

# The Essential Guide

**How to help your foster child to maximise their  
outcomes at secondary school**

**A guide for foster carers of pupils in  
Year 6 to Year 11**





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## **Introduction**

Children in Care (CIC) may have experienced disrupted education due to various reasons, such as lack of previous attendance; the impact of abuse/neglect upon learning and behaviour in school; or changes of placements, areas and schools once entering care. This will have an impact on how well they do in school, their behaviour and how they feel about themselves. It is vital that a child's educational arrangements and needs are discussed with the child's social worker and the supervising social worker, before the placement starts.

As a Foster Carer you play a vital role in supporting your child to have appropriate access to learning and to achieve the best outcomes possible. Your role includes:

- working closely with the child's school or other educational placement
- taking an active interest in the child's homework
- encouraging a child to value learning
- supporting a child's attendance at school
- advocating for the child's individual needs

The purpose of this booklet is to support you as a foster carer to help your child to achieve the best outcomes at GCSE possible. Each child will have a very different experience of education and will have a different starting point when they enter into Year 7. It is important that they develop and build upon their ability to study effectively, and the preparation for achieving the best possible grades at GCSE should begin from the beginning of high school. Whatever your starting point is with your child, you can make a huge difference by supporting their education and encouraging them to aim high.

## **What is a virtual school's role in supporting the education of children in care?**

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires councils in England to appoint a Virtual School Head to discharge the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its children in care. The Virtual School Head is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's children in care (CIC), including those placed outside the caring authority's boundaries.

The Ofsted inspection framework for local authority services to CIC has very clear expectations of the information that will be available to inspectors, and these expectations influence both the work of the Virtual School Head and the organisation of the Virtual School.

We offer support, guidance, training and challenge to ensure that educational services are effective in maximising the progress the progress that our children make in school. We do this through:

- Tracking academic progress, attendance, and exclusions of CIC
- Quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
- Providing support and challenge to schools to ensure that academic standards are raised for CIC
- Using our tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and challenging their settings to provide them with additional education support
- Ensuring Special Education Needs or Disability needs are identified and supported appropriately with an integrated plan

- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of the Pupil Premium Grant for CIC
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers
- Encouraging a culture that supports our young people to have high aspiration about their futures and removes barriers to further education
- Leading training for Designated Teachers, Social Workers, School Governors, Foster Carers and bespoke training for educational settings and staff in schools
- Providing advice to social workers and carers to ensure they contribute to the education outcomes of children on their case load or in their care placement
- Celebrating CIC achievements
- Supporting the delivery of the Children in Care Promise

### **Suffolk Virtual School Key Contacts:**

- Esther Das, Assistant Virtual School Head, Secondary Lead: call 07864 617292 or email [esther.das@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:esther.das@suffolk.gov.uk)
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- Virtual School Office: 01473 260818 or email [suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:suffolkvirtualschool@suffolk.gov.uk)

# Your Role as a Foster Carer



This section will help with:

- knowing what the national picture of attainment for children in care looks like and why your help to support your child's education is so vital
- being clear about your role in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process
- preparing for a PEP meeting
- finding out more about the PEP document and its role in your child's education
- talking to your child about their aspirations

## Your Role as a Foster Carer

### Setting the Scene: The Attainment of Children in Care

There is a significant gap between the achievements of children in care and those who are not looked after. This is evident through each stage in their education, and this is why the work that you do as a foster carer can make so much difference to your child's outcomes.

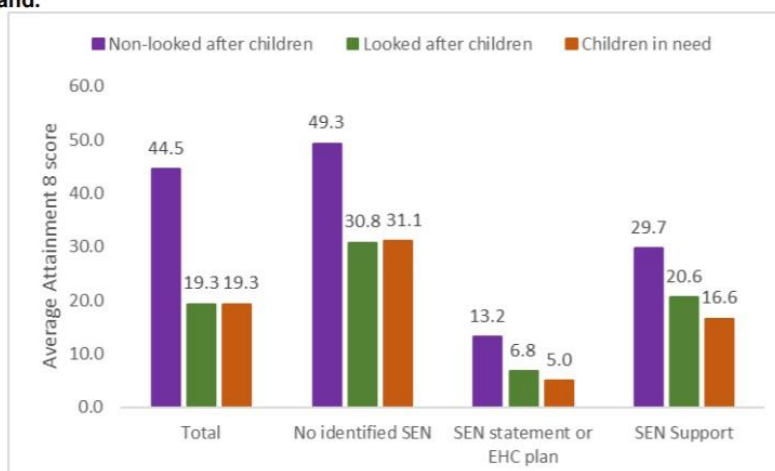
#### Key attainment statistics: (Source: *Statistics: Looked After Children, www.gov.uk*)

- Key Stage 1: In 2017, 51% of looked after children reached the expected standard in reading, 39% in writing, 46% in mathematics and 60% in science. (In comparison to 76%, 68%, 75% and 83% of all children, respectively.)
- Key Stage 2: In 2017, 32% of looked after children reached the expected standard combined reading, writing and mathematics. Nationally 61% of all children achieved expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Key Stage 4: The average Attainment 8 score for looked after children is 19.3 compared to 44.5 for non-looked after children.
- In 2017 17.5% achieved a pass (i.e. 4 and above) in English and mathematics as opposed to 58.5% for all children.

Where a pupil has a special education need, the attainment gap is widened further.

The figures show that 56% of looked after children at the end of key stage 4 have a special educational need (SEN) identified, compared to 48% of children in need and 14% of non-looked after children and attainment rates for children with a SEN are much lower.

**Figure 8: Average Attainment 8 score for looked after children, non-looked children and children in need, by SEN, 2017, England.**

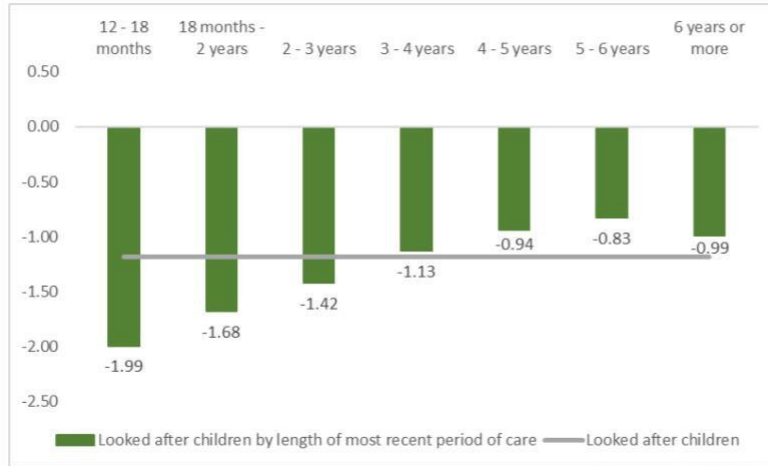


Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD



The length of time that a child is in care for has a significant impact on their attainment. As the chart below shows, the longer a child is in care, the higher their progress score:

**Figure 11: Average Progress 8 score for looked after children, by length of most recent period of care, 2017, England.**



Source: CLA-NPD

Given that a significant number of children enter care during their teens, this reinforces how important your role as a carer is to support your child to gain the best outcomes possible in what can be a turbulent and anxious time.

You will make a real difference to your child's outcomes and their life chances, and this booklet has been designed to support you in this role.

## The Personal Education Plan and your Role in the Process

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is central to improving educational outcomes for children in care. It is how the views of the school, parent/carer, other relevant professionals, and the child or young person are gathered to inform and shape the provision that will support the child to achieve the best grades possible. It considers what is going well and what is going less well, identifies the needs the plan should try to meet and how they will be met through the use of supported **SMART** targets.



Historically, the PEP meeting and the PEP document have been completed together. However, feedback from children in care showed that they felt that this did not promote a person-centred approach to meeting their needs. As a result, in Suffolk the PEP meeting and the PEP document have been separated, with the school taking the lead for the PEP document and the pupil's social worker taking the lead for the PEP meeting.

Schools have a statutory duty to complete a PEP each term. The PEP is a record of the provision that the school is putting in each term to support the pupil to make as much progress as possible.

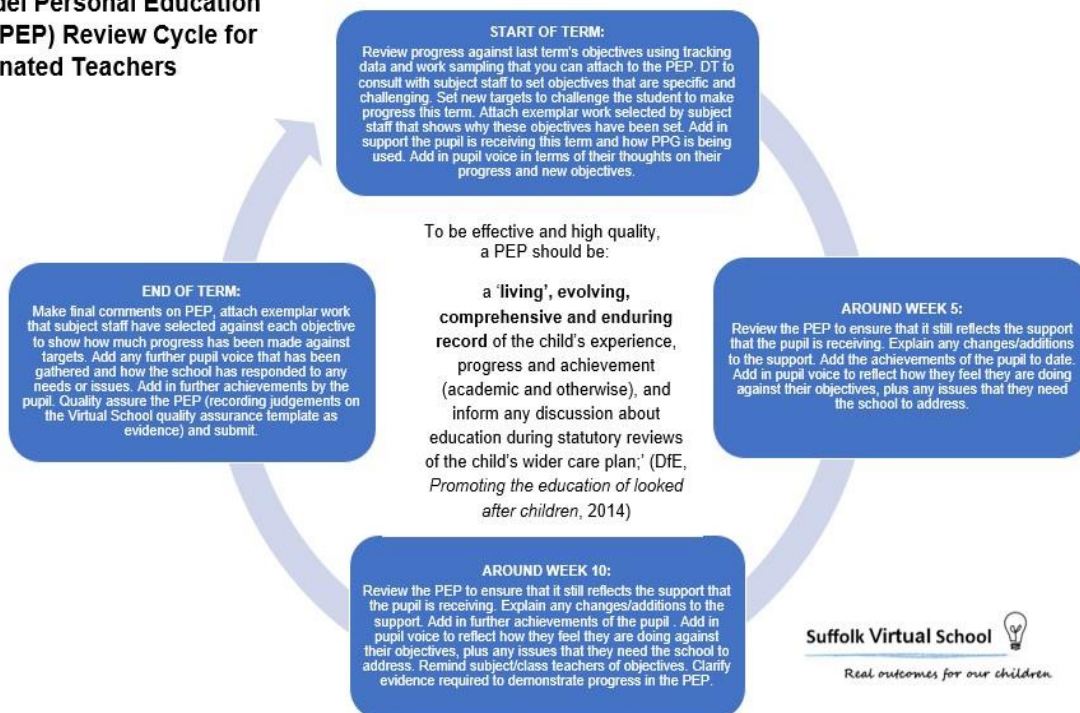
It should detail:

- The pupil's current attainment and the progress that the pupil has made against last term's term
- The learning targets that the pupil will be working during the term
- The academic and pastoral support that the pupil will receive to help them to achieve these targets, and how pupil premium funding will be spent to fund these strategies
- The pupil's wishes and feelings about school, their progress and the school's response to any arising actions

As best practice, schools have been advised to instigate the PEP at the beginning of term to outline an initial provision map, with changes and amendments to this throughout the term. The submission date is always near to the end of term so that the school can ensure that the PEP captures a holistic view of the provision and progress made.

