

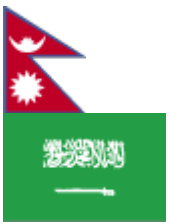
Ethnic Minority



Achievement Service



Asylum Seekers and Refugee Children in Schools: A Brief Guide





Good Practice in Schools

- Make sure you find out about students' experiences and needs and do not assume all asylum seekers are the same
- Provide EAL support for learning English
- As they settle in, assess their initial proficiency in English and use this to set targets to develop their English further
- Create displays that celebrate diversity within the school to create a welcoming environment
- Have a planned induction programme and Welcome pack which includes a timetable, map of the school etc.
- Include parents/families in the induction period so that they can offer support at home
- Help with practicalities such as PE kits, uniforms, bus passes, school meals
- Have access to bilingual dictionary/computer apps to aid translation
- Have a 'language of the month'
- Get children to teach phrases in their language
- Have an inclusive curriculum, including the study of refugees and the human rights supporting this
- Have books available in children's home languages
- Establish a 'buddy system'
- Arrange for the pupil to see school nurse/optician/dentist for health check if necessary

For more advice refer to the more general guidance provided in '*New To English, Guidance for schools admitting newly arrived pupils from around the world*' booklet published by The EM/GRT Achievement Service.



Issues facing Refugee/Asylum-Seeking Children in UK schools

Children in school who may be from an asylum-seeking or refugee family, do not have to identify themselves if they do not want to. Parents/carers do not have to disclose their status.

It is important to recognise that each child will have different experiences. Refugee and asylum seeker children are a diverse group. Some children may arrive with both parents, others may have one parent caring for them. Other children arrive alone and unaccompanied or with siblings. Schools can play a vital role in promoting the wellbeing of refugee children, helping them to rebuild their self-esteem and friendships.

A decision about the future of families can take a long time. Children can be unsettled about their next stage in life. They may be reluctant to make friends in case they are suddenly moved to another area.

It is important to have high educational expectations of refugee children and it should not be assumed that they will be unable to cope within the normal school setting. The majority of refugee children are very resilient and school can provide routine and security after the uncertainty they may have experienced. However, some of these children are suffering from trauma and may have witnessed personal tragedy and atrocities. Some may be struggling to cope and suffer depression, flashbacks and memory loss. Some asylum seekers have also left family behind and may be missing close family members. They will have left personal possessions behind and may feel insecure as they do not know what the future holds.

To help children with any emotional difficulties:

- Support children in making friends
- Provide support in any current issues affecting their well-being (eg financial hardship)
- Use circle time or life story writing to help children understand and express their emotions
- If your school has a learning mentor or accesses a counselling service, these could be appropriate
- If you have further concerns, speak to your SENCO, who would have contacts with an educational psychologist or your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)



Some definitions

These are intended as a basic explanation of terms used across the refugee sector. The definitions are not legal definitions.

A refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...' (Definition quoted from the 1951 Refugee Convention).

Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years, and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. A person with refugee status has the right to work and to claim benefits.

An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection on the basis of the Refugee Convention. They have asked the Government for refugee status and are waiting to hear the outcome of their application. They are allowed to stay whilst they are waiting. They are not allowed to work and have a different system of benefits.

A refused asylum seeker is someone whose claim has been refused. They may be deported but they may collect further evidence to re-start their claim. They are not allowed to work and may not be able to claim benefits.

An economic migrant is someone that has moved to another country to work, European Union migrants often fall into this category.

An illegal immigrant is someone who has either entered a country illegally and not made themselves known or who has overstayed and has no legal right to stay. They are not allowed to work or claim benefits.

An age-disputed child is an asylum applicant whose claimed date of birth is not accepted by the Home Office and/or by the local authority who have been approached to provide support. This term is usually used to refer to people who claim to be children, but who are treated as adults by the Home Office and/or the local authority. Whether an individual is treated as an adult or as a child has serious implications for the way in which the person's claim for asylum is treated, and the support received.

Family reunion is the policy enabling people given refugee status or humanitarian protection to bring their spouse and dependent children to join them in the UK.

Separated children are children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents or previous/legal customary care giver. Separated children are typically asylum seekers, but not in every case.

For more information, see <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>



More information:

www.cityofsanctuary.org/schools Provides information about refugees and asylum-seeking children in school, including a list of relevant teaching resources for KS1 TO KS5.

- www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/30007927 information about schools in Syria
- NALDIC website provides more information on refugee and asylum seekers
- Refugee Week takes place every year in June. <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

Resources:

For Primary-Age Pupils:

- You are Welcome: Activities to Promote Self-esteem and Resilience in Children from a Diverse Community, including Asylum seekers and Refugees – Pamela Allen, Ben Harper and Jay Rowell.

For Secondary-Age Students:

- New in our Nation: Activities to Promote Self-Esteem and Resilience in Young Asylum Seekers – Pamela Allen, Ian Warwick and Jay Begum.

Cross - Phase

- Welcoming a Refugee Visitor – activities and resources
<http://www.employabilityforum.co.uk/documents/RefugeesintoSchoolsResourcePack2.pdf>

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