

☞ To Education

A Rough Guide to Education

For foster carers, social workers and elected members.

This guide is designed to give you information about what is happening in schools, what information you should receive, and what the information means.

If you have any particular queries or want advice on how to proceed with a particular situation please contact

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An overview of the Education System

Infant school (Infant and Junior schools combined are sometimes termed Primary schools)

	School year	Age of child	Comment
Key stage 1	Foundation stage	4-5	Foundation Stage Profile completed at end of Reception
	Year 1	5-6	
	Year 2	6-7	S.A.T.S. completed at the end of the school year (English and Maths)

Junior school

	School year	Age of child	Comment
Key stage 2	Year 3	7-8	S.A.T.S information used To measure pupils progress and predict future attainment Possibly N.V.R. Test.
	Year 4	8-9	Possibly optional S.A.T.S.
	Year 5	9-10	Possibly optional S.A.T.S.
	Year 6	10-11	S.A.T.S. taken at the end of the year English , Maths, Science

Secondary school

	School year	Age of child	Comment
Key stage 3	Year 7	11-12	S.A.T.S. information, Reading age, N.V.R. and primary records used to assess children's needs. There may be baseline testing in a variety of subjects and optional S.A.T.S.
	Year 8	12-13	
	Year 9	13-14	S.A.T.S taken at the end of the year. Children choose optional subjects to study in Key stage 4
Key stage 4	Year 10	14-15	Children start G.C.S.E courses. There may be some preparation for sixth form college taking place
	Year 11	15-16	In September, children apply to sixth form college. Children take G.C.S.E exams May-June

Sixth form education

School year age of child comment

Key Stage 5 (but this term is rarely used)	Year 12	16-17	
	Year 13	17-18	Young people apply to Higher Education in September, finish exam courses May-June.

SCHOOL ISSUES A-Z

Admission to school

Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools will have their own admission policy, and these should be available upon request. The criteria usually relate to proximity to the school, attendance of siblings, feeder school and possibly religious affiliation. The local authority has little influence on admission to these schools, but they should have looked after children high if not first on the admission criteria.

For schools under the local authority (Community Schools), the Admissions Section in education will give priority to Looked After Children. If you are a Carer or the allocated Worker of a child trying to find a place in a Croydon school, inform the admissions in Education and they will try and fast track you through the system. The borough will try and get Looked After Children placed in school within 20 days. Looked After children have very high priority in terms of admission criteria. This means that if a looked after child is placed on a waiting list for a school it is worth appealing the decision.

The manager of the LACE team visits the Unaccompanied Minors Social Work Team and collects names of new arrivals. School admissions forms are then completed on children who are placed in Croydon and handed in to the admissions section. Carers should hear within a couple of weeks with offers of schools. For young people placed out of borough carers can use the internet to find the nearest school <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>.

Contact School Admissions or the manager of the LACE team if there are any problems.

Attendance

Regular attendance is vital if a child is to make the most of school, and is a parental responsibility. This cannot be stressed enough. Research has shown that attendance below 90% will significantly affect performance at school. The only acceptable reason for extended absence is medical. If a child is absent, the carer must contact the school. They should send a note with the child when they return, and the school can ask for a medical certificate if they wish. Schools usually keep computerised records of attendance and these are accessible to carers if you want to check. If you suspect poor attendance, it is important to contact either the class teacher, a senior member of staff or a Head of Year. The school can be asked to phone you if the child is absent, (unless you provide a letter to cover that absence). Some schools use an outside agency that chases up attendance problems by phone. Early intervention is crucial. The E.W.O. (Educational Welfare Officer), attached to the school is there to help, if

attendance has become a serious problem, or the school has not been able to contact the carer. (The E.W.O. has duties that specifically relate to ensuring good attendance at school) If a child is taken away for an extended period of time (for a long holiday for instance) they may lose their school place. If the child is ill for a week or longer, and is able to work, the school should be asked to send work home for them to complete.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Various techniques are used to assess children, predict what they should attain in the future, and plan for their educational needs. For Looked After Children, this information should appear on their P.E.P. (Personal Educational Plan).

S.A.T.S. results are commonly used throughout a child's life at school.

