

What is a parent/carer's role?

Parental co-operation is an important aspect for an off-site placement to be successful. A parent/carer will be expected to attend the initial, 6-week review and final meetings. They would also be expected to communicate with the receiving school on a regular basis.

Can a parent/carer request an off-site direction?

No, off-site placements should be recommended by a child's home school and are directed by the governing body of a school.

A child with an education, health and care plan (EHC) should only be considered for an off-site placement as part of the special education needs review process.

A looked after child should only be considered with the consent and support of the Virtual Headteacher and form part of their care plan.

When will the off-site direction end?

A placement is generally completed within 12 school weeks. Good behaviour and attendance by the child, and good communication between parent/carers and both schools will help achieve a successful off-site placement. However, it is recognised that on occasions off-site placements may end before the 12-week period. If the child is in breach of the school's behaviour policy and does not comply with

agreed targets, the head teacher of the receiving school can end the placement.

If this is the case the receiving school will inform the home school in the first instance and advise them of the situation that has led to the head teacher's decision to end placement. The home school will decide on the action required as a consequence of the child's behaviour whilst on the placement. Parent/carer and child will then be notified of the reason the placement has ended. The child will be expected to return to his home school with immediate effect.

The receiving school can issue a suspension as a disciplinary action as part of their behaviour strategies and in accordance with the behaviour policy. The home school will be notified of the suspension.

Which schools participate in off-site directions?

In Sunderland all secondary schools and some primary schools have participated in off-site placements over the last few years.

Together for Children facilitate school to school off-site placements with Sunderland Local Authority only.

Further information

If a parent/carer requires further information on the process of an off-site direction, they should contact their child's home school.



School to school off-site direction

Information for parents/carers

What is an off-site direction?

It is recognized that there may be instances when a pupil is finding access to their mainstream school challenging and may require an alternative environment to their current school setting on a temporary basis.

Government bodies of maintained schools have the power to direct a pupil off-site to improve their behaviour under Section 29A of the Education Act 2002. Academies can also arrange off-site provision for such purposes under their general powers. Schools can therefore arrange an educational placement for a pupil off-site with an alternative provider directly or with another school.

Sunderland schools/academies have agreed to arrange off-site direction placements consistently and therefore have implemented a *School-to-School Off-site Direction Protocol* that all schools in Sunderland will follow when considering placing a child off-site with another Sunderland school. This involves a **temporary** arrangement where a child is placed in another school for a period of 12 weeks. A formal agreement is agreed between the child's parent/carer, the head teachers of both the home school and the receiving school.

An off-site direction placement is a behaviour strategy that is generally used when it is felt that a child would benefit from a different educational placement temporarily and it would be in the best interests of the child.

It is the headteacher of the home school, in association with their governing body, to consider an off-site direction.

A school-to-school off-site direction can only take place if head teachers (from both the home school and the receiving school), agree that it is in the child's best interest to attend a different school temporarily.

Why would a child be considered for an off-site direction?

The head teacher at a child's home school may request that parent/carer consider an off-site education placement as their child is displaying inappropriate behaviours and the school have already tried a variety of in-school interventions and/or targeted support which has been unsuccessful. An off-site direction can also be considered where a one-off incident or a number of incidents whereby the child's place in their school is becoming at risk of permanent exclusion.

An off-site direction can also be used when a child has previously been referred to the Early Help - Attendance Service at Together for Children, due to poor attendance at their home school and where it is believed that a temporary move to a different school may have a positive impact on the child's attendance and re-engagement with education.

How is an off-site direction set up?

In the first instance, the head teacher or a member of his/her team of the home school will have discussed the consideration of an off-site direction with the parent/carer and child. A school does not need to have consent from a parent/carer to place a child off-site to improve their child's behaviour.

An initial meeting will be arranged with both schools' head teacher or his/her representatives, parent/carer, child and a Together for Children representative.

What happens at the initial meeting?

A Together for Children representative will generally facilitate the meeting. The parent/carer, child, school representatives and the Together for Children representative will discuss what is expected by all parties during the off-site direction placement. This will include the support that will be offered to the child during the placement period and key targets may be set. An off-site direction agreement will be signed by all parties and review dates will be arranged.

How long will the off-site direction last?

The off-site direction would generally run for 12 school weeks. A review is held after 6 weeks with a final review at 12 weeks. Throughout this period a child will be dual registered at both schools with the home school remaining the main school base.