



# Education Guidance for Refugee and Asylum Seekers at Campsmount Academy



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# Introduction

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises the right of the child to an education. In England, education is compulsory and it can be provided at school "or otherwise" (as set out in the 1996 Education Act, section 7).

Asylum seeker and refugee pupils aged 5-16 have exactly the same entitlement to full-time education as other UK pupils and economic migrants. This rule applies equally across Local Authority schools, academies, and free schools.

This document has been produced to help support refugee and asylum seekers who move to Campsmount to continue their education and, in doing so, enable them to reach their full potential.

## Definitions

An asylum seeker is a person who has fled from their home country in search of safety and who has applied for political asylum in another country.

Some asylum-seeking children arrive in the UK with one or both parents, an older sibling or with a relative/family friend or customary care giver. There are also cases where children are passed off as children of a family when they are not related but are with the carers under an agreement.

If a child arrives aged under 18 without an adult who is responsible for them, they are then taken into care considered as an unaccompanied asylum seeker. Children can therefore be asylum seekers in their own right.

A refugee is a person whose claim for asylum has been accepted and who has been granted refugee status in the UK.

Refugees have often fled their home country and are unable to return there owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Refugees are different from economic migrants: migrants have chosen to leave their country and have not necessarily had the traumatic experiences that most refugees have faced.

Some of the main countries that asylum seeker and refugee children have most recently come from, along with the language(s) they are most likely to know include:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Main language(s)</b>
Syria	Arabic
Kosovo	Albanian
Pakistan	Urdu
Eritrea	Tigrinya
Afghanistan	Pashto/Dari
Sri Lanka	Sinhalese/Tamil
Sudan	Arabic
Nigeria	Yoruba
Albania	Albanian
Somalia	Somali



# Education

## Admissions

Refugee and asylum-seeking children have equal access to the full curriculum, appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. They are admitted to school/academies using the same local authority criteria as apply to any other child seeking a school place.

Admissions will be through the normal admissions process, although on occasion this might include placement through the primary Fair Access and secondary Pupil Placement panels if the criteria are met.



# Welcoming asylum seeking and refugee pupils at Campsmount

When considering admissions into the Academy Campsmount will:

- Have systems in place to ensure communication is effective with families, this might mean:
  - Arranging a professional, independent interpreter in advance, ensuring that interpreters working with asylum seekers and refugees understand the context, including being mindful of the local context in the country of origin.
  - Considering the ethnicity/dialect of the interpreter should be the same as that of the family where possible and not from an ethnicity in current conflict in the countries of origin.
- If the new pupil is an unaccompanied minor, the designated teacher for Looked after Children will be invited to the admissions meeting and fully involved in any subsequent meetings.
- The Academy will establish an ethos of trust and partnership from this first meeting. Explain why questions are being asked, as many parents of asylum seeking or refugee pupils may have prior experience of interrogation by officials which may have been intrusive and even distressing.
- Stress confidentiality.
- Make efforts to pronounce and spell names accurately.
- Find out the religion of the family so that you can respond in a culturally appropriate manner respecting their values.
- Be mindful that even if parents have difficulty speaking English, they may still understand what you say.
- When communicating via an interpreter talk to and include the parents or the child, not the interpreter.
- If necessary, offer to help fill in the admissions pro-forma ("Shall I write while you talk?"). Let the parents see what you are writing.
- Clarify any entitlement to uniform grants, free school meals, transport etc. The family can be asked if they receive benefits or asylum support vouchers.
- Proof of date of birth is required by the school, not passports or immigration documents. If necessary, the Home Office will 'age' a child.
- Inform the parents of the name and contact details of the relevant person they should contact in the school if they need help or if there is a problem.
- Find out the names of any previous schools attended in their home country and in the UK, so that you can build up a picture of their strengths and weaknesses. If possible, contact schools attended in the UK for information about the pupil.
- Check with parents if they have been informed about the school curriculum, school routines and expectations including parental involvement in education.
- Provide a guide for parents with useful information about homework, term dates and uniforms. This guide should be written in clear and simple English.
- Share information about any local agencies and community organisations that help asylum seeking and refugee children and families.