Entry Profile

This is completed during the first year of compulsory education, and is designed to assess a child's needs and allow teaching staff to gear work to the level that the child needs.

In year 3 and year 7 especially other assessments may be used as follows

Reading Age- (R.A)

An average child will have a reading age the same as their chronological age. A secondary age child with a reading age of below 9 will find it very difficult to access the curriculum, and this will have a very detrimental effect on their work.

N.V.R. (Non Verbal Reasoning)

The score is standardised at 100 (average). Above 120 is exceptional performance, below 80 is very weak. The N.V.R is taken during year 3 year 7 and sometimes during year 9. It is a fairly robust predictor of ability, and widely used.

MIDYIS

A system organised by the University of Durham. A test is taken in year 7 and 8 that measures mathematical and English ability as well as a range of social factors. It claims to be able to measure performance at Key Stage 3 S.A.T.S. and G.C.S.E performance

YELLIS

Similar to MIDYIS but taken in year 10, it claims to indicate performance at G.C.S.E.

ALIS

As above but taken in year 12 to predict A level results.

CATS

(Cognitive Attainment Tasks) This is very similar system to MIDYIS though rather more complicated.

If you want information on interpreting any of this data, please contact the Education Social Inclusion Officer.

BEHAVIOUR CONTRACT (or Home/School Contract)

Pupils and parents are invited to sign this, when joining the school, it outlines what is deemed good behaviour and what sanctions may be given for positive and negative behaviour. It also lays down expectations of parents and the school.

BULLYING/ RACIST INCIDENTS

Schools must have effective policies on these issues, and these should be made available for you to see on request. If a child complains about such behaviour follow this procedure.

- ◆ Contact a Form Tutor, Head Of Year, or member of the Senior Management Team, outline the problem, and the effect it is having on the child,
- ◆ The staff contacted should then investigate the incident, contact you, and say how they are going to solve the problem, or the outcome of the investigation.
- ◆ If the problem persists contact the school again.
- ◆ If necessary contact the Head teacher and eventually the governors if you are still not satisfied.

Remember that children's relationships can be complicated, and there are sometimes problems on both sides. Schools will usually take complaints seriously, but it may take a while before action is effective.

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

Don't hesitate to do this, most schools welcome early contact with carers, and most problems can be solved quickly. It is really helpful if you do this calmly, however angry you are! Also remember that children can be very good at presenting one-sided information to those at home!

In the case of a primary child, contact the class teacher first, but if the problem is serious or persists contact the Deputy Head or Head.

In Secondary education contact the Head of Year, or for more serious problems a Deputy Head or Senior Manager. If the problem is occurring in a particular subject then try and contact the Head of Department. If you are still not happy then go to a member of the Senior Management Team.

CONTEXTUAL VALUE ADDED

This is a measure of a school's progress with children between key stages, benchmarking it against similar schools. Various disadvantage factors are used to work this out. The average is 100 with below that being weak and above high. It is a narrow range of numbers though.

CURRICULUM 2000 (Post 16)

This refers to the reorganisation of the Post-16 Curriculum. Colleges and sixth forms will have different responses to this. In a school based sixth form many academically able children will take 4 or 5 subjects at A1 level, continuing with 3 in the second year at A2 level. This will prepare them for Higher Education.

Some colleges will offer a mix and match between G.N.V.Q. (A.V.L) and A level. The government's intention is to remove the barriers between academic and vocational qualifications.

Young people now have to take a Key Skills qualification as part of their sixth form course. The Key skills are Communication, Application of Number I C.T. Organising Their Own Learning and Working With Others.

DESIGNATED TEACHERS

Each school in Croydon is required to have a Designated teacher for Child Protection and Children who are Looked After. They act in a key role, and liaise with Social Services as necessary. They will be the person who co-ordinates the writing of Personal Education Plans for Looked After Children.

EXCLUSION OF PUPILS

INTERNAL EXCLUSION

The child may be excluded within school. They will be separated from the rest of the class, but must be set suitable work. They may be segregated during lunchtimes and break times. Quite often they will be placed in another class. They should not be left unsupervised. This sanction should not last for longer than a couple of days, and can be useful as it allows a "cooling off" period, and can allow the child and staff time to work through the issues.

EXTERNAL EXCLUSION

This may be fixed term or permanent.

