoption UK website has a range of resources and training designed to make education a successful environment for children who have suffered early trauma, neglect and abuse.

Adoption UK offers training for schools in Wales. Called *Getting it Right for Every Child* - the training looks at the causes of trauma and the impact of developmental trauma on learning.

<http://www.adoptionuk.org>