

## Welcoming an adopted child to your primary school

Adoption is a legal and permanent way of providing a new family for a child who cannot live with their birth family. Once an adoption order is granted, all legal responsibilities and rights are transferred to a child's adoptive parents.

In modern adoption, very few adopted children have been relinquished voluntarily by their birth parents. Sadly, in the majority of cases, a judge has decided that the severity of abuse and/or neglect that they have experienced justifies permanent removal from their birth parents, and nobody else in their family is able to care for them.

Once they enter the care system, a child will usually live with a temporary foster family. Some children will experience several changes of family during this time, and will continue to have regular contact with their birth families. Many will be separated from their siblings.

The process is not over once a child is first placed with their adoptive family. They are still legally a looked-after child until a judge grants an adoption order. At this stage the child may still be using their birth surname, there will be children's services involvement, and the prospective adoptive parents may not have full legal parental rights. Adoptive parents must wait at least 10 weeks to apply for an adoption order, and the process will usually take several months to be completed, or longer in some cases.

The average age of adoption in 2016 was 3 years 5 months. This means that some adopted children entering primary school will only recently have been adopted, or may still be legally looked after, although they are living with their prospective adoptive parents. There is a growing body of scientific e» en.

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range of responses may develop in response to inconsistent and neglectful care, including passivity, anxiety, fear or excessive compliance.

the brain function of

assimilating and making sense of sensory information may not work as well for children who have been exposed to drugs or alcohol in the womb. This can make it harder for some children to sit still, manage noises and crowds, or deal with other sensory input, such as scratchy clothing.

this is an umbrella term

for a range of diagnoses caused by exposure to alcohol in the womb. Alcohol crosses the placenta in the bloodstream of a developing foetus, and can affect physical and brain development in a number of ways. Up to 70% of adopted children have been exposed to alcohol in the womb.

No two adopted children are exactly the same, but there are some common strategies which adoptive parents have told us have improved their children's experiences of school and progress in learning:

many adopted children benefit from having a key person in school who they can go to for support. Ideally