Exclusion is an option used for either a number of offences over a long period of time, or a major incident. Only the Head teacher (or Deputy in their absence) may exclude a child from school. If the exclusion is for more than 5 days the carer may appeal, and take their case to the school governors. Children may be excluded from school for up to 45 days (on a fixed term basis) in a school year. Exclusions of more than 5 days must be ratified by the school governors.

The following should take place

- ◆ You should be written to formally with the exact nature of the exclusion and the offences that this is for. This is important, if there is an appeal only the offences on the letter can be used as a basis for the exclusion.
- ◆ If there have been problems before, you should know what extra support has been offered to the child (a P.S.P. mentoring, counselling, behaviour, learning support etc.). The school will need to show that it has taken all necessary steps to support the child. If there have been problems over a period of time you should have been contacted by the school, the problem explained to you, and the way forward discussed.
- ◆ Suitable work should be set and marked, and arrangements made for the collection of this.
- ◆ On the child's return to school you should be offered a meeting with a senior member of staff to discuss the way forward and what strategies will be used to prevent the situation occurring again. A P.S.P. may be a good idea.

If the child is excluded permanently, they will be given a place at a P.R.U. (Pupil Referral Unit) or in some cases home tuition. The Get Connected project works with pupils and tries to reintegrate them into school again, (as do the Heads of the P.R.U.s and education officers). There are other initiatives that can help young people who are disaffected.

HOME-SCHOOL AGREEMENT

This is a "contract" between home and school. It lays down what schools expect of parents and what parents expect of schools. It has very little status legally but is still a useful document.

HOMEWORK

Junior and Secondary schools will have a homework policy in place, this details what is expected of teachers, carers and children. The carer should be provided with this by the school. Practice will vary but Primary (Junior) schools will often give homework tasks to children, according to their policy.

Secondary schools usually provide a homework timetable for children and staff. This details what subjects will be set during which day, and how long this will take. Children will normally have a diary of some sort (often called a planner).

This should be used by them to record their homework and other information and is a useful contact between home and school. Form teachers are usually expected to check and sign these regularly, as well as the carer.

For key stage 4, many schools will provide a coursework timetable, outlining when coursework for G.C.S.E and other exams has to be completed. In key stage 4 a lot of homework revolves around the completion of coursework, often with tasks set over many weeks, and it is vital that young people structure this carefully.

Rules For Homework

- ◆ Young people must record homework carefully in their planner detailing tasks and completion dates.
- ◆ It is useful if a regular time is set aside each day for the completion of homework
- ◆ Homework must not be done watching television or other distraction.
- ◆ Ideally, homework should be completed in a well lit and quiet area.
- ◆ The child should not do two things at once; they should either be focussed on their work or relaxing. It doesn't work trying to do both things at the same time.
- ◆ There must be a balance between work and play
- ◆ If you feel that your child is not getting enough homework, or the planner is not being filled in, please contact the class teacher (Primary) or head of year (Secondary).

LITERACY SKILLS

These are the foundation for learning, Infant and Junior schools have a literacy and numeracy hour each day. Secondary schools are now being asked to focus on these areas in the Key Stage 3 Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. It is crucial that they are supported in this. Try to do the following:-

- ◆ With younger children hear them read regularly.
- ◆ Use a library to encourage them to read.
- ◆ Try to get reading material into the home.
- ◆ Be a good example, let them see you reading and enjoying it.
- ◆ Boys are particularly poor at reading- try to encourage them!

Access to a computer is very important, particularly with older children. If this is difficult, schools may be able to provide times after school when computers can be used. Under some circumstances, Social services can provide a grant to Foster Carers towards the purchase of computer equipment.

MARKING AND ASSESSMENT OF WORK

There should be a school policy on this too! Schools usually have an internal grading system for marking work that may use numbers or letters. You and the child have a right to know what the numbers and letters mean. There should be comments on work saying how it could be improved. Children have a right to regular feedback, and there should be evidence that their work is regularly marked. Some work may be marked with National Curriculum levels

PARENTS EVENINGS

These should take place at least once a year, (three times a year at Primary level). The carer should make attendance a priority, as it is a useful contact point.

P.E.P.