# Induction to school life

## In order to aid in the smooth transition into school life Campsmount will:

- Organise for the child to start school three to four days after the admissions meeting. This gives both the school and the family time to get organised.
- Arrange a quiet few days of acclimatisation before expecting a refugee or asylum-seeking child to attend lessons. (Some may need more time than this, especially if they have never attended formal schooling or have been out of education for a while).
- Organise 'buddies' for the new arrival and brief them carefully. Buddies can show the new pupil where the toilets are, explain the procedures for school dinners and make sure they get on the right bus home. To ensure continuity of support Campsmount will share the buddy role between two or three pupils, paying attention to cultural background, language, or dialects.
- Arrange a quiet space for prayer if needed and allot time to do so.
- Arrange for the child to be observed and assessed informally from day one.

Postpone any formal testing of the child's English for two to three weeks. Once they have had chance to settle, conduct a baseline initial assessment of their English proficiency using appropriate assessment tools. (Please note that it is not recommended that reading and spelling-age tests are conducted with EAL children, as vocabulary and cultural gaps often lead to skewed results, even if the child seems to have good English.)

The same applies to Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT), though the non-verbal reasoning score may be an indicator of general potential).

Teachers will need to carefully monitor the attendance and progress of each new pupil and check on their well-being.

A review of early progress with the pupil and key staff after the first few weeks is essential to ensure that the pupil is in learning groups that are appropriately challenging; and any extra support that is needed is put in place. If progress is reviewed with parents, then more effective home school partnerships can be developed, any anxieties tackled, and the pupil's wider needs further assessed.



# Systems, policies and messages

**Consider within existing systems and structures what you might want to include:**

## Building staff knowledge

- Brief all staff with clear, factual information and guidance before the refugee pupil starts school. Find out as much information as possible about the country of origin, especially languages and education systems. The British council website can provide this information as well as <https://eal.britishcouncil.org/teachers/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

## Systems, policies and messages within the school

- Have effective systems for sharing information within the school, and between school and home that take account of the fact that parents may not speak, read or write English. Make sure that all communication is written in clear simple English.
- School policies are inclusive of asylum seeking and refugees.
- Use the website to communicate to all readers that Campsmount welcomes all children and values the contribution they can make.

## Exploring help available

- Find out about any support available locally for refugees and their families from charities, community groups and voluntary agencies.



## Links to curriculum provision

Every child under 16 has an entitlement to the full National Curriculum, but often asylum seeking and refugee children have had an interrupted education. Some will have never attended formal education, so, steps will be made to ensure the mainstream curriculum offer is accessible for them.

A new refugee or asylum-seeking child is likely to need EAL support. For most pupils acquiring proficiency in English is a priority. As their timetable is compiled, several hours will be free each week for the new arrival to work on their English, review learning from recent lessons and complete homework. This time should be supervised and structured.

For the remaining time the refugee or asylum-seeking child will join mainstream lessons. Where and when appropriate, the initial placement of refugee and

asylum children in a low ability set will be avoided, as these children tend to learn better when working with peers who can provide good linguistic and behavioural models.

At Year 9 and KS4 level Campsmount will not ask students to choose options until they have some experience of the curriculum. Some taster lessons in subjects that are new or of interest can be arranged.

At KS4, curriculum pathways will be appropriate, so that the courses offered match the learner's ability and potential. Additional opportunities for extra study or EAL support will be built in too.

The local authority can also provide advice and support to schools regarding the above issues.





## Pastoral support

Asylum seeking and refugee children are a very vulnerable pupil group, who may experience emotional or mental health problems, discrimination and racism. Pastorally, the school's first aim is to provide a safe and supportive environment for a refugee or asylum-seeking child, both physically and emotionally.

Many refugees have come from unstable social situations and have high levels of anxiety or emotional distress as a result of the trauma of leaving their home country and their initial experiences of the host country.

Some asylum seeking and refugee children may exhibit behaviour which can be related to their recent experiences. These behaviours can be disruptive, emotional, social or learning-related. Such behaviours are equally associated with SEN and mirror other social, emotional and mental health difficulties, making it difficult to determine the cause and provide the right support. It is important to make contact with the right agency locally to seek support in these situations.

Asylum seeking and refugee children can experience racism, bullying and discrimination within and outside school. Campsmount will ensure that pupils and staff are clear that this is unacceptable and that they must report any incidents. Make it clear what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.

Be alert to the needs of school staff, who may not be skilled and knowledgeable in meeting the needs of asylum seeking and refugee pupils.

The local authority can also provide advice and support to schools regarding the above issues.