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COUNCIL**  
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Together   
for Families

# Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme Guidance for Primary Schools

This guide provides information and practical support for primary schools in aiming to optimise both the child's and the school's experience of resettlement under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPR)



[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

The guide provides **the learning from previous experience of resettlement, research of the consequences of the cultural differences and the relationship between the home and the school.**

Lastly, it contains **a picture dictionary to assist communication** between the staff and Arabic speaking pupils who has English as an Additional Language.

This guide aims to reduce the possibility of discrimination and cultural exclusion by enabling an inclusive environment and strengthening the communication between those involved.

**It is important for schools to understand the culture of refugee children** as this reduces the risk of non-attendance, underachievement or exclusion of the pupil.

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# Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to explain glossaries present in this guide but also to evade any misunderstanding about terms which occur within the work of the SVPR Scheme and migration in general.

A **“Refugee”** is a person who has been forced to flee from its home country because of war, persecution or national disasters. Refugees are asylum seekers who have been given refugee status. Refugees are entitled to work and can apply for welfare benefits. Refugees mentioned in this guide are people under the SVPR Scheme who have been forced to leave Syria and have been accepted as being vulnerable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). On arrival the SVPR refugees are granted five years’ refugee leave to remain. After the five years they can apply for indefinite leave to remain (permanent residency).

The **“Community Sponsor Scheme”** is a scheme developed by the Secretary of State for the Home Office to enable community groups to support refugees brought to the UK through the scheme. In cases where families are resettled under the Community Sponsor Scheme, the Community Sponsor group fundraise in order to support the families’ resettlement, hence the support from the Local Authority is at a minimum. Among other things, the groups provide housing, help the families in order to gain English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications and make the initial contact with the schools.

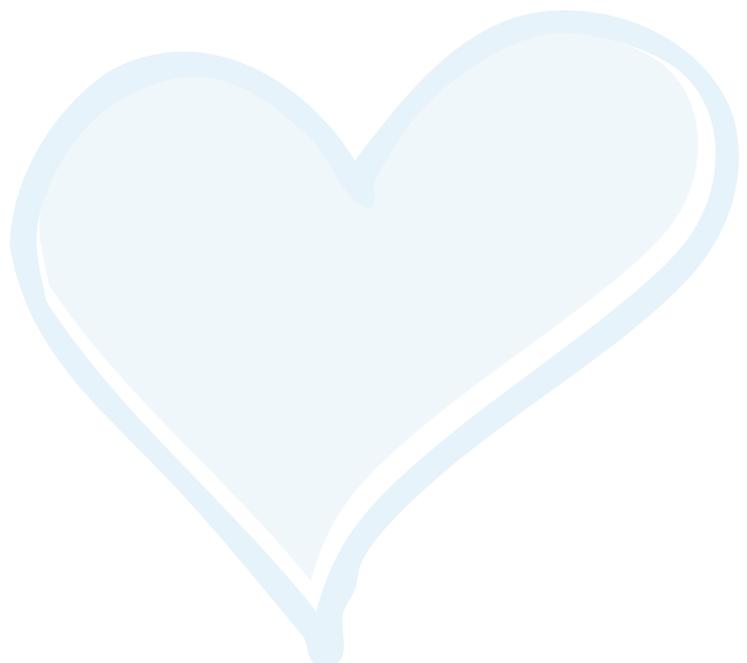
A **“Migrant”** is a person who moves from one place to another especially in order to find work or better living conditions. It differentiates from the word “refugee” in the way that migrants in a greater extent have a choice to move. People from the European Economic Area (EEA) who are working or are registered as a jobseeker have the right to reside in the UK.

An **“Asylum seeker”** is a person who has left their country of origin and is seeking asylum in another country. They are not entitled to work in the UK hence they rely on state support which is

approximately £37.75 per week per person. Asylum seekers are allocated a place to live. The housing is not paid for by the Local Authority. Asylum seekers between the ages of five to seventeen must attend mainstream education.

An **Unaccompanied child** is a child without the presence of a legal guardian. Cornwall Council is committed to support unaccompanied refugee children however the council do not currently have any unaccompanied children from the area in and around Syria.

The **Vulnerable children Resettlement (VCA) Scheme** is an additional scheme to the SVPR Scheme. The UK has made a commitment to resettle 3,000 vulnerable children from the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) by 2020. It is not only targeting unaccompanied children but also the families of vulnerable children at risk. Cornwall Council is not currently supporting any families under the VCA Scheme.



# Contact information

## Cornwall Council SVPR Scheme Coordination

Serena Collins, Commissioning Officer  
Together for Families

✉ [serena.collins@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:serena.collins@cornwall.gov.uk)

☎ 01872 324754

Joanne Wadley, Assistant Commissioning Officer  
Together for Families

✉ [refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk)

☎ 01872 327412

## Translation Support

If the school needs support on translation from Arabic to English, please contact Cornwall Council on the following email:

✉ [refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk)

## Cornwall Council Media team

✉ [mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk)

If a school or family is approached by the media in regards to the SVPR Scheme, **they should make contact to the Council Media team.**

## Bookstart

Bookstart is a programme which encourages people of all ages and cultures to engage with books. Bookstart hold additional dual language resources.