The Personal Education Plan will be required for all Looked After Children, and a borough-wide format for this is being drawn up. When the system is implemented, the P.E.P. will need to be initiated by the attached Social Worker and drawn up by the designated teacher, in co-ordination with the young person, parents, other teachers and carers etc. This must be done within 20 days of a Looked After Child entering care or changing school. The plan should be completed in time for the 28 day review, and at 3 months and 6 months, and will be part of the care plan. The P.E.P. should include the following:-

- ◆ Contact and other information about the child.
- ◆ An achievement record
- ◆ Developmental and educational needs
- ◆ Short term plans
- ◆ Long term plans and aspirations

There is training organised for Social Services staff and designated teachers on this. At the present time work is in progress producing a borough format for this document, and it is envisaged that this will be introduced in Croydon in June 2001.

P.S.P. (Pastoral Support Programme)

This should be set up for any child that has had several fixed term exclusions or has been identified as being at risk. It should identify the problem, list any

action that will be necessary to improve the situation (and who is responsible), and the responsibilities of the child.

- ◆ The parent or carer must be involved, as well as appropriate social service staff in the drawing up of the plan.
- ◆ It should have a review date set that will give strategies time to work,
- ◆ For Looked After Children, the P.S.P. should be part of the Personal Education Plan.

REPORTING ON PROGRESS

Legally schools have to report on a child's progress at least once a year, many schools do this twice or more, often with one short report and one full one.

S.A.T. (Standard Attainment Test)

This is used to measure progress and place a child on a National Curriculum level (usually at the end of a Key Stage). There is a mixture of teacher assessment and examination used. The most useful are English Maths and Science as these are carefully standardised. In Key Stage 4 S.A.T.S. are replaced by G.C.S.E., G.N.V.Q. and other exams.

This is a rough guide to what the levels mean.

Year 2 (7 years old)	Level 1	low ability shown
	Level 2	average
	Level 3	high ability
	Level 4	exceptional performance
Year 6 (11 years old)	Level 3 or below	-low ability shown
	Level 4	Average
	Level 5	High ability
	Level 6 or above-	exceptional performance
Year 9 (14 years old)	Level 3	low ability shown
	Level 4	just below average
	Level 5	average
	Level 6	high attainment
	Level 7	A very high standard of attainment
	Level 8	is the highest level that can be achieved
Year 11 (16 years old)	Attainment shown by a G.C.S.E. grade, A* to G. A-C is considered to be equivalent to the old O' level, and is necessary for entry to A' level courses. National Curriculum levels are not used	

There are often the letters A, B or C attached to levels. C is low A is high therefore 3C is lower than 3A. There are point scores sometimes used for SATS levels.

P Levels are used for children who are not able to reach level 1. This is an 8 point scale in each subject with level 1 being the lowest. This is usually used for children with MLD or SLD.

The Foundation Stage Profile is a 9 point scale in 13 areas (9 being exceptional) . This is used to assess children in nursery education and completed at the end of reception. Children make progress through stages called Stepping Stones.

Special Educational Needs

A child may be deemed to have a Special Educational Need (S.E.N.) and will be placed on the register that is held by the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). There will be a variety of reasons for this, behaviour, educational difficulties, health or a disability. The need will be reviewed regularly, and the carers, residential social workers, and parents should be expected to take part in this process particularly if the child has a "Statement" .The SENCO's main duty is to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs have these needs met. They often co-ordinate the work of the T.A.'S (Teaching Assistants), monitor the Special Needs Register, and organise statements and reviews. In some cases it may be seen that mainstream school cannot provide the necessary support for a child and they may be referred to an E.B.D (Emotional Behaviour Difficulties) school, or a school that works with Severe Learning Difficulties (S.L.D.) or Moderate Learning Difficulties (M.L.D.)

Stages of the Special Need Code of Practice

This is the new system of categorising children with Special needs in school. The old system was on a five level system.

