

## Promoting the Education of Children and Young People in Care

As foster parents, like any parent, you want the children in your care to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential. You know that a good education is key to achieving that. But children in care often experience barriers that other children don't, and as a result, there is a significant gap between their achievement and that of their peers.

For example, in 2024:

1. In early years, 40% achieved a good level of development, compared to 68% of all children.
2. In year six, 34% achieved the expected level in SATs, compared to 61% of all pupils.
3. In year eleven, 7% achieved a grade 5 'good pass' in English and mathematics at GCSE, compared to 40% of pupils not in care.
4. 55% had Special Educational Needs, compared to 18% of all pupils.

This is why it is critical that they attend school regularly and receive every available support.

### The importance of good attendance

City of Wolverhampton Council's policy on Promoting the Education of Children and Young People in care states:

**Foster parents should not take children & young people in care out of school for holidays during term time.** Social care will not give authorisation for children's holidays during term time, unless in very exceptional circumstances. If a foster parent feels that exceptional circumstances apply in such a case, they should submit a request to their child's social worker, who will forward the request in writing to the Virtual School Head. As the authorising officer on behalf of the local authority, the VSH will consider the request and provide a written response to the social worker within 10 working days of receipt of the request. The VSH will discuss the request with the child's school and other managers and arrive at a decision.

The policy is available here:

<https://wcconline.sharepoint.com/sites/CAYPPolicy/Shared%20Documents/CYPiC%20Education%20Policy%202024updateV1.4.pdf>

All requests should be submitted to the local authority first, before contacting the child's school. As a rule, however, holidays should not be taken in term time and only in exceptional circumstances will be agreed.

Have a think about your child's attendance at school.

There are **365 days in a year.**

They have a possible **190 days** in school each year.

So, they have **175** days a year **outside** of school.

Where does that mean they are on this chart?

Attendance Percentage	Number of days lost	Number of weeks lost	Number of hours lost
100	0	0	0
95	10	2	57
90	19	4	114
85	29	6	171
80	38	8	228

Consider: if a pupil has 95% attendance – while that *sounds* high - they are missing **two full weeks** of schooling in that year. The school curriculum is packed and fast-paced, and during that time, they will have missed the teaching of important knowledge and skills. How will they catch up on lost learning?

Small changes in attendance can have a big impact. DfE research has found that:

- Missing just 10 days of year 6 reduced the likelihood of reaching the expected standard in SAT tests by around 25%.
- Missing just 10 days of year 11 reduced the likelihood of achieving grade 5 in English and Maths by around 50%.
- At both primary and secondary stage, moving up a single attendance band by attending school 2 extra weeks a year is associated with an increased chance of achieving good results by at least 30% (primary) and 10% (secondary) (Department for Education 2025).

So, when a child misses school due to a holiday in term time, the implications for their attendance and learning can be more significant than you might think. And that is without considering the attainment gap between children and young people in care and their peers.

Foster parents have a pivotal role supporting the education of children and young people in their care. As well as ensuring good attendance and punctuality, and the necessary school uniform and equipment, this can include:

- Attending Personal Education Plan meetings (as well as parents' evenings and other school events) contributing fully to the discussion and planning, and securely retaining a copy of the child's up-to-date PEP.
- Providing a suitably quiet and comfortable space for homework, with a desk, stationary and other necessary equipment such as appropriate books, computer and internet access

- Encouraging and helping with reading, writing, homework, and study skills such as revision and homework planning. Simply helping them to be organised can be so beneficial.
- Promoting attendance at clubs and other positive activities, both in and out of school
- Maintaining regular contact with their child's school.

### **The Virtual School**

The Virtual School Team promotes the education of children in care and previously in care, in accordance with our statutory duties. The wide range of support on offer, along with lots of advice and resources, plus contact details, is on our website:

[www.wolvesvirtualschool.co.uk](http://www.wolvesvirtualschool.co.uk)

We purchase access to *Britannica School*, an excellent online study resource, for all of our children and young people in care and their foster parents. See website below. Enter password Wolves1 to access all the functions on offer.

[Wolverhampton Virtual School](http://Wolverhampton%20Virtual%20School)