Bookstart Coordinator

✉ [eyl@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:eyl@cornwall.gov.uk)

## Cornwall Council Inclusion Education Welfare Service

Natasha Davey-Diop, Education Welfare Officer (Inclusion)

✉ [Natasha.Davey-Diop@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:Natasha.Davey-Diop@cornwall.gov.uk)

☎ 01872 322910

SVPR families can sometimes require help to ensure their children get the most out of their education. Cornwall Council has an Inclusion Education Welfare Service that can support schools with advice and guidance around meeting the needs of SVPR families including training and transition.

## Early Help Hub

If you have any concerns about a specific SVPR family, please follow the Early Help Hub process. Please see the link provided:

[www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/early-help/professionals/](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/early-help/professionals/)

For early intervention in regards to a SVPR child's well-being in school, please contact the Cornwall Council's Education Welfare Officer.

## Safeguarding

In cases where a teacher is concerned about a child's well-being and whether their human rights are being endangered, the school must take action by following the school's safeguarding policy and procedure.

# Introduction to the scheme

The families coming to the United Kingdom under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (SVPR) scheme are in desperate need of assistance.

The scheme prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identifies refugees **based on the following seven categories:**

- Legal and/or physical protection needs
- Survivors of violence and/or torture
- Medical needs
- Women and girls at risk
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Family reunification
- Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions

The refugees come from the areas around Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq, and therefore do not include people who have arrived without legal status in Europe. All SVPR refugees are being screened for any security concerns by the UNHCR before they enter the UK. The families are granted five year humanitarian leave to remain. What happens after five years will depend on the situation in Syria.

The Home Office gives Cornwall Council a fixed amount of money to cover the costs of welcoming the families to Cornwall for the first year. A reduced scale of funds is available for year two to five.

Cornwall Council has a school admission protocol for SVPR children, the purpose of which is to ensure a place is allocated as quickly as possible once it has been identified that a school place is required. For further information on this, please contact the SVPR Scheme Co-ordinator on [refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk)



The Scheme will provide refuge to **20,000** vulnerable refugees by 2020.

**14,945** refugees have been resettled in the UK under the VPR Scheme.



**Cornwall Council has a history of helping those in need. In December 2015 Cornwall Council agreed to welcome initial families.** They have arrived and settled into their new communities. Cornwall Council has since then offered sanctuary to further families. The Community Sponsor Group in Bude has welcomed two families under the Community Sponsor Scheme and other Cornish community groups are working hard fundraising to support families in need.

## Funding

**There is funding for schools as part of the SVPR scheme.**

There is funding for schools as part of the SVPR scheme. **The funding covers the first year of the child's attendance at the school**, and it is only for children who start school within their first year of arriving in the UK.

The funding covers the gap in the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU), until the child is picked up at the relevant School Census. Extra money for support needed can be made available for an individual child. Exact figures will be agreed directly with schools on a case by case basis, dependent upon a number of factors.

The school will invoice the Council termly in the first year. If a child leaves for any reason the funding will continue for the term where the child leaves and will then terminate.

## Confidentiality

**The families under the SVPR Scheme are particularly vulnerable.**

The subject of refugees attracts considerable press and public interest.

**If a school is approached by the media**, they should contact the Council Media Team on [mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk) and should not give any information to the media.

Internal communications within the school should respect the families' privacy.

## What we offer to schools within the SVPR Scheme

- **Pre-arrival meeting** between the SVPR Scheme coordinator and the school
- **Arrival meeting between the school and the parents** - an interpreter from Cornwall Council will also attend this meeting
- **Pre-start meeting** where any possible concerns can be discussed
- **Access to an interpreter** during the child's first week at school
- **Regular reviews** according to need
- **Transition support**
- **Support** from an Inclusion Officer
- **Guidance** from the Police Diversity Community Team
- **Training, trauma and counselling support** for the staff

## Expectations of the school

- **To use the funding to provide extra support** for the child to meet their specific EAL needs
- **To make use of interpreters** for any official meetings
- **To make use of online translation services** to help with day to day communication
- **To look for opportunities to connect the families with other Arabic speaking families** in the school, where this is appropriate
- **To liaise with other schools to learn from each other** (for example we are aware that one school has used Makaton and found this helpful and have managed to identify additional funding)
- **To contact the Scheme Co-ordinator with any arising issues**, if required an interpreter will be made available
- If the school is aware of any Arabic speakers in the school or local community, **consider whether they would be suitable as a volunteer** and approach them regarding this.

# Workshops

A yearly workshop for schools with SVPR pupils will be organised by the Scheme Co-ordinator in order to create a proactive network of peer support and sharing good practice learned.

Workshops will support consistency in the way different educational settings are managing the challenges presented through the scheme and overcome issues with discrimination within the community.

## The home situation and the children's backgrounds

All schools are aware, that the home situation has an impact on a child's performance in school, hence it is important that the teachers are aware of the potential challenges which are possible within the homes of vulnerable Syrian families. The families under the scheme come from different backgrounds and it is unknown to what extent they have been exposed to atrocities. Consequently, we must be mindful of not assuming anything whether it regards the mental health of the child, the child's family or the reason of a child's behaviour. However, our learning within the scheme is that the background does have an impact on the child. Previously we have seen eating disorders, high levels of anxiety and issues with attachment. Through the scheme, Cornwall Council can offer training, trauma support and counselling to the staff if required. Below are some key matters which previously have been present in primary schools together with possible solutions based on successful case studies.

