

## School Exclusion Guidance for Foster Carers

Embrace fostering aim to ensure our children have individual needs led support in school, this is fundamentally important when children face suspension or exclusion.

Children in foster care are statistically more likely to be excluded from school than their non-care experienced peers. The risk of exclusion is higher for children with additional learning needs.

This can feel at times like the decision to exclude children from school is taken rather than the child unique challenges being considered. This said the team around the child have to advocate for children.

### Exclusions and Suspensions Explained.

Exclusions and suspensions are decided by the Head teacher after a review of the behaviour policy and exploring disciplinary procedures.

**Suspensions** are a set number of days a child cannot attend their school, usually if the child broken a rule in the school behaviour policy. This can be for a maximum of 24 days per school year.

**Exclusions or Permanent exclusion** means the child can no longer attend their school unless-

- The school governing board says they can return
- The headteacher cancels the exclusion

### Guidance on school Exclusion

- If your foster child is excluded or suspended, the team around the child will consider the following steps in formulating a plan for your child.
- Children in care have additional legal protections under education law. Headteachers have to consider the child's unique needs and circumstances before making any decisions about suspension or exclusions. Within the school foster children should have a designated teacher who understand the child's background/ACE and who will be their voice and advocate for them with school. All foster children will have a person from their Local Authority virtual school who should have overview of the child's situation. The Virtual Head must be notified of school exclusions. The virtual school will ensure foster children are advocated for appropriately when suspensions or exclusions are considered.
- A really important factor for the team around the child is to build a positive working relationship with the school. Foster carers are encouraged to form relationships with teachers, SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) and the Designated Teacher for looked-after children.

- Transparent and fluid communication ensures that the school are aware of children's needs, change in circumstances etc and this can ensure that school are equipped to provide needs led support. PEPs (Personal Education Plans) occur termly but could be requested more frequently.
- Many foster children face challenges and this stems from their ACE or unmet emotional needs and /or learning needs. Sometimes children have missed much education and may feel left behind from their peers. If a foster carer or any other professional recognises a child is struggling, a practice intervention approach is required, seeking extra tutoring, adjustments or additional assessments for example. This may prevent escalation to exclusion or suspension.
- It is useful if foster carers are familiar and have access to the school's behaviour policies and how disciplinary matters are handled by the school and is usually on the school website. This allows the team around the child to look at the displayed behaviour of the child and how this matches with the information in the behaviour policy. It is important to always hear the child's view and perceptions. An exclusion should be a last resort. It is permitted that the team around the child can question or challenge a school's behaviour policy and consequences.
- If a foster child is excluded and you feel it is unfair, this can be challenged. It needs to be considered if the school used all available support and adjustments prior to the decision to exclude the child. It can be explored if the school have followed due processes and the foster child's social worker, and virtual school have been involved in the decision. If procedure has not been followed this could deem the exclusion unlawful. An appeal process would start with the school's governors, and if it was not overturned an independent review can be conducted by the local authority. A local government ombudsman establishes whether a case was handled appropriately but they cannot overturn the exclusion.
- There are some alternatives agreed by the Virtual school, that can be offered opposed to exclusion. This may be pastoral interventions, access to other services/schools/off site support, assessments, or reduced timetables. The person with parental responsibility does need to agree to the alternative provision.
- Any meetings convened pertaining to the exclusion are required to be properly attended, and those persons can advocate strongly for the child. Evidence of support needs and discussions with social workers and any negative impact on the child's stability and education need to be considered. It is vitally important foster carers attend PEPs to understand how a school is supporting the child and have a say in how pupil premium is used to meeting learning needs.
- It is vitally important that foster children feel valued and supported in their school, and this impacts in their engagement, wellbeing and conduct/behaviours. This supports children in investing in their education, and a sense of belonging to the school community and engaging in school activities. We all want children to have a passion and zest for learning.

## Embrace Fostering Advocacy for children

- SSW will support foster carers in-
- Ensuring children access full time and appropriate education that is individual to the child's unique needs.
- Advocacy in ensuring the child is everyone paramount concern and their rights are protected.
- Support in attending PEPs and exclusion/ suspension meeting or Appeal process, independent review panel.
- Support in challenging school exclusions to prioritise the wellbeing of the child and upholding the child's rights to thrive and learn in a supportive learning environment.
- Support in building strong relationships with educational professionals.
- Support in ensuring all children are safeguarded

## Additional information

[School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK](#)

[School exclusions: guide for parents - GOV.UK](#)