

ADOPTTEENS

TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS

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PAC-UK
Adoption and Permanence Support



ADOPTTEENS TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS

- 1** We want to have a professional within school that is informed about adoption and has an understanding of an adopted person's needs. We know there are designated teachers, but often their information is not passed on to us.
- 2** Pupil passports. A lot of effort goes into making one of these and it is frustrating when it is not used properly. We would like an active role in what is written in the passport information and would like a copy of it – it would also be helpful to know which teachers have access to it. We also want provision to be consistent. If it is not consistent, it leaves us feeling unheard and it breaks our trust.
- 3** The topic of family is discussed in various lessons within school. We want adoption and fostering to be included within these discussions as these are two of the many family make ups in the twenty-first century. When not included it can make you feel isolated. Family trees are also difficult – it leaves us wondering 'what do we do here?' We often don't want to ignore the fact that we have a birth family as well as an adoptive family.
- 4** Foreign language lessons. Talking about family and what they look like can be very complex. When a teacher is asking you about your family and what they look like, brothers, sisters, parents etc. we often don't know the answers to these questions when thinking about birth family and we don't want to make them up. It needs to be considered, as just presuming a child will talk about adoptive parents and not birth parents isn't ok.
- 5** Teachers using radios or walkie talkies in school brings a lot of attention to us. Our experience is that even when a teacher uses initials instead of names over the radio to discuss a pupil, most other pupils can work out who this is. It can be very embarrassing and shaming.
- 6** We feel adoption/ family circumstance should be treated the same as other protected characteristics. If someone in school is caught using racial slurs or bullying because of LGBTQI+ issues, then it is treated as discrimination. We feel that when we are bullied or taunted because of our family circumstance then we are also being discriminated against, yet it is often not treated this way.
- 7** We think it should be compulsory for all teachers have specialist training in the needs of adopted and looked after children and for this training to be treated with the same level of importance as safeguarding training. PAC-UK offer specialist online training for education professionals on attachment 'a self-guided route to becoming an adoption friendly school' – visit www.pac-uk.org/education for more information.
- 8** Our fear in talking about our adoption is that we are adding fuel or ammunition for people to use against us. Whilst we would love to be more open about it, when a school doesn't take this seriously or tackle bullying surrounding adoption, it leaves us feeling vulnerable.
- 9** Trust is key. We need to be able to trust that school will support us. If we cannot trust the school professionals, we will struggle to open up about how we feel and share our experiences.
- 10** And finally, please do not underestimate the power of a 'hello' and a smile. Being seen and acknowledged every day is powerful and can mean a lot.

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