### Lack of routines

It is not unusual that children under the scheme lack daily routines. This implies, among other things, no regular meal time and bed time. This lack of routine is likely to have an impact on the child's behaviour in school.

#### Case study:

Previously the lack of routines and the unknown background of the child have caused wetting in class and at night, and the need for sleep during the school day. To support tiredness throughout the school day, a bed was put in the classroom for the child to use when needed. **This initiative was successful and valuable to the child.** The other pupils quickly became accustomed to this.



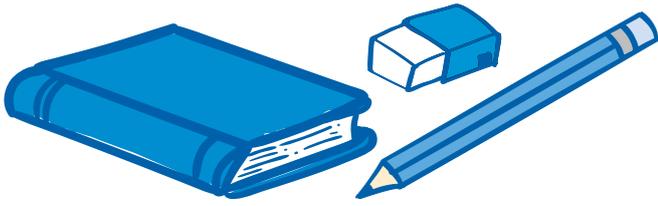
### Settling periods

SVPR children tend to have a prevalence of attachment issues. Previous experiences show that it is likely to take up to one term before a SVPR child is becoming settled into the school which causes delays in learning compared to their classmates.

#### Case study:

The schools have been successful with a **“settling in session”** in the morning; 30-60 minutes where the pupil spends time with a sibling or another pupil who they feel safe around.

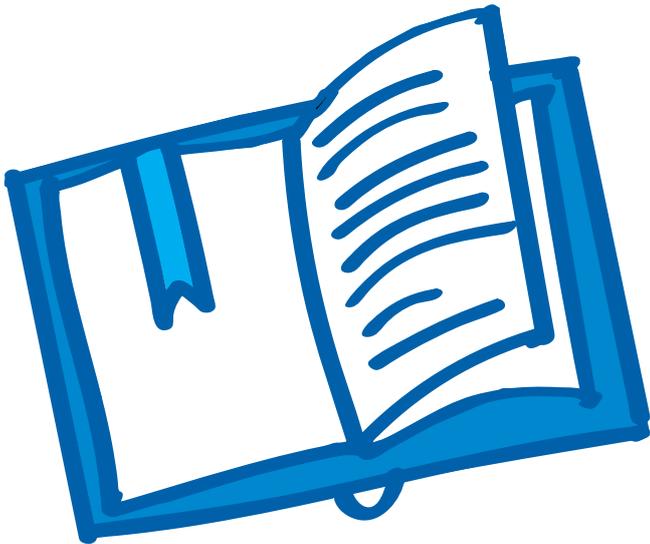




## Homework

Many SVPR children find it very difficult to complete homework successfully at home due to a lack of materials, space and privacy. Parents may also have low literacy levels, meaning that they are unable to assist with homework.

**Schools should ensure that there is adequate support in place for SVPR children to complete homework.** This should allow them to feel included, rather than keeping them in a break or lunchtime to complete homework, which can be seen as a punishment. Allowing SVPR pupils to complete their homework during school time reduces the risk of conflict between pupil and class teacher.



## Greater use of teaching assistant time

**SVPR children are likely to have had gaps in their learning as a result of interrupted or missed schooling.** Together with the fact that SVPR pupils are unlikely to be able to be assisted with homework by their parents due to their own educational needs, a higher use of teaching assistants in class will add value to the child's achievements in school.

## Internet safety

Cases have been seen where children are searching for inappropriate violent content online. **As the parents may not be proficient internet users, they are unable to control their child's use of the internet.** It is therefore important that the school is aware of the child's use of the internet and reiterate safety messages to the child and parents.



## The impact of the media

The media, especially the news, has a significant impact on children under the scheme in several ways. **It is our experience that children under the scheme are exposed to news at home that in some cases is inappropriate for children and is not necessarily discussed or explained by the parents.** Furthermore, due to both the child and parent's limited English skills, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what is on the media's attention can generate fear and possibly disclose traumas.

# Home-school relationship

**Due to the language barrier, attention to how communication with the parents is executed effectively is necessary.** Previous experiences show that children find themselves in uncomfortable situations, which highlight their difference, such as wearing inappropriate clothes on non-uniform days due to unsuccessful communication with the parents.

## Case study:

It is important to note, that despite the fact that English is essential to learn, talking Arabic at home, together with English, is not disadvantageous to the child as it advances the child's ability to learn new languages and acknowledge their background. Moreover, it opens up for the possibility of becoming translators and interpreters.

The libraries and the book-gifting programme "Bookstart" have resources in Arabic such as dictionaries, dual language picture books and children's books.

Below are some possible solutions to facilitate the communication in preparation for greater involvement from non-English speaking parents in their child's education.

## Communicate via text messages or make use of an interpreter

Parents of the SVPR Scheme can have very limited English skills, particularly in the first year, which is why the school must ensure that the information is sent in a way which is intelligible for the parents. **Information sent via a text message is advantageous because the parents are able to translate it directly on their phones.** If the information does not fit in the format of a text message, a translation of the letter into Arabic is necessary. If further assistance is required, communication can be supported by the Council. Moreover, elaborating the information given can be useful in situations where the information

concerns practices unknown to families who have recently arrived in the UK such as World Book Day and Inset days.