The diagram below shows the best practice review cycle that the Suffolk Virtual School shares with schools:

## A Model Personal Education Plan (PEP) Review Cycle for Designated Teachers



(Source: Suffolk Virtual School)

The deadline for the PEP document is near to the end of each term so that the school can make sure that the provision and progress for the whole term has been recorded.

As a carer, you can ask the school for a copy of each PEP so that you are able to support your child to work on their targets during the term and to engage with the support in place.

## **The PEP Meeting**

There will be two PEP meetings per year.

As a foster carer, your role is to attend and contribute to the PEP meeting. There will be action points to support your child's learning agreed during the meeting and it is important that you monitor and support (and possibly implement) the implementation and impact of these actions, so that you are able to provide some feedback at the next PEP meeting, CiC review or even before these formal occasions if you are particularly concerned or pleased about them.

Your child should be set new learning targets at the beginning of each term so that they are able to work on achieving them during the term. These learning targets should focus upon subjects and skills that need attention to improve outcomes. If your child is already at least meeting their targets in their subjects, the learning objectives should reflect this and challenge them to achieve even higher outcomes.

The previous term's targets will have been reviewed with subject staff before new ones have been set, and the school (usually the Designated Teacher) will discuss with your child the progress they have made against these targets at the start of each term. You can ask the school for a copy of the targets set each term and the progress that has been reported against each one.

Once the targets have been set, the school should put into place appropriate interventions to help your child to achieve the targets set. There is no exhaustive list of intervention and support that can be put in place, and the choice of intervention used will, to a large extent, depend upon the way that the child best learns. For example, a one-to-one tuition session with their maths teacher after school every week on Mondays may suit a child who finds it hard to work with adults they don't know and learns better alone than with other children. On the other hand, a child may prefer working in a small group with an external tutor for a series of sessions during lunchtime as it caters for their dislike of being alone with an adult and they learn better through discussion.

Each term's PEP will require the school to gain 'pupil voice' relating to their wishes and feelings about school, their progress and their learning targets. The school is expected to respond to any concerns or issues that the child raises. You could speak to your child about who they are happy to talk to at school about these things and feed this back to the school's Designated Teacher. It may also be useful to discuss how your child is feeling about school on a regular basis so that you can encourage them to speak to a member of staff if an issue arises. They may be happier for you to raise it on their behalf.

After the PEP meeting, your role is to ensure that all agreed actions are implemented and reviewed. You can speak to the school's Designated Teacher and the child's social worker if you wish to follow these up during the term.

## **Pupil Premium Plus Funding**

The pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England.

It's designed to help disadvantaged pupils of all abilities perform better and close the gap between them and their peers. It is understood that looked after children have additional needs and vulnerabilities and as a cohort achieve significantly less well, and so they attract additional funding called PP+ Grant.

The Virtual School Head is responsible for allocating pupil premium plus funding to schools where there are children in care on roll.

For Suffolk children in care, their school will receive up to £600 of PP+ per term, providing that their Personal Education Plan (PEP) is submitted by the deadline and meets the required standard. In addition, the Suffolk Virtual School retains a proportion of PP+ to support pupils and schools through commissioned work with key services within the local authority, as well as our own outreach project. Schools can also apply for additional funding if a pupil or pupils require a level of support which costs more than the amount received during a term but will have a significant impact on their educational experience and progress.

The school is expected to use the funding to help each child in care to make the progress and achieve the outcomes expected of them. Schools should adopt an 'Above and Beyond' approach to implementing support and interventions so that children in care can make accelerated progress to meet or exceed their target grades.

The funding can be used in different ways, depending upon the needs of each child and the number of children in care in the school. A school, for example, may use some of the funding to pay for an individual child's one to one tuition, whole staff training about attachment or trauma, or a small group project involving a child in care as a 'stretch and challenge' opportunity for pupils who are exceeding their expected attainment.

The use of funding per term should be recorded by the school in the termly PEP document so that the virtual school can see how it has been used. The virtual school would expect to see a correlation between the targets set and needs outlined in a pupil's PEP and the interventions and support being funded by the pupil premium plus funding.

It would not be expected that pupil premium funding pays for leisure activities that occur in the evenings or weekend or school trips which are not linked to the curriculum.

For more information about the allocation and use of pupil premium please see our webpages.

### **The DfE guidance Allocations and Conditions of Grant**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>

## **Raising Aspirations**

Higher aspirations lead to higher outcomes.

It is not uncommon for vulnerable young people to arrive in care with low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence; difficult previous circumstances mean not every situation your child has been part of will have been an ideal environment for a child to be raised and nurtured.

Carers of vulnerable young people have a unique opportunity where they can influence their foster children for the better; by boosting shattered confidence and rebuilding self-esteem, foster children can follow a more successful path in life; nothing they don't already deserve.

Just because a child hasn't had an optimal start in life doesn't mean they shouldn't achieve the steps necessary for later success. Here's how you can raise aspirations of the foster children or young people in your life.

### **Gain Their Trust**

By showing your child that you are able to provide an open and trustworthy support system, they will be more likely to open up and discuss their future aspirations with you, viewing you as a helping hand on their way to a successful future.

Be a positive mirror to them. A child's self-image comes not only from what the child perceives about themselves, but how others perceive them. Be realistic too, we can't have a smile on our face permanently, and by letting them see this they will be able to trust you for your sincerity.

### **Communicate Effectively**

Should your child suffer a blow to their self-esteem it is important to validate their feelings. After a child feels that their feelings have been validated, they will be open to you bolstering their self-esteem by pointing out the positive things people think about them. Be sure that your child knows that you value them for who they are and not how they perform.

When it comes to career decisions, let young people understand that going on to higher education is a choice that they can make with the help of their foster parents- no doors are closed to them.

### **Boost Motivation Levels**

If you see an ability in your child that they don't, encourage them; they might not have the self-belief to pursue it. If you don't encourage your child to try new things their skills won't improve, and you've lost a valuable confidence builder.

Show enthusiasm for their interests and encourage them to explore subjects which fascinate them. Celebrate their achievements, no matter how small. You will offer positive reinforcement that will inspire them to keep learning and challenging themselves.

### **Help Them Achieve Their Goals**

If your foster child has a career path in mind which they wish to pursue, as well as providing them with adequate support with their studies where you can, it is important to educate them on all options should their chosen route be out of their academic ability. Help them in their search to find work experience in their chosen sector, which should give them a taste of what working life would be like. They will be in a more informed position to make a career decision.

(Source: [www.nfa.co.uk](http://www.nfa.co.uk))

## **Pupil Voice: Making school work for children in care**

### **What do children in care say about their education?**

The Suffolk Virtual School approached the Children in Care Council (C2C) in October 2018 to find out how we could help to make their educational experience as positive as possible. Feedback received from the C2C group highlighted the best ways that teachers can engage with them, what they expect of the Council's services, and how you as a foster carer play a really important part in making their education an enjoyable and fruitful experience.

Below are statements taken from the feedback sessions with the C2C group with some suggestions about how you can support your child.

***“If you have bad news, tell me at home or in a comfortable setting where I can cope with it rather than half way through school”.***

School needs to be a place where your child can focus solely on their education and be like everyone else around them.

The C2C group said they wanted school to be a place of stability and somewhere that they're not constantly reminded that they're in care. The conversation surrounding this emphasised that children want to decide who knows they are a child in care. Before a school move or even at the start of each school year, it would be useful to talk to your child about how they would like to approach this issue. If their preference is to keep the subject private, you can agree with them how this is communicated to the school. Some ground rules can then be agreed between your child and the school (and you) about how things like PEP meetings are managed to preserve your child's privacy.

***“It feels like the meetings are about ticking a box”***

Details of the way that PEP meetings and the online PEPs are managed are outlined in this booklet.

The PEP process in Suffolk has been heavily shaped by the views of our young people, in that we have been told that they do not like paperwork being filled out in PEP meetings and prefer to take part in meetings that are about them, their education and well-being.

The C2C group told us that these meetings are often boring and that most children would not respond well to purely functional and formal meetings. They often prefer a meeting where they are comfortable in a setting that is neutral to both parties rather than in an office. They also highlighted that they would be more willing to open up to teachers about their experiences if they adopt a 'my door is always open' approach and make the effort to their child feel comfortable in an atmosphere where they could also be seen as an equal.

As their carer, you will be able to support your child in making sure that their preferences for meetings are respected. You could talk in advance with your child about how, when and where they would like their PEP meeting to be held and either convey these to the school for them or encourage them to share these details with the PEP meeting organiser.

It's also important that your child has ownership over the meeting and can share their wishes and feelings in the way that best works for them. Some children are creative and will want to illustrate their school experience through a story board or even create a presentation on a computer, whilst others are happy to vocalise their views. Again, talking to your child prior to the PEP meeting will enable them to think about how they will get the most out of the meeting by sharing their views in the most appropriate way for them.

***“Don't always have the same expectations of us that you have of other pupils”***

Schools are expected to make reasonable adjustment when working with children in care so that they are able to make progress in ways that cater for their learning and emotional needs. The C2C Council told us that they want to be encouraged further when they are doing well. They also want schools and carers to acknowledge that when things aren't going so well, reasonable adjustment is also made to the expectations professionals have of them.

You are able to support your child by getting them to share with an adult they trust at school when things aren't going so well or, if they prefer, to share it on their behalf.



# GCSEs – the key facts



This section will help with:

- knowing how things have changed at GCSE
- supporting your child to make their GCSE options at the end of Key Stage 3
- explaining why GCSEs are so important in achieving success in adulthood
- knowing how our child's performance is measured at the end of Year 11

## GCSEs

### Why do GCSEs matter?

A Post 16 pathway might seem a long way off when your child is deciding on their GCSEs but their GCSE choices and grades can directly impact their later options at sixth form or college – and ultimately, their university or employment choices.

Most universities look for at least Cs in GCSE English, maths and perhaps science – which means a grade 5 or 4 is likely to be required in future applications. Some university courses go further and list specific subjects and grades they expect your child to have – so make sure they check directly with universities to find out their requirements.

