

Refugee Council

help and advice



May 2008

English

Schools for children - information factsheet for refugee parents

- Children are entitled to go to school between 5 and 16 years old, and nursery after the age of 3 year and 3 months. Your local education authority (LEA) will help you find a school place for your children.
- It is a legal requirement that children go to school, and it is your responsibility to ensure they attend. If they do not attend without good reason you and your child may get in trouble.
- If your child is unable to attend school due to sickness you will need to inform the school as soon as possible.
- Schools have their own start and finish times. It is important that your children arrive in time for registration in the morning.

You and the school

- It is helpful to get involved in your child's school life by going to parents evenings where you get to meet the teachers and discuss your child's progress. Schools can be a good place for you to meet people. They will always welcome parents and will be happy to speak to you.
- Your child will get regular homework assignments which they must complete. Get involved in helping them with homework if you can, ensuring they have time at home to do it and making sure it is completed on time. If homework is regularly handed in late or not completed your child may get in trouble with their teacher.
- If you or your child has any problems whilst they are at school find out who your child's teachers are. They will be happy to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have.

Bad behaviour

- If your child misbehaves they may be required to stay at school in order to complete additional or unfinished work, or help their teacher. This is known as detention. If a child has to stay behind as punishment the teacher must give you 24 hours notice.
- Physical punishment is against the law and is not used in schools.

Equipment

- Your child may be required to wear a school uniform. You might be able to get some help in paying for this – please check with your child's school. They will also need a change of clothes for physical education (PE) classes. Children can be sent home if they are not wearing the correct uniform.

Other leaflets are available at <http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

- You will probably be required to provide some basic equipment for your child at school like pens, pencils, rubbers and rulers. Your child will also need a bag big enough for their books, pencil case and PE clothes. Please check with your child's school about what you will need to provide.

Lunch

- Your child's school will provide a warm dinner for your child at lunch time. These are free for children who are claiming asylum. If you have permission to stay in the UK you may get help paying for the meals – please ask your school for details. Alternatively, you can provide a cold packed lunch for your child to take to school with them.

Getting to school

- If you live a long way from your child's school you may be able to get some help paying for their travel to school. Check with your school or your local education authority for more details.

Bullying

- Bullying is hurtful behaviour, whether this is physical or verbal. If your child suffers with any problems like bullying whilst they are at school, or if you have any concerns, it is important that you speak to your child and to their teachers. Try to find out about the school's anti-bullying policy and work with the school and teachers to help resolve the situation. Don't be afraid to pursue the matter until you and your child are happy with the outcome. If you have any concerns you can also ring Parentline Plus for advice and information on 0808 800 2222.

Childcare

- There may be childcare services and family support in your area. To find out about these you will need to call your local Children's Information Service. You can get this telephone number by calling ChildcareLink on freephone 0800 234 6346.