## Case study:

Learning within the scheme is that parents do not check school bags for any letters from the school or do not understand the letters. If a SVPR parent does not attend parent's evening or a school event, a telephone call to arrange a meeting is good practice. It may be beneficial to have a named member of staff responsible for general communication with SVPR families.

## Extend the length of parent consultations

Extended parent consultations will not only allow for the extra time it takes to have a conversation via an interpreter, furthermore, providing an opportunity **to clarify any uncertainty and address questions that are likely to occur in a meeting with a new school system** in place. Moreover, EAL pupils, especially SVPR, are likely to face more challenges than an English speaking pupil which is important to make time to cover in a parent consultation. Lastly, it will make the parents and teachers more familiar with each other which will aid a closer and more trusting relationship between the parents and the school.

## Calendar with key dates

It would help the families if **a calendar is provided to give a simple overview of key dates** during a school term such as school trips, special events and half terms. This is important in order to reduce absence.

## Parent buddy system

Due to rules on confidentiality, it is not possible to send out information to the other parents about the families under the scheme. **However, a buddy system between SVPR parents and local parents is a possible solution if families are willing to be connected.** This will increase communication between parents and may help dispel any myths which possibly have been created about the families.

Moreover, since the SVPR parents are new to the UK school system, questions and concerns may arise hence it will be useful to be paired up with a parent who is familiar with the UK school system.

### Case study:

A concern has been raised that an alienating situation arises in the meeting between parents at the school gate. From the perspective of the English speaking parents, it has generated a feeling of insecurity and added to rumours. Based on our previous experience, the families under the SVPR Scheme likewise find the situation at the school gate uncomfortable as it stresses the feeling of being isolated from the surrounding community. **A parent buddy system is a possible solution to this challenge as it will increase the dialogue between parents.**



## Cultural and religious factors' impact on education

Islam is a minority religion in Cornwall hence Muslim children and the school teachers face new and unfamiliar challenges.

### Key celebration dates toward an inclusive education

It can be valuable to teachers to keep a calendar which marks the key celebration dates in Islam, such as Eid, to achieve a greater understanding of the pupil's behaviour. This information is moreover valuable in including the pupil's religious and cultural background in the classroom. The picture dictionary can be a good starting point as it includes words in both Arabic and English which gives the option for the child to teach his or her classmates basic Arabic words. By representing the child's culture and religion positively, the school will reach a higher level of inclusion, which is high on the agenda on the new Ofsted framework

### Case study:

Having a classroom wherein the teaching and behaviour reflect the cultural diversity within the room **has proven valuable in reducing stereotyping, preventing bullying and racial incidents and has a positive effect on a minority child's self-esteem.**

### Sex education

In many cases sex education contradicts the parents' cultural and religious values especially learning which concerns sexual intercourse. The children can find themselves in situations where living up to both the expectations of the curriculum and their religion is difficult. Previous examples show that it is beneficial to arrange a meeting between the parents, the teachers and an interpreter where the content of the educational material is explained as well as explaining which parts of the education is statutory.

# Transition

The process of smooth transition between primary and secondary school is essential in regards to maintaining the progress of the SVPR child. This applies both to the support at school and the social life of the pupil. A SVPR child who has experienced forced migration is more vulnerable when moving to a new educational setting where they have to respond to new challenges in an unfamiliar environment.



## Communication between schools, parents and the pupil

Information sharing between the different educational settings is the key to a successful transition. **Person-centered planning needs to include the progress already achieved, needs of the SVPR child and effective use of communication with the parents.** Planning the transition is advisable to start between year five and six to prepare the child for the upcoming change.

Moreover, the parents and child must be involved in the process of transition to understand the changes a new educational setting involves.

## Visit the school

To reduce stress, **parents and children under the SVPR scheme should be given the option to visit the school prior to the transition** to become familiar with the new environment. During this visit, the family should meet a contact person to enable a good communication and build confidence between the parties involved.



## Buddy system

When children move from primary school to secondary school, **it is recommended to have a buddy system between SVPR pupils and pupils born in the UK**, who already know each other. Fostering the friendship made in primary school makes the transition easier on the children. The schools are encouraged to arrange visits to the new school before the children start, where the buddies can be made familiar with the new setting together.

## Cultural factors

**Some Muslim children start participating in additional religious and cultural matters when they reach a certain age.** Girls might start wearing hijab and children will take part in Ramadan. Both the feeder and the receiving school must be aware of the possible challenges which might occur due to religious beliefs. It is important to be aware of situations where the SVPR children might stand out due to cultural and religious factors. Examples are girls outfit during swimming classes which covers their full body or a child's behaviour when fasting.