If your child has got an idea of the degree subject they want to study, get them to take a look at the entry requirements for specific courses at universities and work back from there (i.e. 'This university course requires these A-levels; and to get on to this A-level course, I need these GCSEs...').

If they're not sure about what they want to study at university just yet, then having a good mix of subjects – including both the traditional academic subjects featuring in the English Baccalaureate model and creative subjects they're interested in – will help keep their options open.

Due to the changes to A-levels, GCSE grades are likely to play a more important role in university admissions. Because AS-levels will no longer count towards their final A-level grade (though they can contribute to UCAS points), admissions staff are more likely to look further afield when considering a young person's application; this may well include your child's GCSE grades.



## The Current Landscape at GCSE

There have been some significant changes to GCSEs, assessments and the way that both schools and pupils are measured in terms of performance and progress. Schools no longer are judged on the number of A\* - C grades in English and mathematics achieved by pupils. Instead, the performance of each school and pupil is based on how much progress they have made between the end of Year 6 (the end of Key Stage 2) and the end of Year 11 (the end of Key Stage 4).

The changes to the GCSE assessments and performance measures are explained below.

## What the new GCSEs look like

The main features of the new GCSEs are:

- A new grading scale of 9 to 1 will be used, with 9 being the top grade. This allows greater differentiation between students and helps distinguish the new GCSEs from previous versions.
- Assessment is mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills.
- There is new, more demanding content, which has been developed by government and the exam boards.
- Courses are designed for two years of study – they are no longer divided into different modules and students take all their exams in one period at the end of their course.
- Exams are only split into 'foundation tier' and 'higher tier' if one exam paper does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge and abilities.
- Resit opportunities are only available each November in English language and maths.
- Coursework and controlled assessment have disappeared from most subjects, apart from practical ones such as art, dance and drama.

## The new GCSE grading system

<p><b>9 is higher than a current A*</b></p> <p><b>8 is between and A* and A.</b></p> <p><b>7 is equal to an A</b></p> <p><b>6 is equivalent to a high B</b></p> <p><b>5 is between a B and C (strong pass)</b></p> <p><b>4 is equal to a grade C (standard pass)</b></p> <p><b>3 is in between a D and E</b></p> <p><b>2 is between an E and F</b></p> <p><b>1 is a G</b></p> <p><b>U refers to an ungraded paper</b></p>	<b>New GCSE grades explained</b>	
	<b>9</b>	<b>A*</b>
	<b>8</b>	<b>A</b>
	<b>7</b>	<b>A</b>
	<b>6</b>	<b>B</b>
	<b>5 (strong pass)</b>	<b>B</b>
	<b>4 (standard pass)</b>	<b>C</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>D</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>E</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>U</b>	<b>G</b>	
<b>U</b>	<b>U</b>	

League tables report the percentage of students who achieve a 'strong pass' (5 or above) in both English (either language or literature) and maths.

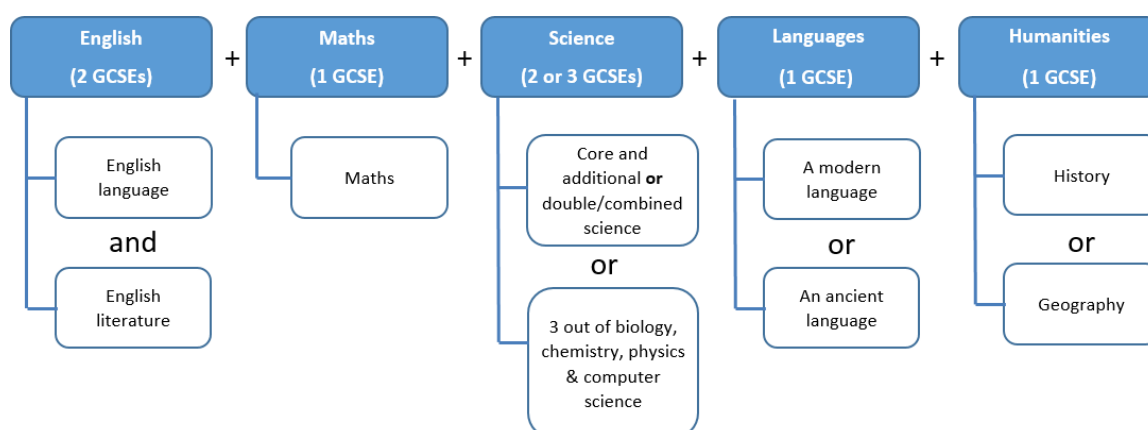
The number achieving a 'standard pass' (4 or above) is also reported. Grade 4 will remain the level that students must achieve without needing to re-sit English and Maths post-16.

## The EBacc

The English Baccalaureate, or EBacc, is a measure of how many pupils achieve a **good GCSE pass in six core academic subjects: English, maths, history or geography, combined science (which counts as two passes) and a language.** In addition, students must take both English language and literature, although they only need a grade A\*-C (old GCSEs) or 5+ (new GCSEs) in one of them.

From 2018, league tables will report on the average point score across the six EBacc subjects for all students, rather than reporting how many passed.

The following diagram illustrates what the EBacc looks like:



If your child's programme of study at GCSE contains the required subjects, they will qualify for the EBacc qualification. This will demonstrate that they have studied a broad range of subjects, and this can be beneficial for future university and job applications. There is no separate grade or certificate for the EBacc when your child receives their exam results.

Their performance in the EBacc subjects will also contribute to the school's and their own figure in the new performance measures, Attainment 8 and Progress 8.

An explanation of what these are and how they are calculated follows.

## **Attainment 8 and Progress 8**

Progress 8 and Attainment 8 are based on **pupils' performance in eight qualifications**. These are English and maths, up to three subjects from the EBacc list, and students' three highest scores from a range of other qualifications, including GCSEs and approved non-GCSEs. English and maths are given double weighting to reflect their importance.

Progress 8 is a new measure of the progress children make between the end of primary school and the end of secondary school. **It's designed to encourage good quality teaching across a broad curriculum.**

If a school's score is 0, then all pupils on average have made the progress that is expected of them by the end of Key Stage 4.

### **What's the significance of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 for your child and you?**

There are several implications of these new measures:

- It is strongly recommended each pupil studies at least 8 subjects at GCSE as it provides them with a broad experience and widens out their choice of Post 16 and Post 18 options. When making their choices at GCSE (see the next section) you can provide further guidance to your foster child about a suitable programme which will give them a comprehensive experience of knowledge and skills.
- If you have a foster child who is in Year 5 or 6 and will soon be involved in making an application to high school, you can ask each school being considered what their current Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores are the whole cohort and also for children in care (if there were any on roll in the previous year's Year 11 cohort).

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Attainment 8 and Progress 8?**

### ***Will I find out my child's progress 8 score?***

Schools are not required to share pupils' progress 8 scores. The school may choose to report it.

### ***Can my child take more than three EBacc subjects?***

Yes. Pupils can take any subjects in the DfE's list of approved qualifications as part of the 'open group' of qualifications. The open group of qualifications is where the other subjects taken as options by a pupil are placed, as well as any other of the core subjects that haven't been counted in the core group. Option subjects must be on a list of approved courses to count in the open group towards a pupil's Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores.

### ***Do all pupils have to study the progress 8 set of subjects?***

Not necessarily. Progress 8 scores will be calculated for all pupils, except those who did not sit tests at the end of year 6. However, a school can enter any pupil for any qualification, including those not in the EBacc.

(Source: [https://wernethschool.com/key\\_information/downloads/Parent\\_Pamphlet\\_-\\_Progress\\_8.pdf](https://wernethschool.com/key_information/downloads/Parent_Pamphlet_-_Progress_8.pdf))

## Supporting your child to make their GCSE subject choices

Choosing the right subjects to study at GCSE is key to success at GCSE. Depending upon the school that your child attends, they will make their GCSE choices either in Year 8 or Year 9. This means that they will have either a two or three Key Stage 4.

There are several factors that a child needs to consider when making each subject choice:

- Is this a subject that I enjoy? Can I see myself enjoying the subject for two/three years?
- Am I likely to do well in this subject?
- Do I need to take this subject for the career path, Post 16 or Post 18 course that I would like to take?
- Does the subject's content and style play to my strengths?
- What grades have pupils who have a similar ability to me in previous years achieved in this subject?

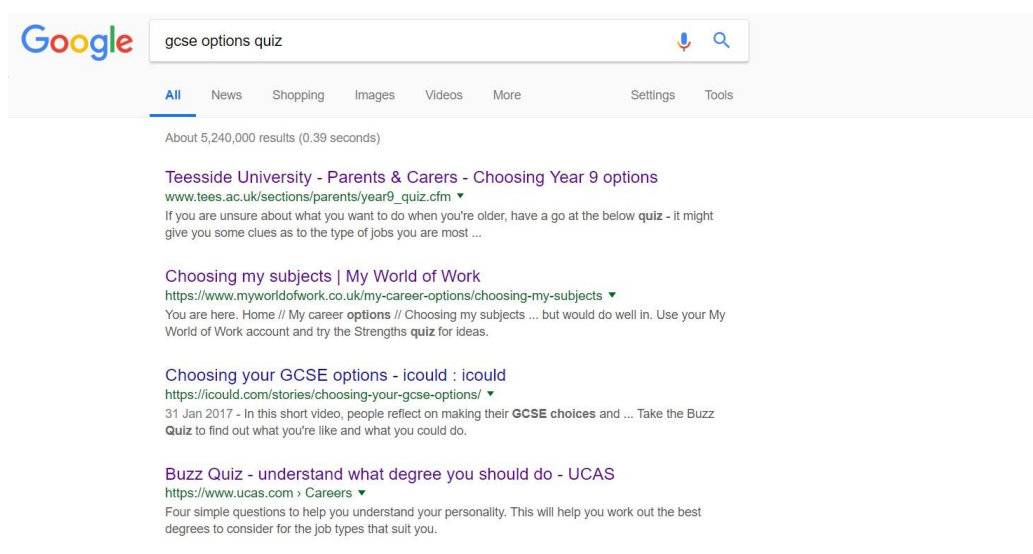
Online quizzes such as the example below may be helpful for your child to complete to enable them to make informed decisions about their choice of GCSE subjects.

Answering these questions will help when you're making your decision. You can use them to put together a shortlist of subjects.

