**­­­PCAF SAMPLE LETTER TO TEACHER**

Dear Teacher,

CHILD is excited about this school year, and so are we. I wanted to share some information about our CHILD that will help you get to know him.

CHILD was adopted/joined us in kinship care/joined us in permanent care at (age), and we have (limited information on his early life, are in an open adoption/kinship with his birth family, etc.). Here is all our relevant contact details (any persons permitted contact and on what basis)

CHILD has a number of interests which (include)

Due to some of the disruption in CHIDLS early life, while CHILD is ? years old chronologically, CHILD is actually ? years old neurologically. As a result CHILD needs to be provided with activities and support that promotes their neurological growth – at the right stage of development so that they can progress to someday catchup academically, emotionally­­­, physically and socially.

For some children that disruption might also mean they have difficulty concentrating, holding pencils and writing or find transitions or noises in the classroom overwhelming. They may also get confused, be forgetful, daydream or become irritable, withdrawn and anxious or aggressive. They need your help to maintain relationships and to help them with triggers like harsh lighting, shouting, bells and loudspeakers, slamming doors and unwelcome or unexpected transitions or touch. They need reassurance to build their trust and a calm, structured environment with someone that will encourage them to try again. They would also benefit from a quiet space to go to when they feel overwhelmed.

You are in a significant position to send a message about families formed by adoption/kinship or permanent care to the other children in this class and their families. Our hope is that students will receive a positive message about the many ways that families are formed. Some children are born to their parents, and sometimes families are formed by kinship, permanent care or adoption. Regardless of how families come about, they are all families.

I thought it might make help you if I shared some appropriate responses to common questions children may ask about this. These are questions that our child has already heard, and we practice answers together that feel most comfortable to CHILD.

* **Where are CHILD’S real parents?**

CHILD has two sets of real parents: the parents who gave birth to him and the parents who raise him as his Mum and Dad forever.

* **Why didn’t CHILD’S birth parents keep him?**

CHILDS birth parents were unable to parent him (raise him, be his parents, whichever fits your classroom) when he was born. Sometimes in families it is not safe for the child to stay with their parents and they need to go to another home. CHILD is now in a safe home just like yourselves.

* **Why doesn’t CHILD look like CHILDS Mum?**

Children usually look like the parents that gave birth to them, don’t they? CHILD probably looks like his birth parents.

Some school assignments may be hard for us. I’m not asking that you change the task, but I would appreciate an advanced warning and some flexibility to adapt the assignment to fit our family’s circumstances. Some examples of school assignments that might be challenging for CHILD would include:

* creating a family tree
* bringing in baby pictures
* sharing birth or young infancy stories
* discussions of inherited traits
* birthdays, mothers day or fathers day.

I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you after you have had a chance to get to know my wonderful CHILD. Can we schedule a time to talk in about three weeks? I would also love to read some books or provide you with some books about families formed through adoption, kinship, permanent or foster care for the class or library. Our family has quite a collection that we read together. We find books to be excellent conversation starters and this helps increase CHILDS understanding too.

If you are interested in learning more about how early childhood experiences like trauma affect my CHILD, I would also be happy to share some resources with you. A couple of good resources are:

* this [5 minute video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYBUY1kZpf8&t=5s) on childhood trauma
* trauma informed practice in [schools](https://www.theactgroup.com.au/documents/makingspaceforlearning-traumainschools.pdf)
* needs of adopted and permanently placed children [guide for schools](C://Users/SoniaWagner/PCAF/General%20-%20Documents/HELPLINE%20RESOURCE/3)%20HEALTH%20&%20WELLBEING/C)%20TRAUMA/b)%20TRAUMA%20RESOURCES%204%20SCHOOLS/Meeting-the-needs-of-adopted-and-permanently-placed-children-A-guide-for-school-staff.pdf)
* becoming a [trauma informed school](https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Schools-Resources-List-2.pdf)
* A teachers introduction to [attachment podcast](https://www.theteachersintroductiontoattachment.com/podcastpage/) series
* What [survival](http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/What-Survival-Looks-Like-At-Home-Quick-Printout.pdf) looks like in schools
* The impact of [secondary trauma](https://thewriteofyourlife.org/secondary-trauma-teachers/) and burnout on teachers.

If I can also help you with sharing this message more widely to the broader school community, parents and staff, these resources might be of value too:

* Removed Videos – [1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOeQUwdAjE0) and [2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1fGmEa6WnY)
* Beacon House [trauma behaviours](http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/What-Survival-Looks-Like-At-Home-Quick-Printout.pdf) diagram
* Beacon House [Primary](http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Survival-In-Primary-School-2019.pdf) Schools
* Beacon House [Secondary](https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Survival-In-Secondary-School.pdf) Schools

There are 50,000 like minded children that have had different experiences living away from birth parents who need support in a manner that addresses their needs.

We are looking forward to working with you to make this a great year for CHILD. Thank you so much for being part of CHILDS journey and helping CHILD to build his emotional, behavioural and developmental capabilities.

All the best,

YOU

Source:*Adapted from https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-blog/a-letter-to-my-adopted-childs-teacher/*