## Bullying and racist incidents

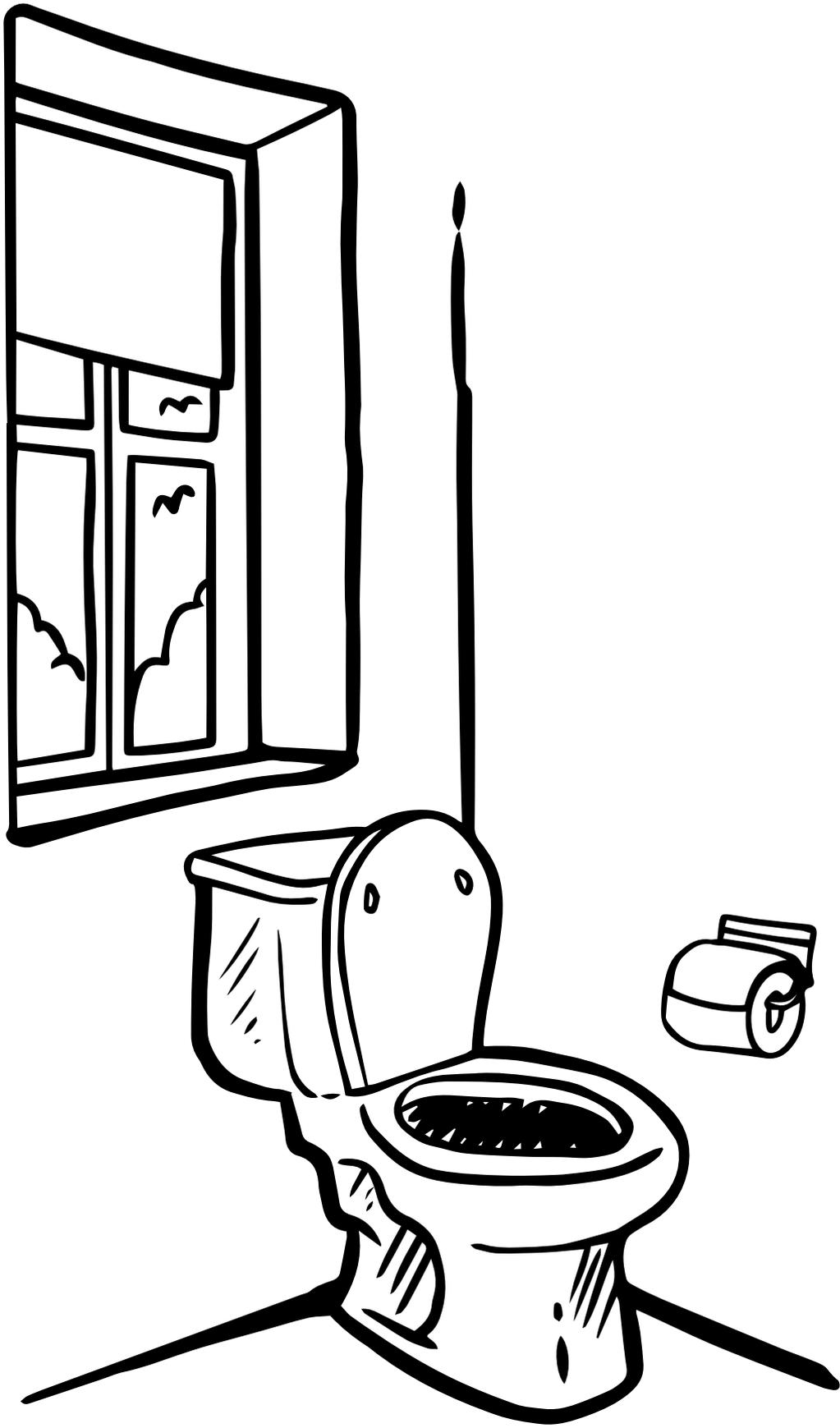
**Bullying and racist incidents within school have previously occurred within the secondary environment.** Transition arrangements must have actions to reduce this risk. A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. In dealing with a racist incident, staff should be aware of the context of the incident, as well as all of the pupils involved. All incidents of this nature should be recorded on a Racial Incident Recording form, separately from a bullying log. It is vital that all racial incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively and parents are informed of actions taken. This maintains good relationships with the school and reassures parents that name-calling, racist incidents and hate crimes are being dealt with appropriately



**Have  
your  
say...**

This is our first guidance produced based on our experience with resettlement. Feedback is greatly appreciated so we can improve our support and offers to schools. You can provide feedback using the following email address:  
**[refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk)**