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>How do you like to learn?</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Where could they take you?</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>What subjects do you enjoy?</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>What subjects are you good at?</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>What do others think you're good at?</b></p>
<p>Do you like English and drama because you get to talk and listen? Or woodwork because you are good with your hands? Working out how you like to learn can help you choose your subjects.</p>	<p>Know what you want to do when you leave school? Picking the right subjects could help you get there, or keep your options open if you haven't decided yet.</p>	<p>You're more likely to get better marks in subjects that you find interesting. Does time fly by in some subjects and go at a snail's pace in others?</p>	<p>What do you get your best marks in? There may be some you've never studied before but would do well in. Use your <a href="#">My World of Work account</a> and try the <a href="#">Strengths quiz</a> for ideas.</p>	<p>Talk to your parents, friends, family, teachers and careers adviser. What do they think would suit you and why? Ask for their opinions, and see how they weigh up with your own thoughts.</p>

(Source: <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/my-career-options/choosing-my-subjects>)

## Helping your child to maximise their outcomes at secondary school



The screenshot shows a Google search page for the query 'gcse options quiz'. The search bar is at the top, with the Google logo on the left and a search button on the right. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for 'All', 'News', 'Shopping', 'Images', 'Videos', 'More', 'Settings', and 'Tools'. The search results are displayed below, showing approximately 5,240,000 results found in 0.39 seconds. The first result is from Teesside University, titled 'Teesside University - Parents & Carers - Choosing Year 9 options', with a URL of [www.tees.ac.uk/sections/parents/year9\\_quiz.cfm](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/parents/year9_quiz.cfm). The second result is from My World of Work, titled 'Choosing my subjects | My World of Work', with a URL of <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/my-career-options/choosing-my-subjects/>. The third result is from iCould, titled 'Choosing your GCSE options - iCould : iCould', with a URL of <https://icould.com/stories/choosing-your-gcse-options/>. The fourth result is from UCAS, titled 'Buzz Quiz - understand what degree you should do - UCAS', with a URL of <https://wwwucas.com/Careers>.

### Support in school

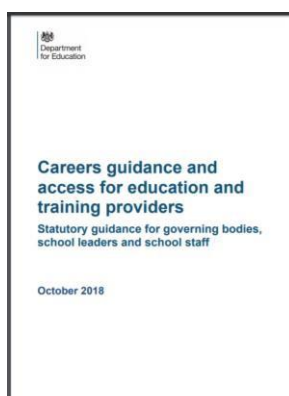
Your child's school should provide a range of ways in which to support their choosing of their GCSE options. It will depend upon each school, but there may be:

- Information giving assemblies to pupils about the option process and subjects available
- An information evening for pupils and their parent/carer to attend to find out more about the option process and the subjects available
- An options interview – with their form tutor or a member of the senior leadership team to discuss and agree appropriate options

In addition, updated DfE careers and education guidance for school says that children in care should be given 'strong support' in this area. Each school must appoint a Careers Leader who coordinates this support. The Careers Leader or a nominated colleague should meet with your child on a regular basis and may play a part in PEP meetings or CiC review meetings as and when advice, guidance and actions are required to support your child when making decisions about their education or careers choices.

The DfE guidance can be access through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools>



## Compulsory and Optional GCSE Subjects

Some subjects are compulsory at GCSE level and have to be taken by all young people. The compulsory subjects are:

**English** (English Literature and English Language or a single English GCSE)

**Maths**

**Science** (Combined Science or Individual Sciences)

Some schools make other subjects compulsory, so it is worth checking what you are required to do at your school.

Whatever the child is planning to do in the future, **it is now a requirement for them to retake both maths and English GCSEs until you obtain a Grade 4 in the new GCSE grading system.**

## GCSEs - Optional choices

Optional subjects vary from school to school, but you must be offered at least one course in each of four groups of subjects...

- Arts
- Design and Technology
- Humanities
- Modern Foreign Languages

Your child doesn't always have to choose one subject from each area but remember that studying a range of subjects at this stage is useful so that they have a wider range of options for later study and career choices.

Different schools offer a different range of GCSE subjects from which pupils can choose. Your child's school will be able to tell you what GCSE subjects and combinations are available.



# Effective Communication



This section will help with:

- talking with your child's school to make sure their needs are met and maximise their outcomes
- how to respond to your child's report to help them to make progress
- how to follow up concerns you may have about your child's educational experience and progress

## Effective Communication

### School Reports

The purpose of a school report is to provide a picture of your child's current attainment levels and their effort – often called Attitude to Learning – in each of their subjects.

A school report ideally should never deliver any unpleasant surprises! If your child is making less progress than expected or if their behaviour has changed, you should expect the school to communicate this to you in a timely manner and not wait for the report or a parents evening to let you know.

Lots of schools now use numbers and codes to indicate how a pupil is getting on in each subject. This is an example of this type of report:



#### STUDENT PROGRESS ASSESSMENT – YEAR 7 December 2015

STUDENT: Joe Bloggs FORM: 7ABC

Based on their prior attainment, your son/daughter should be working in line with:

Approximately the top 30% of students nationally	For English
Approximately the top 50% of students nationally (broadly in line with the National Average)	For Maths
Approximately the top 30% of students nationally	For all other subjects

Subject	Autumn 2015				Spring 2016				Summer 2016			
	Current Attainment	Current Progress	Attitude to learning	Managing Homework	Current Attainment	Current Progress	Attitude to learning	Managing Homework	Current Attainment	Current Progress	Attitude to learning	Managing Homework
English	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
Mathematics	Top 30%	Above	1	1								
Science	Working Towards Nat Avg.	Well Below	3	3								
French	Top 10%	Above	1	1								
Geography	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
History	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
Information Technology	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
Religious Education	Top 50%	Below	1	2								
Technology	Top 10%	Above	1	1								
Art	Working Towards Nat Avg.	Well Below	3	3								
Music	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
Performing Arts	Top 30%	Expected	1	2								
Physical Education	Top 10%	Above	1	1								
Reward Credits					15							
Behaviour Points					0							
Attendance (%)					100							
Punctuality (Number of Lates)					2							

The school will provide a guide to accompany the report to explain the codes and will enable you to gain an overview of how they are getting on. If you are not sure about what something on the report means, you can contact the subject teacher, Head of Year (or equivalent) or the Designated Teacher to discuss it.

### How to respond to your child's report

Hopefully, your child's report will be a positive picture and will show that they are making expected progress. In which case, there will be lots to celebrate and praise.

On the other hand, the report may feel disappointing to you and your child. A positive but proactive response will be the most appropriate way to deal with this.

Below are some suggestions about how to approach dealing with a range of scenarios that can arise from receiving a report for your child.

## **General Advice**

### **Talk with your child's teacher**

If your child's report doesn't provide any detail about why they received the marks that they did, ask the teacher. Could it be because your child did not understand the concepts covered? Or are they not handing in their homework or assignments? Did they perhaps just barely miss the cut-off for a higher mark?

It can be difficult to hear that your child is achieving what you consider to be average results, despite the fact that they are working as hard as they possibly can.

As a foster parent, you should always keep in mind that academic performance doesn't remain the same throughout your child's academic career. A period of average results does not mean your child will always perform at that level. As children go through the process of 'growing up', they experience ups and downs in all areas, including those who are most able.

Your child's teacher will help you understand the reasons your child has received the marks they did, so that you are able to respond appropriately and make the necessary changes.

### **Talk with your child**

When you talk with your child about their report, try to ascertain if they have a realistic view of their situation. For example, your child may think they only sometimes forget to complete their work or assignments. But their teacher might reveal a consistent pattern of them neglecting their work.

Your child might also be under the impression that, because they have always done well in maths before, they don't need to worry too much about applying themselves in that subject. However, as maths becomes increasingly abstract, some children struggle and may need to put in extra effort. Their teacher can point you and your child in the right direction and help provide remediation if necessary.

Sometimes, lower than expected results can simply reflect the curriculum becoming more involved. Science, for example, can become more difficult for some children with the introduction of memorisation and lab work. When the curriculum becomes more difficult, your child will need to work harder just to maintain their results.

It is very important to start the conversation with your child by praising the positive first. Congratulate them, not only on high results, but also on getting better grades in subjects they previously had difficulty with. Ask them which grade they are proudest of and why. Involve them in discussions about their successes and challenge them to explain how they got such a good result. It is far more useful to ask, "What went right?" for a good result to see how that achievement can translate to other more difficult areas.

When talking with your child about problem areas, focus on discussing the class itself. Ask if the work was too difficult or if the class went too fast. For example, if maths is "useless" and "boring," find ways in the future to show them how maths is used in subjects they love, from shopping to computer games.

(Source: <https://www.worksheetcloud.com/blog/3-adult-ways-to-respond-to-your-childs-school-report/>)

## **Suggestions for how to approach specific issues within a report**

### **Grades improved, but less than you expected.**

It might be tempting to say, “I was expecting to see more improvement than this.” But it’s important to remember that any improvement is progress, and even a little bit can take a lot of effort. Recognising this provides an opportunity to talk about what’s working well.

Instead, try saying, “Well done! What do you think helped you to make those improvements? Would the same strategies be helpful for other subjects, too?”

### **Grades and attitude both need improvement.**

When the news isn’t great, it might be tempting to say, “You’re grounded until your attitude and grades improve!” But take a deep breath and try this approach instead: “I need to take some time to think about what I want to say. We’ll talk about this tomorrow.”

Then, think about what “improvement” looks like. Be realistic and define it for your child: “Here are the expectations for the next half term. Let’s come up with a plan to make it happen.”

### **Grades have improved since the last report card.**

When the results are positive, it might be tempting to say, “I knew if you tried harder you could do better!” But “trying harder” isn’t how children with learning and attention issues do better in school.

Instead, you can say something like, “Well done! Looks like using new strategies for homework and studying really paid off.”

### **Grades stayed the same, but attitude and effort improved.**

When you’re looking for improvement in grades you may overlook teacher comments about progress in other areas. It might be tempting to say, “Well, your attitude is better. If only your grades were better, too.” But if your child doesn’t enjoy school, greater effort and an improved attitude are progress.

Instead, try saying, “It’s good to hear you’re more comfortable in school, and to see that you’re doing well with your homework. Let’s work on answering longer questions for the next half term.”

### **Some grades improved, and others dropped.**

Since some subjects have improved, it might be tempting to say, “What happened with the rest of your classes?” But as your child gets older, the expectations for learning change and may be harder to meet in some subjects.

It’s more productive to say, “Your maths and science grades look great! But I’m a little disappointed about the others. What’s different in those classes?” Talk about changes that might help, such as a quieter homework area or working with a tutor. If they are old enough, you can also suggest that they speak with their teachers about strategies that could help them improve.

