



Refugee Education UK

In collaboration with



University of
Nottingham

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Promoting the inclusion of refugee children in schools: recommendations for secondary education policy in England

Summary of recommendations
October 2023

Executive Summary

Schools can be places of safety for refugee and asylum-seeking children, providing a place of growth, flourishing and integration. The recommendations presented in this paper are the result of focus group discussions – carried out through a partnership with Professor Joanna McIntyre from the University of Nottingham and Refugee Education UK – with key stakeholders in the education sector (including teaching unions; Virtual School head teachers; CEOs of Multi Academy Trusts; staff from local authorities and third-sector organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers with education-related outcomes).

This paper is a call to promote welcome and inclusion for refugee and asylum-seeking children. In an era of continued global migration, we urge policymakers to move beyond a crisis-based response towards a more sustainable and inclusive strategy. The recommendations below will help critical progress in ensuring inclusive education for all children.

Impact of dispersal accommodation practices on the education of refugee and asylum-seeking children

Recommendations:

- The Department for Education should work collaboratively with the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure consideration of educational outcomes at all levels is explicitly encouraged within accommodation and dispersal policy for refugee and asylum-seeking children.
- The Home Office should provide advance notice to local authorities about the dispersal of families with school-age children in order to allow the arrangement of school places before the relocation takes place.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Home Office should consider a wider, sustainable approach to housing for refugee and asylum seekers to ensure minimal disruption on children's education.

In-year admissions funding for pupils from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds

Recommendation:

- The Department for Education should implement an alternative approach to lagged funding to ensure schools receive appropriate funding for children who arrive after the census date.

Funding uplifts for refugee and asylum-seeker pupils

Recommendations:

- Building upon the positive provision of funds for schools for resettled refugee pupils from Afghanistan and Ukraine, the Department for Education should create sustainable education funding uplifts for all sanctuary seeking learners. A sustainable funding model should be informed by funding already in place for other vulnerable groups, including alternative provision funding and uplifts for care-experienced pupils.
- The Department for Education should fund the targeted deployment of teaching assistants to provide additional 1:1 support in the classroom for newly-arrived pupils

Routes to refugee practitioner professionalisation for educators

Recommendations:

- Department for Education should design and implement a professionally recognised status in schools for educators with a specialism in the support needs of refugees and asylum seekers
- Department for Education should review the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) core content framework to ensure that all new teachers have insight into working with refugee and asylum-seeking pupils¹
- Continuing professional development² (CPD) should include up to date information on the rights and entitlements of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils, as well as ongoing updates on best practice in the refugee education sector. Teachers should be properly resourced to complete such training within their roles.

Support for communication and collaboration at the local authority level

Recommendations:

- The Home Office should provide local authority school admissions teams with regular and accurate updates about the location of existing and new refugee and asylum seeker accommodation within their catchment area
- Where the majority of secondary schools within a local authority are academies, the Department for Education should authorise local authority school admissions

¹ Refugee Education UK along with Joanna McIntyre at the University of Nottingham are building a teacher training curriculum on supporting refugee children in school.

² CPD within Early Career Framework, National Professional Qualifications and Specialist Leadership pathways currently overseen by the Department for Education

teams to oversee in-year admissions for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils to avoid children falling between the gaps of the multi-faceted academy system

- Local authorities should be supported to coordinate the sharing of resources between schools where a need is identified (for example, the translation of documents and guidance into mother-tongue languages prominent in the local area; sharing of well-being resources across schools such as access to counselling in mother-tongue languages)
- Where funds are distributed at a regional level, local authorities should coordinate with schools to ensure funding is targeted where it is most needed

Learning from young people with lived experience to inform further policy

Recommendations:

- Department for Education should create and consult with a youth advisory committee of learners with lived experience of forced migration whilst recognising the diversity of experience within this group³
- Members of Parliament and the Department for Education should support the creation of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugee Education to advocate for and inform policy changes in order to achieve successful education outcomes for pupils from a forced migration background

Accountability measures for schools

Recommendations:

- Ofsted should ensure that inspectors receive appropriate training to interpret the education inspection framework to recognise positive practice taking place within schools to promote the inclusion of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils and other vulnerable groups
- The Department for Education should ensure that schools are not negatively impacted by attendance figures where a child is dispersed and delays occur in securing a new school place whilst the child remains on the original school's census

Conclusion

The voices of young people with lived experience are clear: education is a vital lifeline for refugee and asylum-seeking children in the UK. Focus group participants recognised and celebrated pockets of good practice already happening across the country. However, there remains much to be done at a policy level to recognise and prioritise inclusive classrooms for refugee and asylum seeking pupils. The recommendations in this report are not an exhaustive list, but rather the beginning of an ongoing conversation to ensure positive outcomes for refugee and asylum-seeking children. Further research and policy recommendations are required across different stages of education in England, Wales,

³ Refugee Education UK is able and willing to work with the DfE to facilitate such a group

Scotland and Northern Ireland. We call on policymakers to move towards a sustainable and inclusive policy landscape to ensure every child seeking sanctuary in the UK is able to access and thrive in appropriate, quality education.

To request the full version of the report and more detailed findings from the research, please email research@reuk.org.



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“Education is the key”