حَمَّام | Hammām | Bathroom



مطعم المدرسة

mat'am al madrasa | Canteen



صَفّ | Al sāf | Classroom



جوعان | Jaw`ān | Hungry



وقت التعلم

**Waqt al ta'allum | Learning time**



اسمي | Ismi | My name

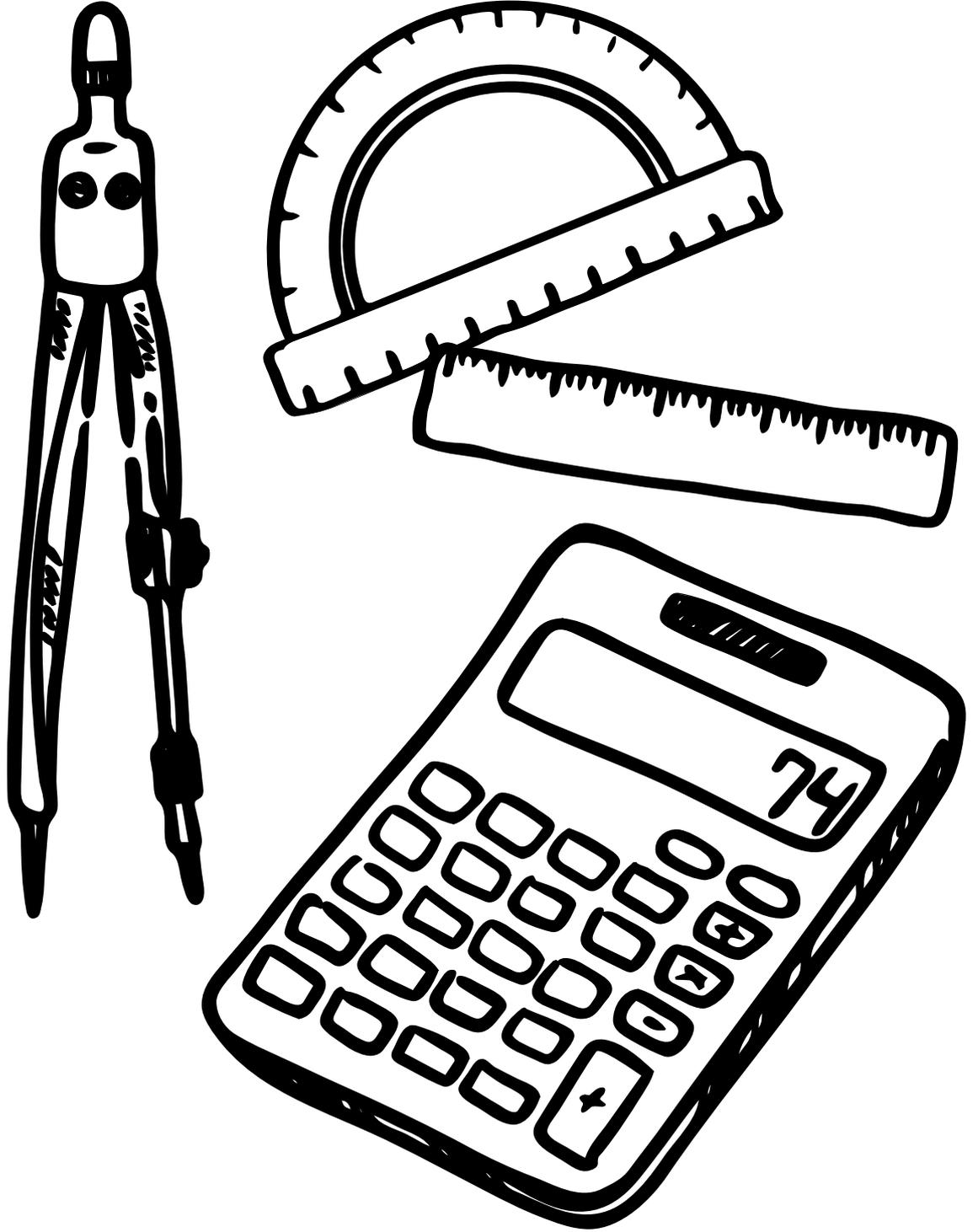


وجع | Waja` | Pain