**Your child is failing most classes despite working hard.**

If you're surprised, it might be tempting to say, "You're failing everything?! I thought you were working hard!" Your child's performance may have little to do with effort, though. Do they have the necessary supports? Maybe it's time to consider an evaluation or revisit their PEP objectives and interventions.

You can say this instead: "I'm really surprised by these grades—I know you worked hard. After we talk about what you think could help you, I'm going to ask for a meeting at school to come up with a better plan."

**Grades have taken a sudden nosedive.**

When your child is suddenly failing everything, it might be tempting to say, "What on earth is going on with you?" But it's important to think about any other signs that something's wrong. Have you seen changes in their behaviour or in their friendships recently?

If so, you could say, "I'm really not happy with this, and I've noticed other changes in you lately. Take a day to think about what your teachers and I can do to help. Tomorrow we'll talk and come up with a plan for moving forward."

**Your child is disappointed they didn't do better.**

It might be tempting to say, "I don't understand why you're upset. This report card looks pretty good." If your child has been expecting a bigger "payoff" for their hard work, however, it might not look good enough.

Instead you can say, "I understand that you're disappointed, but I'm happy with this. I see your hard work paying off."

**You know they didn't put in the necessary work.**

Out of frustration it might be tempting to say, "I knew this was going to happen! I'm taking your phone until you fix it!" But your child can't prove it's "fixed" until the next report card. And that's too long for any form of punishment to be meaningful or effective.

A better approach might be to say, "You can't change your report card, but you can—and will—change your approach to school. You aren't going to use your phone until your homework is done and checked each day."

(Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/understanding-childs-challenges/talking-with-your-child/tips-for-reacting-to-childs-report-card>)

## Parents Consultation Evenings

The Parent's Consultation Evening is an important opportunity for parents, carers and students to meet tutors and teachers to discuss student progress in all subject areas, share any concerns with staff. They often follow shortly after a report. The school will give details of how appointments can be booked; some manage appointments online, whilst others rely upon children booking appointments with subject staff.

You should use the evening to make sure you are clear about what your child's strengths are and, importantly, what next steps needs to be focused upon to help them to make progress.

### **The following are some questions that you may want to ask at a consultation evening to support your child's progress and attainment:**

- What are their strengths in this subject, and how can they be developed further?
- What skills do they need to develop to meet and/or exceed their target grade?
- How will they be assessed in this subject?
- What extra support or intervention could there be available to support this?
- How are you accommodating my child's special educational needs or attachment needs?
- What can I do to support my child to make further progress in this subject?
- Could I have a copy of the assessment criteria?
- End of Key Stage 3 – would this subject would an appropriate option for my child at GCSE?
- End of Key Stage 4 – would this subject be an appropriate Post 16 option for my child?



## **What should you do if you are concerned about the educational experience of your child?**

There are a number of people who you can discuss concerns with. It is natural to sometimes be worried about how a child is getting on at school and sharing your concerns will mean that they can be addressed.

### **If you have concerns over the educational progress of your child:**

1. Contact the School's Designated Teacher.
2. Contact the Social Worker
3. Contact the Virtual School Head (VSH) representative or VSH on 01473 260818

### **If you have concerns about the provision for your child:**

1. Discuss with school, the child's social worker and your Supervising Social worker
2. Request a joint meeting between school / carer / social worker / supervising worker and child (where age appropriate)
3. Contact the Virtual School Head (VSH) representative or VSH on 01473 260818

## **Suffolk's Education Champions**

Suffolk's Education Champions are experienced carers with a strong interest and passion for the education of young people. We have a number of Education Champions across the county with varying interests and areas of expertise, including Primary, Secondary and SEN. The Education Champions are available to support Suffolk Carers and provide a friendly and flexible service to support Carers to support their young people.

The support they can offer includes: being a listening ear, a sounding board to try out new ideas, support with attending school meetings and general education advice and guidance.

They also have access to some additional education resources and are happy and willing to share their experience and knowledge, whilst fully understanding the day to day challenges.

Education Champions attend the support groups across the county and can be accessed directly at these or by contacting Heidi Austin, who oversees and supports the Education Champions, by emailing [heidi.austin@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:heidi.austin@suffolk.gov.uk).

## Supporting Learning at Home



This section will help with:

- encouraging and supporting your child to complete homework at home
- helping your child to revise for exams
- helping your child to be mentally, emotionally and physically ready for the exams
- knowing what exam access arrangements are
- what happens once GCSE results are issued



## Supporting Learning

### Helping with Homework

At secondary school it can be expected that a child will be required to complete homework several times a week. The purpose of homework can be to:

- consolidate or reinforce skills or knowledge learnt in a lesson
- practise applying skills and knowledge to an exam style question or task
- revise a topic or topics in preparation for a test or mock exam
- extend the pupil's knowledge of a topic or skill beyond what has been learnt in class.

Completing homework on time and to a high quality is vital to enable your child to develop and demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Their teachers will be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and as a result will be able to provide focused support to help them to fill in gaps and extend strengths.

Some children enjoy the challenge of homework and do not need much if any support from home to get it completed and handed in on time. However, other children do not necessarily see the value in homework or find it difficult to complete. This means that the more support you can give, the more likely they are to complete it and to the expected standard.

There are several things that you can help with to ensure that your child benefits from completing homework:

#### Set up a daily homework routine

As with anything, the key to ensuring homework gets done is to have a set routine in place. This could be something as simple as each day, when they return from school, you sit down together and discuss what homework needs to be done.

If it would help our child and you, you can always contact the school to get an idea of how frequently homework is set. The teachers will be able to tell you which days your child should have homework and for which subjects.

Once you know what homework has to be done, you can either have them complete it before your evening meal, or straight after. Make sure you stick to whichever schedule you decide upon.

#### Do it together

The need for this will vary owing to different factors: age, ability, confidence level and the relationship that you currently have with them. You could sit down together and be there to guide them when necessary. Talk about the subjects they are covering. Discussing the homework and asking questions will enhance the learning process. They'll also likely be much more willing to do it if they aren't alone and it's turned into a more enjoyable task.

If you are not required to sit down with your child for the whole duration of them completing homework, making yourself available if they need you to answer a question or read through their work, for example, will be very helpful.

#### Ensure that they have the right space

A noisy, busy space in which to complete homework is likely to have a negative impact on your child's approach to the tasks and the quality of the work they produce. Preferably, they need a quiet space, with enough room to spread out their books on a desk or table without

being interrupted. Some people work better with some background noise, others find that it interrupts their train of thought. Talk to your child about the right environment for them. If they have a phone or access to social media on a device, agree some conditions of use during homework time. For example, it could be a 10-minute reward for every hour they do homework for or, conversely, you both might agree that these devices are barred until the end of the homework session.

### **Ensure they have the right equipment**

It is highly likely that your child is going to need access to a computer and the internet in order to complete their homework or undertake further learning around a subject. However, other learning tools can also come in useful such as an encyclopaedia, dictionary and thesaurus. Whilst these can be found online, having physical copies is also helpful.

### **Providing further help**

As well as helping them with their actual homework, it's a good idea to do additional things to enhance their learning; making their homework easier. Reading together, watching educational programmes, drawing and playing educational games can all help expand their learning capacity and enthusiasm for a subject. Again, this will be dependent upon a range of factors, but the offer and availability of such support might be welcomed by your child.

(Source: <https://www.fosteringsolutions.com/news-events/back-school-helping-homework>)



## Useful resources at GCSE to support the completion of homework

Your child's school will be able to offer recommendations for useful websites and resources that they can complete at home to support their studies and exam preparation. However, these are just a few that are available that you and your child may find useful, according to the website [www.targetcareers.co.uk](http://www.targetcareers.co.uk):

### General revision resources

- BBC Bitesize is a website with syllabus-specific material over a wide range of subjects.
- Evernote is an app that allows you to access your notes online and share them with your friends.
- Foraday is a calendar app that tracks your day.
- Go Conqr is a website that allows you to make flash cards, mind maps, notes and slide sets.
- Hodder Education magazines are subject-specific publications aimed at A level, IB and GCSE students.
- Quizlet is a website that allows you to make flashcards and test yourself on them through memory games and exercises.
- Revision World has various different forms of revision help for multiple GCSE and A level subjects.
- Study Blue is a crowdsourced library of flash cards.
- Timetune is a schedule planning app.
- Tutor2U is a revision website with subject-specific material from teachers and schools.

### English revision websites

- No Fear Shakespeare is a translation facility for Shakespeare that puts his plays into modern English.

### Revision resources for science

- Beaker Mix Chemicals app lets you see the reactions that happen when you mix different chemicals.
- Biology Dictionary offline app gives you definitions for difficult biology terms.
- Periodic Table 2017 app is an interactive and up-to-date version of the periodic table.
- PhyWiz's Physics Solver app solves any physics problem you give it.
- The Sumanas, Inc website has information on various science subjects and topics.
- A number of science-specific apps exist for each exam board.

### Maths revision websites

- Study Maths is a website with revision notes, games and exercises.
- Exam Solutions has online tutorials and past papers.
- Maths Made Easy is a site with online tests, past papers and exam advice.

## Helping your child to maximise their outcomes at secondary school

- MyMaths is a subscription that many schools have. It has interactive homework, webinars and revision notes.
- Revision Maths has worksheets and notes on curriculum-specific topics.
- S-cool has tests and memory exercises for subject-specific topics.
- Maths Genie has revision notes and exercises.

### **Humanities revision resources: geography, history, religious studies, philosophy, sociology**

- Google Books and Google Scholar are good resources for further reading.
- The History Learning Site has important facts and information on key dates in history that are relevant to the GCSE and A Level curriculum.
- HistoryRevision has curriculum-specific revision notes.
- History Timeline app allows you to add events to a historical timeline and bookmark key dates.
- Mr McMillan's Revision YouTube channel has a number of revision and exam help videos for religious studies and philosophy.
- Old maps' A Touch of History app allows you to see historical maps from the 15th to the 20th century.
- Sociology Dictionary allows you to find definitions for technical sociology terms.

### **Revision resources for languages: French, German, Spanish, Portuguese**

- Babbel is not specifically for school exams but is a fun way of testing your language skills and covers many languages.
- Duolingo covers many languages and helps you track your progress.
- German Revision has crosswords and matching exercises for curriculum-specific topics.
- GetRevising has French, German and Spanish revision resources.
- Gojimo is a French revision app.
- The Language Gym has revision games and exercises for French and Spanish.
- S-cool has tests and memory exercises for German language.