SCHOOL ACTION (SA) (old system level 2, children who were on level 1 are removed)	A need is identified, and teachers work out strategies to deal with it. The child is placed on the register.
SCHOOL ACTION PLUS (SA+) (old system level 3)	The need is more serious and the child May have access to out of school support services (The Education Psychology Service for example

<p>STATEMENT</p> <p>(old system level 5, level 4 was preparation of a statement)</p>	<p>If the needs are not being met the child may be put forward for a "Statutory Assessment" leading to a Statement Of Educational Need. This lengthy process will require the cooperation of different agencies, and will formally state the needs of the child and what extra provision will be provided. A school or parent may request that a Statutory Assessment is started.</p>
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A child on a Special Needs Stage should have an I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) that details their needs and how the school will meet them. A child is usually moved through the stages sequentially, but may be moved immediately onto a higher stage if the need is severe enough, there is no minimum or maximum time for the child to remain on a particular level, but the school will be expected to monitor the child's progress regularly.

If the child has a Statement of Educational Need, it means that the child has serious problems that are affecting their education and states what extra help the child requires. The Local Authority is required to provide the resources to meet this need. There are reviews at least once a year, but there may be more frequent mini-reviews to track progress.

SUBSTANCE MISUSE/SMOKING

Schools should have their own policy that links with the agreed Croydon one. Normally, the school will carry out its own investigation, and will consult with the Police Youth Section. The carer will be informed as a matter of course, and should be asked to come into school. Police involvement for minor offences is usually in an advisory role, and exclusion from school should not be automatic. The main emphasis should be on counselling the child and prevention of further Substance Abuse. Exclusion may lead to further drugs related problems. With smoking, schools have their own rules for pupils, and this information should be laid out in the behaviour contract.

UNIFORM

In primary education school uniform is not compulsory, though many schools do expect children to wear a uniform. Secondary schools may determine what children may wear to school, and this should be clearly laid out in a policy given to carers. Uniform requirements can cause problems between home and school. My advice is – do your very best to ensure that children fulfil uniform requirements however petty you think the rules are. If they are dressed incorrectly, they may feel "picked on" by their teachers, and this causes all sorts of complications at home and school.

QUALIFICATIONS

G.C.S.E. (General Certificate in Secondary Education)

Graded A* to G. A* is exceptional performance. A-C grades are equivalent to the old O' level and necessary to start an 'A' level course at Further Education

G.N.V.Q. (General National Vocational Qualification)

At 16 may be taken at Intermediate or Foundation level (Intermediate is equivalent to about G.C.S.E A-C level). These levels can be taken in year 11 or post-16.

G.N.V.Q Higher is equivalent to 2 A levels and to complicate things further is now called an Advanced Vocational Level (A.V.L.)

A LEVEL

Now divided into two parts A1 and A2 taken over two years. A1 and A2 are qualifications in their own right and children can leave with an A1 qualification, but they can only do A2 if they have successfully completed A1.

N.V.Q. (National Vocational Qualifications)

These are normally taken post 16 and relate specifically to a particular occupation. They often are taken as day release courses. Level 3 is roughly A level standard. Level 4 is about degree level.

Certificates of Achievement

Are often taken by children who are unlikely to be successful at G.C.S.E. or G.N.V.Q. There is a wide variety of traditional subjects as well as areas such as Travel and Tourism. They often have a very practical base.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

A.S.T.	Advanced Skills teacher.
A.V.L.	Advanced Vocational Level
C.A.T.	Cognitive Attainment Task
C.A.I.S.	Croydon Advisory and Inspection Service
C.V.A.	Contextual Value Added
E.B.D.	Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
E.P.	Educational Psychologist
E.W.O.	Education Welfare Officer
F.S.P	Foundation Stage Profile
G.C.S.E.	General Certificate in Secondary Education
G.N.V.Q.	General National Vocational Qualification
I.C.T.	Information Communication Technology
I.E.P.	Individual Education Plan

K.S.	Key Stage
L.S.A.	Learning Support Assistant
MIDYIS	Middle Years Information system
M.L.D.	Moderate Learning Difficulties
N.V.R.	Non-Verbal Reasoning
N.V.Q.	National Vocational Qualification
P.E.P.	Personal Education Plan
P.R.U.	Pupil Referral Unit
P.S.P.	Pastoral Support Programme
R.A.	Reading Age
S.A.T.	Standard Attainment Test (sometimes Task!)
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
S.E.N.	Special Educational Need
S.L.D.	Severe Learning Difficulties
T.A.	Teaching Assistant
YELLIS	Year 11 Information System