وقت اللعب

Waqt al la`ib | Play time



الرياضيات | Riyādiyyāt | Maths



آمین | Amin | Safe



نَوْم | Nāwm | Sleep



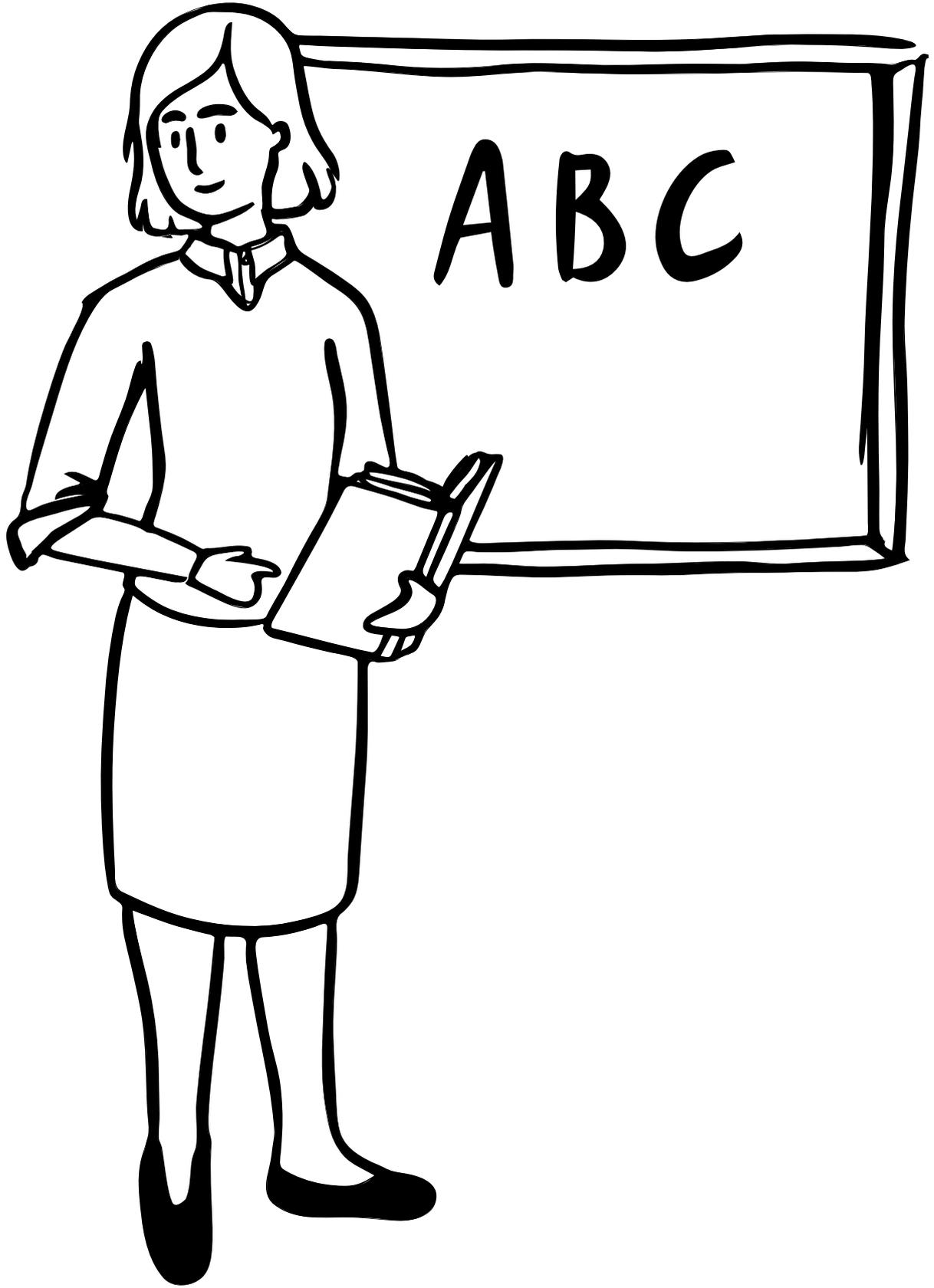
مساعدة | Sā`ada | Help



صديق | Sadiq | Friend



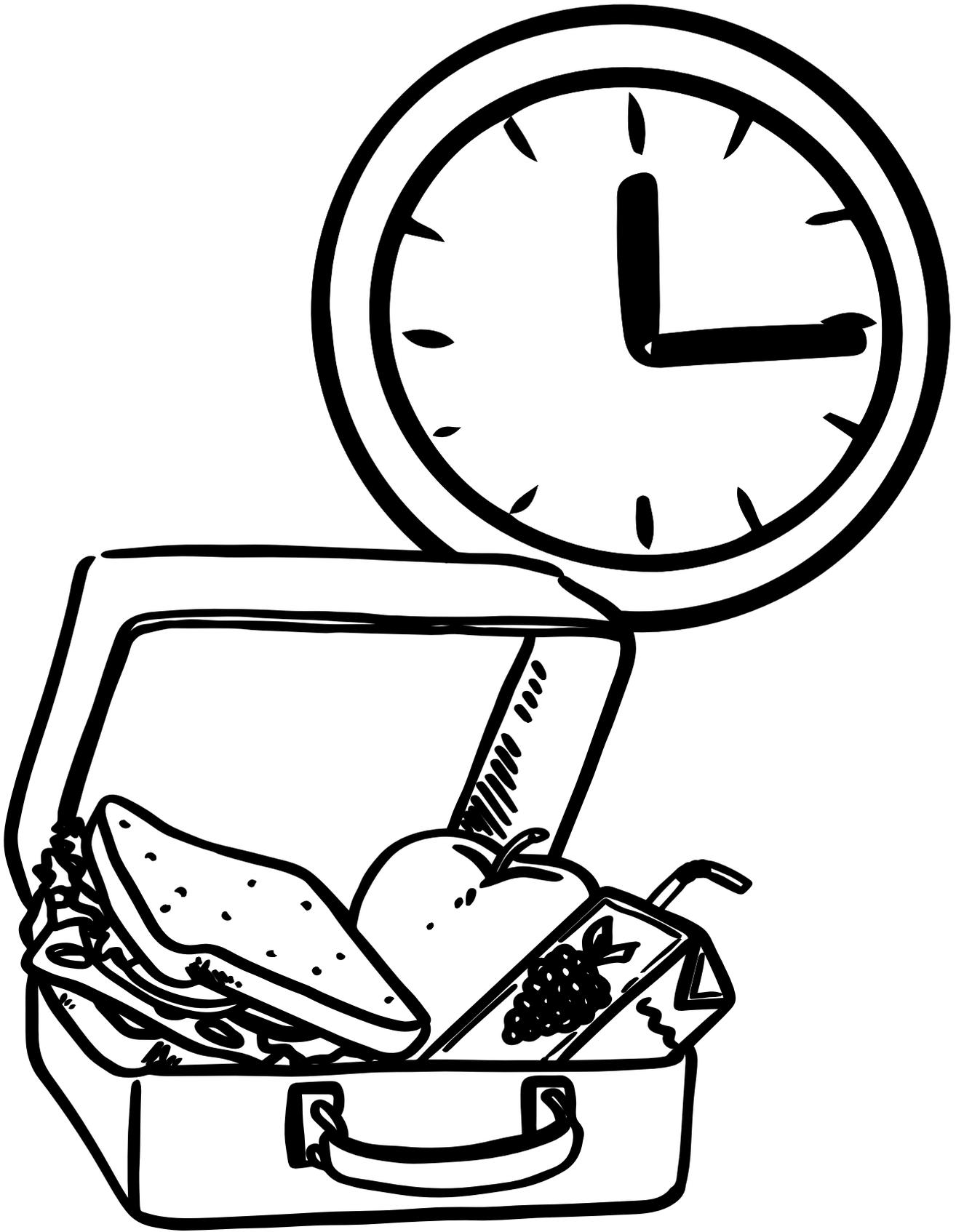
رياضة | Riyada | P.E.