### **Art revision resources**

- Dreams of Dalí is a 360° video that allows you to explore Dalí's works of art within a surreal world.
- The Guardian* art and design page includes opinion pieces on art and current exhibitions.
- Khan Academy has a series on art history.
- MOMA website has information on artistic movements including Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, Minimalism, Pop Art and Surrealism.
- Words to Use offers a list of interesting words for various colours, shades and hues.

### **Music revision websites**

- Touch Piano is a fun way to discover piano pieces from all ages, such as those by Debussy and Beethoven. It plays music to the tempo of keystrokes.
- YouTube has various classical music channels and allows you to hear different versions and interpretations of the same piece.

### **Drama revision resources**

- National Theatre Live broadcasts live performances to cinemas around the country.

### **PE revision resources**

- My PE Exam has quizzes, games and tutorials.
- An online revision guide for GCSE PE.
- Tes has a selection of paid-for and free revision material.

## **What can you do to support your child if they struggle with their working memory?**

**Working memory plays a big part in successfully completing exams. The move away from coursework to formal assessments at the end of Year 11 puts an even greater emphasis on the need for child to be able to effectively use their working memory.**

Working memory is a cognitive system with a limited capacity that is responsible for temporarily holding information available for processing. Working memory is important for reasoning and the guidance of decision-making and behaviour. Children who have suffered trauma or who have an attachment disorder will find it more difficult to hold on to the information that they need to learn a skill or technique. Children who have trouble with their Working Memory skills will often have difficulty remembering their teachers' instructions, recalling the rules to a game, or completing other tasks that involve actively calling up important information.

A good example of an activity that uses working memory is mental arithmetic. Imagine, for example, attempting to multiply 43 and 27 together, and spoken to you by another person, without being able to use a pen and paper or a calculator. First of all, you would need to hold the two numbers in working memory. The next step would be to use learned multiplication rules to calculate the products of successive pairs of numbers, adding to working memory the new products as you proceed. Finally, you would need to add together the products held in working memory, resulting in the correct solution. Without working memory we would not be able to carry out this kind of complex mental activity in which we have to both keep in mind some information while processing other material.

You can help your child improve this executive function by building some working memory boosters into their daily life.

### **1. Work on visualisation skills.**

Encourage your child to create a picture in their mind of what they've just read or heard. For example, if you've told them to set the table for five people, ask them to come up with a mental picture of what the table should look like. Then have them draw that picture. As they get better at visualizing, they can describe the image to you instead of needing to draw it.

### **2. Have your child teach you.**

Being able to explain how to do something involves making sense of information and mentally filing it. If your child is learning a skill, like how to dribble a basketball, ask them to teach it to you. Teachers do something similar by pairing up students in class. This lets them start working with the information right away rather than waiting to be called on.

### **3. Suggest games that use visual memory.**

There are lots of matching games that can help your child work on visual memory. You can also do things like give your child a magazine page and ask them to circle all instances of the word *the* or the letter *a* in one minute. You can also turn license plates into a game. Take turns reciting the letters and numbers on a licence plate and then saying them backwards, too.

#### **4. Play cards.**

Simple card games like Crazy Eights, Uno, Go Fish and War can improve working memory in two ways. Your child has to keep the rules of the game in mind. But they also have to remember what cards they have and which ones other people have played.

#### **5. Encourage active reading.**

There's a reason highlighters and sticky notes are so popular! Jotting down notes and underlining or highlighting text can help children keep the information in mind long enough to answer questions about it. Talking out loud and asking questions about the reading material can also help with this. Active reading strategies can help with forming long-term memories too.

#### **6. Chunk information into smaller bites.**

Ever wonder why phone numbers and social security numbers have hyphens in them? Because it's easier to remember a few small groups of numbers than it is to remember one long string of numbers. Keep this in mind when you need to give your child multi-step directions. Write them down or give them one at a time. You can also use graphic organizers, such as a flow chart or mind map, to help break writing assignments into smaller pieces.

#### **7. Make it multisensory.**

Processing information in as many ways as possible can help with working memory and long-term memory. Write tasks down so your child can look at them. Say them out loud so your child can hear them. Toss a ball back and forth while you discuss the tasks your child needs to complete. Using multisensory strategies can help your child keep information in mind long enough to use it.

#### **8. Help make connections.**

Help your child form associations that connect the different details they are trying to remember. Grab your child's interest with fun mnemonics like Roy G. Biv. (Thinking about this name can help children remember the order of the colours in the rainbow.) Finding ways to connect information helps with forming and retrieving long-term memory. It also helps with working memory, which is what we use to hold and compare new and old memories.

(Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/8-working-memory-boosters>)



## **Special arrangements for young people with additional needs during exams**

Schools can make their own arrangements for pupils with additional needs during internal exams. For public or external national exams, they must apply for special arrangements to be put in place. These can also be called access or assessment arrangements.

Schools have to demonstrate that special arrangements are needed. For example, pupils and students may first have been tested by a specialist teacher or an educational psychologist to determine which arrangements are appropriate. There may be a requirement for special arrangements to accommodate a pupil's special educational needs or mental health needs.

The special arrangements you can ask for include:

- extra time
- a separate room either in a small group or alone
- a reader
- a scribe
- a prompter to keep students focused
- an oral language modifier (except Scotland)
- a computer instead of handwriting
- assistive software (screen reader/voice recognition)
- exam papers in different formats, such as digital
- supervised rest breaks.

These arrangements may be offered to students with special educational needs or additional support needs, including autism. They must be requested in advance from exam boards or awarding bodies and there are often deadlines involved.

Schools can apply for special arrangements to be made with evidence of a pupil or student's needs and if an application is refused, they can appeal against it.

If you have concerns about your child as their exams approach, talk to school staff about applying for special arrangements.

(Source: <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/in-education/exam-guidance.aspx>)



## Supporting school revision sessions

After school revision sessions are now, more often than not, part and parcel of a Year 11 pupil's school timetable. They may run for the entire year or just in the lead-up to exams. Schools are increasingly holding revision sessions on Saturdays and during the school holidays.

Revision sessions with subject staff help children to practise key exam skills, consolidate subject knowledge and build their confidence. Your child may be identified to take part in particular revision sessions if their teacher feels they would benefit from extra intervention, or they will be encouraged to attend revision sessions along with their peers.

It would be beneficial for your child to attend the sessions, and your support with this is really important. Whilst attending revision sessions may need to be balanced out against other commitments, all efforts should be made to facilitate their participation.

It would be a good idea to make sure your child knows what the arrangements are in terms of getting back from school after they have attended a revision session so that they do not worry unnecessarily or get anxious about going to future sessions.

Talk to the school's Designated Teacher, or your main contact at the school, if you need further details about any aspect of the school's provision of revision sessions.

## Revising at Home

Your child's school should offer advice and guidance about revision arrangements. Many schools now hold an information evening for Year 11 pupils and their parents/carers to go through how best to approach revision at home. If your child's school doesn't offer this or you would like further support with how to organise it at home, you can contact the school's Designated Teacher (or your main contact).

Each child will revise in different ways – what works for one child might not work for another – and it is important that your child has the chance, at home or at school, to work out how they revise best before the most intense revision time so that they can put to use the most effective techniques when it really matters.

As a general rule of thumb, the following advice is a good starting point for organising revision at home:

1. Organise your study space and time. You could put together a schedule which includes subjects and topics within subjects, which you can amend every time you sit an exam.
2. Use flow charts and diagrams.
3. Use past papers to practise all of the questions and to make sure you can manage your time in the exam effectively.
4. Use online revision resources and activities to practise your knowledge and skills.
5. Explain your answers to others.
6. Organize study groups with friends (but only if it helps you – avoid if it doesn't!)
7. Take regular breaks.
8. Snack on brain food.
9. Plan your **exam** day.
10. Drink lots of water.

(Source: <https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/health-and-support/exam-preparation-ten-study-tips>)

## Practical tips for the day before and the day of the examination

The lead up and actual day of an exam can be incredibly stressful. There are lots of things, however, that you can do to support your child. Below is some advice that you can give and help with to ensure that they are fully equipped for the exam:

### Physical Strategies

- **Sleep:** Get enough sleep the night before the exam. If you're dull-headed because of a lack of sleep, you won't be able to perform at your best. Sleep a few extra hours instead of studying a few extra hours.
- **Food:** Eat moderately before your exams; avoid a heavy meal. If you eat too much, your brain will have to devote energy to the process of digestion. On the other hand, if you skip a meal altogether, your brain will have inadequate fuel to function well. Aim for nutritional balance and moderation.
- **Drinks:** Avoid drinking diuretics that contain caffeine such as coffee, tea or cola, which could make you need to use the washroom more often.
- **Water:** Your body and your brain need water. Research has proven that your brain performs more efficiently when well-hydrated. Drink enough water, but not so much that you need to use the washroom.
- **Temperature:** The aim is to be as comfortable as possible during your exam so you're not distracted by physical needs or concerns. Take a sweater or jacket along in case of excessive air-conditioning or lack of sufficient heating. Arriving early may allow you to select the seat you feel most comfortable in.
- **Breathing:** Deep breathing involves breathing slowly and deeply. Start by inhaling through your nose. Make sure your chest does not expand; if it does you are breathing in a shallow way. Instead, expand your belly with each breath, while your chest remains unchanged. Try to reach a count of 6 on each in breath, and 6 on each out breath. When you have mastered this process, you can add a pause of 6 seconds between the inhaling and exhaling breath.

### Psychological Techniques

- **Positive Visualization:** This is a powerful psychological technique that can be used to enhance your positive feelings and diminish the negative ones. It is based on the fact that the mind and body are powerfully interconnected. You can create changes in your heart rate, skin temperature, and brainwave patterns by the thoughts you evoke. You can use this information to your advantage before and during your exam. Imagine a positive outcome; see yourself doing well, recalling the information easily and remaining calm and in control.
- **Handling Anxiety:** Practice deep breathing techniques if you find yourself becoming nervous or overwhelmed. By breathing correctly, you can provide your brain with fuel to help it perform better.
- **Arrive early:** This will help you avoid unnecessary stress in the immediate period before your exam. Allow for traffic, check the weather reports for exam day, or even travel to an external exam location in advance to get an idea of how long it will take you to travel there on the day of the exam.
- **Avoid nervous students:** While waiting for the exam to begin, avoid speaking to any nervous students and absorbing their negative energy. It's preferable to stay confident and focused on doing well on the exam.
- **Bring necessary materials:** Keep extra materials such as pens, pencils, calculators, rulers, or compasses packed and ready the night before the exam so you have time

to locate or even purchase any misplaced or lost items. Knowing you have everything you need will make you feel calmer and well-prepared.

### **Mental Strategies**

- **Review output:** If you have some time before the exam, use it to review material and practice your output. Don't try to learn new material at this stage.
- **Stay for the entire exam:** Stay for the full length of the exam. Even if you feel you cannot recall any more, by relaxing or waiting in the exam hall, information and details might come to mind and enable you to score additional points. On exams, every point counts.
- **Read instructions:** Make sure you focus on reading the directions carefully. This is the most common avoidable mistake made by students. Don't let it happen to you.
- **Read each question:** Really read what you are being asked to do on each question. Don't presume it's the angle you're familiar with. Reread to see what you're actually being asked and remember that exams change all the time, so questions that appeared in the past may differ from those given in the present.
- **Focus on yourself:** Don't look around at how other students are doing. It may appear that you're trying to cheat and it will just distract you from your main task which is to do as well as possible on your exams.
- **Budget your time:** Check how much each question counts towards your final mark and spend time on each answer accordingly. If you have a choice to write your answers in any order, do the easy ones first to build up your confidence.

(Source: <http://www.goodluckexams.com/what-to-do-on-the-day-of-an-exam/>)

# GCSE Revision Timetable



Don't forget to take regular breaks!

Day \ Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							

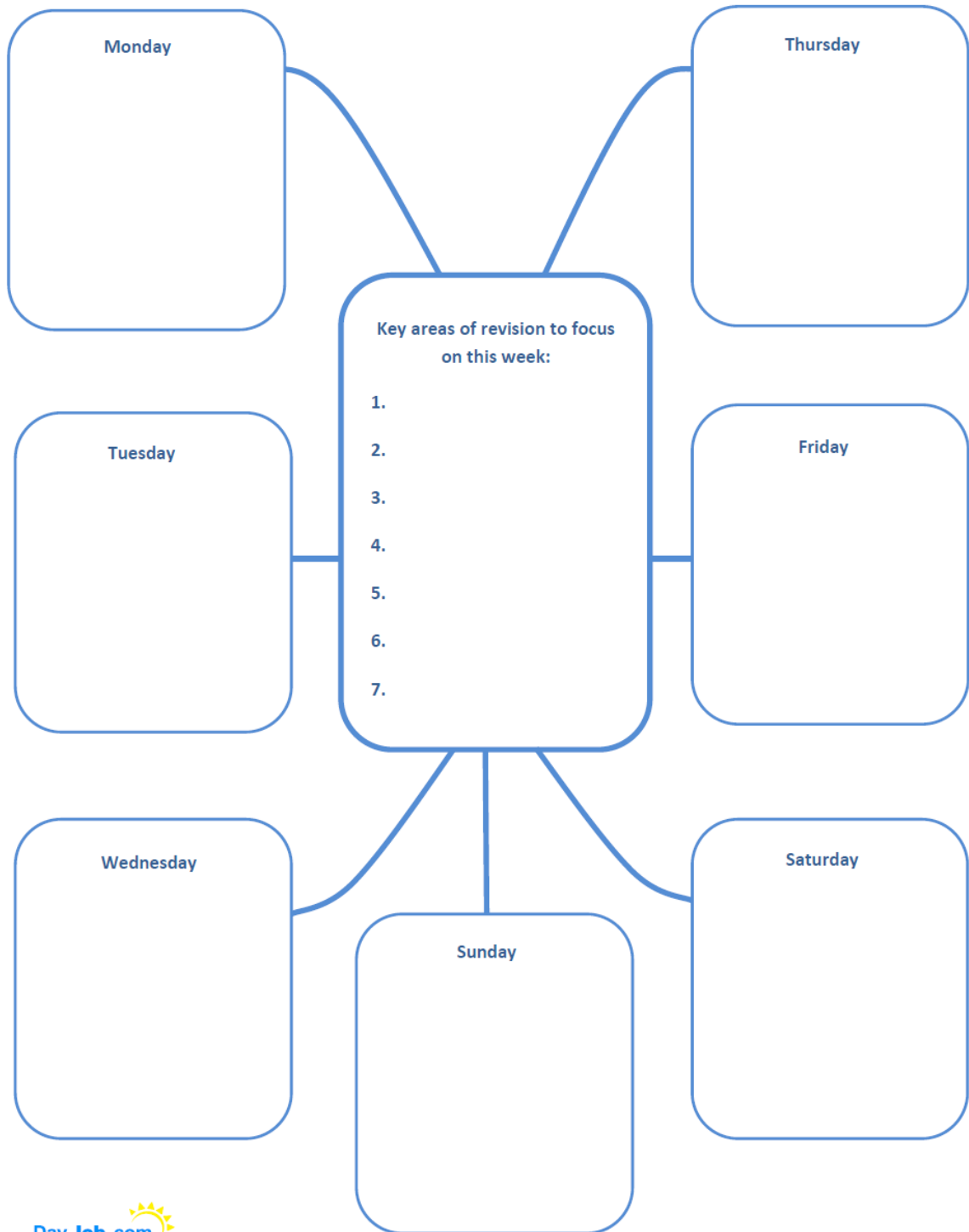
Day \ Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							

# timetable revision

Name .....



### Weekly Revision Timetable



## GCSE results

Your child's school will communicate the arrangements for the collection of exam results. It is always beneficial for the young person to have the opportunity to collect their exam results on the day from school. Their friends may well be there too, and there will be staff on hand to support the pupils. Once your child's results are known, they may need to confirm that they wish to take up their place at their chosen Post 16 setting. The offer email or letter from the setting will have detailed how they can do this, and staff at the school on results day will be able to help if your child is not sure. If any changes to Post 16 plans need to be made because, for example, their GCSE grades are better or not as predicted, your child may need to talk to their intended Post 16 setting. Again, the staff at their school will be able to help with this.

Don't forget to speak to their social worker about changes that may need to happen to make sure that they are aware and are supportive of these changes.

If your child does not wish to collect their results in person, the school will send the results home by post. This will take a few days. This may delay any decisions or changes that need to be made, so it's always best to collect them on the day, where possible.

Centre		Candidate		Unique Candidate Identifier	Unique Learner Number	Sex	Date of Birth
00000 SAMPLE SCHOOL		0000 SAMPLE CANDIDATE		0000000000A	00000000	0	00/00/00
Series	Code	Unit (max UMS)	UMS	Subject Award	UMS	Unit grade	
<b>Double Award Course</b>							
4854	ENGINEERING		300	AB(ab)			
Jun	48501	Engineering Unit 1 (80)			64	A	
Jun	48502	Engineering Unit 2 (120)			93	B	
Jun	48503	Engineering Unit 3 (80)			61	B	
Jun	48504	Engineering Unit 4 (120)			82	C	
<b>Full Course</b>							
8700	ENGLISH LANGUAGE				7(seven)		
8701	Spoken Language				Merit		
8702	ENGLISH LITERATURE				7(seven)		
8300H	MATHEMATICS				8(eight)		
4401	BIOLOGY		308			B(b)	
4402	CHEMISTRY		236			D(d)	
4658	FRENCH		276			A*(a*)	
4403	PHYSICS		297			B(b)	
<b>Short Course</b>							
4056	RELIGIOUS STUDIES		53			D(d)	

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: My child does not go to our local school so I don't have the opportunity to meet with and speak to their teachers on a regular basis. What can I do to ensure that I am fully in the loop with how things are going at school, progress wise?**

A: There tends to be less regular contact between home and school at secondary school as pupils are expected to be more independent and take more responsibility for their learning. However, distance can make the monitoring of how things are going at school feel more difficult. It would be a good idea to speak to the school's Designated teacher directly about this. A link person can then be agreed, with phone number, email address and conditions for being contacted being established.

For more general information such as dates of consultation evenings, mock exams and so on, you can access the school's website. Many schools also now use a text messaging service to communicate with home about issues such as absences and urgent messages (such as a sudden school closure). You can find out if your child's school uses this type of service and, if so, it would be a good idea to sign up.

**Q: What's the difference between progress and attainment?**

A: The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted use the words 'attainment' and 'progress' based around the following definitions:

- 'Attainment' refers to the standards that pupils reach, often measured in assessment and examination results. Attainment results are usually defined as grades, scores or levels achieved by pupils.

For example, a pupil may have achieved five grade 5s, three grade 6s and one grade 8 in their GCSEs.

- 'Progress' refers to pupils' achievements over a period of time, for example from Key Stage (KS) 2 to KS4. Progress is measured by comparing pupils' current attainment with their previous attainment and measuring the difference.

For example, the grades the pupil achieved at GCSE are better than their targets and therefore show that the pupil has made better progress than their performance at the end of Key Stage 2 had forecast.

(Source: <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/school-evaluation-and-improvement/school-improvement-data/expectations-of-pupil-progress/what-is-the-difference-between-attainment-and-progression/>)

**Q: I know that coursework will only be part of a few subjects from now on, but will it count towards their final GCSE grade?**

A: The answer is Yes. If your child completes coursework during their GCSE course, it will contribute to their final GCSE grade. The coursework itself will be completed in lessons but your child may have planning to complete for homework.

Below are some examples of what coursework looks like within the new GCSEs:



## Helping your child to maximise their outcomes at secondary school

Non-examination Assessment: Spoken Language	Component 2: Devising drama (practical)
<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <p>(AO7–AO9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presenting</li> <li>• responding to questions and feedback</li> <li>• use of Standard English</li> </ul>	<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of creating devised drama</li> <li>• Performance of devised drama (students may contribute as performer or designer)</li> <li>• Analysis and evaluation of own work</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher set throughout course</li> <li>• marked by teacher</li> <li>• separate endorsement (0% weighting of GCSE)</li> </ul>	<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devising log (60 marks)</li> <li>• Devised performance (20 marks)</li> <li>• 80 marks in total</li> <li>• 40% of GCSE</li> </ul>
	<p>This component is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.</p>

Component	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Television and promoting media (01)	70	1 hour 45 mins	35%
Duration includes 30 minutes' viewing time			
Music and news (02)	70	1 hour 15 mins	35%
Creating media (03 or 04)	30	-	30
Non-exam assessment			

### **Q: My child has been set some mathematics homework and I am struggling to help them as I don't understand what they have to do. What can I do?**

A: Don't worry. As a foster carer, like all parents, you cannot be expected to be an expert in each subject. If you and your child do not understand a piece of homework, you or your child (depending upon their age, ability and confidence) can contact the teacher who set the homework and ask them to explain it. It is always worth looking at homework well in advance of the deadline to give you both time to follow up queries and still complete it before the deadline.