تهجیة | Tahjiya | Spelling



قراءة | Quira`a | Reading

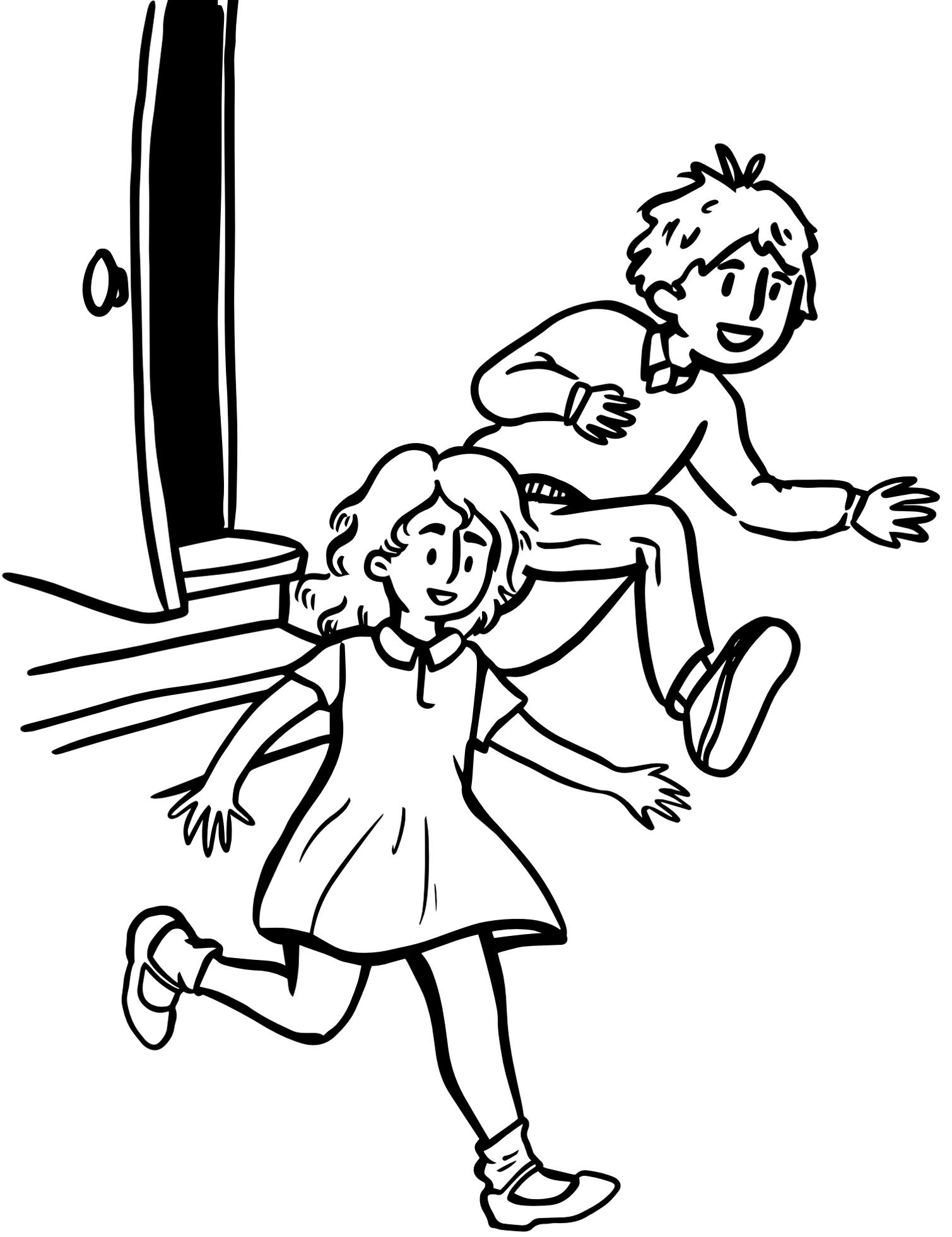


وقت الغداء

Waqt al ghada`a | Lunch time



رفيق | Rafiq | Buddy



استراحة | Istiraha | Break



معلم | Ustāz | Teacher



عَطْشَان | 'Atchāhn | Thirsty



## Contact us

For advice and guidance please email us on  
**[refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk)**

If you would like this information in another  
format or language please contact:

Cornwall Council, County Hall  
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY

Telephone: 0300 1234 100  
Email: [equality@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:equality@cornwall.gov.uk)  
[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)