Youtube and the internet will have information and 'how to?' advice about most topics which can be a good starting point if you cannot speak to the teacher straight away. Be mindful that sometimes the maths equation, for example, may be explained differently to how they have been taught in class. If this is the case, and it becomes too confusing, leave the homework and contact the school.

## **Key Members of Staff in School**

There may be several staff members in school that will support your child at school. It would be useful for you to find out the name and contact details of the person in each role so that you know who to speak to if and when required.

Titles of roles can vary from school to school, but the roles below tend to be found in most secondary schools:

### **Designated Teacher for children in care**

All maintained schools, academies and Free Schools are required to appoint a Designated Teacher to champion the educational attainment of looked after children and act as a source of information and advice about their needs.

If you do not know who the Designated Teacher is, please ask at the school immediately and make contact.

### **CiC Coordinator**

A school may have a CiC Coordinator who works alongside the Designated Teacher. They may oversee the daily support and welfare of a child in care and support the Designated Teacher in completing the PEP documents and meetings.

### **Head Teacher / Principal**

The headteacher or Principal is the leader of the school. They have the overall responsibility for everything that happens within the school and work with the governing board to set its strategic direction.

### **Head of Year**

This may be Head of Key Stage in smaller schools. Heads of Year are responsible for tracking pupil attainment and supporting them pastorally. There may also be **Assistant Heads of Year** who support the Head of Year with monitoring behaviour, attendance and following up issues.

Sometimes Heads of Year are called **Learning Directors**.

### **Form Tutor**

Your child will have a form tutor. A form tutor's role is to care for students and to monitor their progress both academically and socially; encouraging them to get involved in school life and to show high standards of work and behaviour. Pupils usually meet their form tutor for registration at least once a day. This is the member of staff to contact for day to day issues in the first instance.

### **Teaching Assistant / Learning Support Assistant**

Teaching Assistants will know your child very well and may support them in the classroom. Their role is to support a pupil to engage with their learning, whether it be to reinforce and re-explain instructions or to support the completion of a task.

### **Pastoral Support Workers**

The purpose of the Pastoral Support Worker is to provide a member of staff who can assist Progress Leaders and Managers in the effective daily management of the pupils, as well as providing individual and group intervention as necessary.

## **SENDCO**

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator – The SEND Coordinator (SENDCO) plays an important role in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school in order to raise the achievement of children with SEN.

## **Attendance Officer**

Attendance officers track student attendance. There are strict policies regarding the monitoring of pupil attendance. Attendance officers will ensure that the whereabouts of all pupils is known daily and any issues regarding attendance are followed up. They may work with other agencies where a pupil's attendance is a concern. Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil is absent and the school has not received notification from home.

You can record the contact details for each key member of staff at your child's school on the next page.

Helping your child to maximise their outcomes at secondary school

Name:		Phone:
Role:	Email:	
	Notes:	
Name:		Phone:
Role:	Email:	
	Notes:	
Name:		Phone:
Role:	Email:	
	Notes:	
Name:		Phone:
Role:	Email:	
	Notes:	
Name:		Phone:
Role:	Email:	
	Notes:	

## **Glossary of Educational Terms**

### **Academies**

Academies are independent, publicly-funded schools. Academies receive their funding directly from the Department for Education, rather than the local council or educational authority. Academies must follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools, but they do not have to follow the national curriculum. Each academy or academy chain is run by a trust which employs the staff.

### **A Level**

Short for General Certificate of Education Advanced Level, A Levels are studied between the ages of 16-18 years. Exams are often sat at the end of both years. The first year of A Level is called AS Level (Advanced Subsidiary) and the second year is called A2. Together they make up an A Level. The curriculum is set by the government but the exams and specifications (syllabuses) are set by individual exam boards.

### **AQA**

AQA (the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) is a UK exam board offering a range of qualifications including GCSE and A Level.

### **Attainment 8**

Used in secondary schools, Attainment 8 records a pupil's achievement across eight qualifications, including Maths and English.

### **Cambridge Assessment International Education**

Cambridge Assessment International Education is an international exam board offering a range of qualifications including Cambridge Primary, Cambridge Lower Secondary and Cambridge IGCSE.

### **Comprehensive school**

Comprehensive schools are secondary level state-funded schools, that do not select their students on the basis of achievement or their academic aptitude. They should accept any applicable students from within a geographical area. They differ from grammar schools, which selects pupils on the basis of their grade at the 11+ exam. Today, most comprehensives are also academies.

### **Edexcel**

Edexcel is a UK exam board offering a range of qualifications including GCSE.

### **Edexcel International**

Edexcel International offers a range of syllabuses for the Edexcel IGCSE.

### **Framework**

A guide developed for Key Stage 2 and 3 outlining how and when subjects should be taught.

### **Free schools**

A free school is a variety of academy; a state-funded, free-to-attend, independent school which is not controlled by a local educational authority. A free school is understood to be "free" from local authority control, rather than describing free for students to attend. Like other academies, free schools may have sponsors, but the sponsor may not control more than 1/5 of a free school's board of trustees. Free schools are allowed to employ teachers who have not gained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

### **GCSE**

Short for General Certificate of Secondary Education, GCSEs are studied between the ages of 14-16 years and are assessed by formal exams. GCSEs cover a wide range of subjects

and each student chooses several subjects to study. Most are expected to take English, Mathematics, and Science. Coursework may count for part of the final mark depending on the subject and syllabus. The curriculum is set by the government but exams and specifications (syllabuses) are sent by individual exam boards.

### **Gifted and Talented**

Gifted and Talented is a phrase used to describe high ability children. The gifted are those with high ability in one or more academic subject, and the talented are those with high ability in sport, music, visual arts and/or performing arts.

### **Grammar schools**

Grammar schools are schools that select their students on the basis of their academic aptitude. Historically, grammar schools were the selective level of the Tripartite System of secondary education in the UK from the 1940s to the 1960s. With the introduction of comprehensive schools in the 1970s, many grammar schools converted to comprehensives or became independent, fee-paying schools. Some areas of England, such as Kent and Lincolnshire, retain most elements of the Tripartite System, and select students for grammar schools on the basis of their results at the 11+ exam.

### **IB**

The IB (International Baccalaureate) offers three programmes used in many schools all over the world: PYP (Primary Years Programme), MYP (Middle Years Programme), IB Diploma Programme.

### **IB Diploma Programme**

The IB Diploma Programme is offered by the International Baccalaureate (IB) for students aged 16-19 years. It is a demanding two-year curriculum that leads to a qualification recognized by universities around the world.

### **IGCSE**

IGCSE is an international qualification for 14-16 year olds offered by Cambridge Assessment International Education and Edexcel International.

### **Key Stage**

The national curriculum in the UK defines the minimum educational requirements for students of compulsory school age (5-16 years). It is organised on the basis of five Key Stages. At the end of each Key Stage, students take assessments to determine the levels they have reached.

Foundation (Reception/3-5 year olds) - Infant

Key Stage 1 (Years 1-2/5-7 year olds) - Nursery

Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6/7-11 year olds) - Primary

Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9/11-14 year olds) - Lower Secondary

Key Stage 4/GCSE (Years 10-11) - Upper Secondary

After GCSEs students can opt to enter Key Stage 5 and take A Levels (Years 12-13/16-18 years old). It is increasingly common for schools to adopt a two-year Key Stage 3 in favour of three years of study in Key Stage 4. The thinking behind this is to give pupils more time to prepare for the new examination led assessments at the end of Year 11.

### **Multi-academy trust (MAT)**

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a group of academies run jointly by one board of directors, working together as one entity to pool resources and improve standards across the trust. A

multi-academy trust is usually headed by a CEO, who differs from a traditional headteacher, and may not be a qualified teacher themselves.

### **MYP - Middle Years Programme**

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) is offered by the International Baccalaureate (IB) for students aged 11-16 years and provides a framework of academic challenge and life skills through embracing and transcending traditional school subjects.

### **National Curriculum, The**

The national curriculum is set by the government in the UK and is a program of study outlining what must be taught at each level and giving attainment targets. Not all schools have to follow the national curriculum (such as academies and private schools).

### **National Literacy/Numeracy Strategy (NLS/NNS), The**

The NLS and NNS were approaches to teaching the reading, writing and mathematics elements of the national curriculum. They defined the objective of the English and Maths curriculum at Reception to Year 6 (3-11 year olds). The National Strategies were abolished in 2011.

### **OCR**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a UK exam board offering a range of qualifications including GCSE and A Level.

### **Private schools**

Private schools (also known as *independent schools* and in some cases *public schools*) are schools that charge fees in order to attend. They do not get funding from the government, and do not have to follow the national curriculum. About half of private schools are inspected by Ofsted, while the other half are inspected by either the Independent Schools Inspectorate or the School Inspection Service. Some older and more expensive private schools are known as "public schools" although they are not part of the public sector; these schools were considered historically public because they were open for anyone to attend, provided they could pay the fees.

### **Personal Education Plan**

A meeting to plan for the education of a CiC. The meeting is usually organised by the young person's social worker and involves the pupil, the carer and, if the young person agrees, a representative from the school.

### **Progress 8**

Progress 8 is a measurement scale used to determine the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of Key Stage 4. It was introduced in 2016 as a new measure for determining overall school performance. Under Progress 8, pupils' results are compared to the progress of other pupils nationally with similar levels of attainment (using Attainment 8). Students are then judged relative to their attainment and how much progress they have made since the end of primary school. The average scores of a cohort makes up a school's Progress 8 score.

### **PPG – Pupil Premium Grant**

The Pupil Premium is additional funding for schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The funding – up to £600 - is issued to schools by the Suffolk Virtual School for children in care each term, providing that a PEP is submitted on time in the previous term.

**SATs**

SATs (officially known as National Curriculum assessments) are the national curriculum tests that are taken at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. They are designed to help teachers measure students' progress, how much of the curriculum they understand and what they might achieve in the future. SATs attainment levels were abolished in 2016 and replaced with a new judgement framework.

**SEN (Special Educational Needs)**

Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children of the same age.

**Whiteboard, Interactive**

An interactive whiteboard is a teaching tool that enables anything you can do or see on a computer screen to be projected onto a whiteboard for all the class to see. It is made up of a computer, a digital projector, and a whiteboard which acts as a touch-sensitive screen.

**WJEC**

WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) is a UK exam board offering a range of qualifications including GCSE.

(Source: <https://global.oup.com/education/help/glossary/?region=uk>)