

Questions concerning children's education & welfare for 6-monthly discussions with Field Leadership

(The intention is to discuss these at the same time as regular ministry review)

The list is neither exhaustive, nor is it a formula. Not all of these questions are relevant every time the field leader meets with the family. If the field leader does not feel qualified to discuss some detailed issues, it may be best to focus on the more general questions and refer to outside help. This could come from someone else on the field or from the MK Consultants.

The discussions aren't meant to be just a box-ticking and duty-performing exercise, talking with parents about their children is something that is built on relationship and trust. The clear purpose of this is to provide support NOT surveillance. We have a duty of care as an organisation, and a family and fellowship ethos that we rightly make one of our pillars. These factors mean that we must care as best possible for our children, but we don't interfere with the parents and normal family life. We can guide and advise, but we can't and shouldn't prevent parents from making their own decisions for their children, whether we agree with them or not at times. The only exception would be if we sense real danger to the children from careless actions or negligence.

Some of the questions are more relevant when making a decision about a new option, either at the start of a child's formal education or when a major transition is considered. However, it is good to realistically and regularly review progress even when the children are well established in the school or home-based option they are using.

For all Children

1. What are the impressions of the children's general well-being?
2. If they have recently arrived how well are they adjusting?
3. Do the children have the friends they need? Are the main friends local children, local adults, other MKs or mission staff? If the children are isolated, then how can this be reviewed and changed?
4. If home leave is coming up, how well prepared are they? How advanced are the practical arrangements for education and other needs?
5. If definitive re-entry is coming up, discuss the same issues with the proviso that sorting out the necessary details now is even more important.
6. If definitive re-entry is coming up, do the parents plan to move directly to one place and stay there? (If not then they should be encouraged to change plans, or find a more permanent location as soon as possible after arrival and temporary accommodation.)
7. How is the children's health – both physical and emotional/psychological?
8. What about physical fitness and exercise, especially if living in big cities? If the children are lacking exercise and play opportunities, and this is having a negative impact what can realistically be done to improve that?

Educational review

For all children

1. How well are they doing compared to norms for their age group?
2. If the answer to question 1 is unknown, what can be done to check up – teachers in home country, education consultants in SB, AERC, SHARE, Anchor, testing in an MK school....?
3. Are the parents & children happy with the current option? If no, what are the alternatives? If there are no realistic alternatives, what can be done to make the option work better?
4. Are the children being issued with adequate educational records?
5. How does the education they are receiving compare with that of the passport country for re-entry?

For Local Schools

1. Are you happy with the ethos of the school? Both the formal stated school policy and the informal classroom and playground sub-culture.
2. Do you have a good relationship with the teachers and school management?
3. Are the children integrated at all?
4. If the answer to number 3 is no, then how do the children cope with this?
5. Is there any evidence of bullying, including name-calling?
6. Are the academic standards good enough?
7. Are the discipline standards good enough and discipline methods fairly used?
8. If the school is in a shame-based culture, are children and/or parents blamed and shamed for poor academic performance?
9. If shaming is being used, even if not directly on the MK, what impact is this having on the child?
10. Are safety standards good enough?
11. As children progress up the school are they being taught enough critical thinking skills or is the emphasis on rote-learning heavy?
12. Does the school have enough resources and equipment to properly teach at the higher levels?
13. What active measures are you taking to keep up with what the children learn in class and from school peers? If they are learning unacceptable standards and behaviour how do you process this with the child?
14. If the school is struggling is there any way you could help out?
15. What positive things are the children drawing from their school experience – local friends, appreciation of the country and culture, language skills....

For Schooling at Home

1. Are the children making enough progress at a relatively normal rate?
2. How is the progress on pure home schooling being assessed? Encourage real objective assessment if not currently being assessed.
3. If using a correspondence school are you happy with the materials, the delivery service and the feedback from tutors?
4. If using an internet based programme, are you happy with the curriculum, speed of marking and feedback from tutors? Is the technology working and reliable?
5. If the answer to 3 or 4 is no, is there anything you can do about this, anything others can do on the family's behalf to help? E.g. the national MK Consultant to phone, even visit the school if possible.
6. Are costs an issue with the correspondence or internet school?
7. Are the materials portraying a balanced view of life? Are they excessively secular and politically correct or do they give a distorted view of Christianity (even from "Christian" sources)? Are the parents open to change if the materials aren't good enough in some way?
8. Do the resources used meet the re-entry needs (short-term and long-term) of the child?
9. Do the resources overemphasise one style of learning – e.g. all on CDs or DVDs, fill in the blanks exercises, rote learning, all reading and no activity.....etc
10. If yes for question 9, what measures could be put in place to improve this?
11. Are the parents under pressure from other strong voices on the field (including from other missions) to choose a certain set of resources?
12. What about socialisation, does the child meet enough other children for their well-being?
13. Are the children enjoying learning at home?
14. Are you enjoying teaching at home?

15. How well can the children stay on task – any distractions? If yes, is there anything that could be done to reduce distractions?
16. What positive things are the children drawing from education at home? E.g. less time wasted in classroom crowd control, one to one attention meaning more work can be done faster, strong family bonds...

For MK Schools

1. How well is the school matching up to the long-term academic re-entry needs?
2. How well is the child performing academically?
3. How is academic performance measured? Are the report cards, forms or transcripts easy to interpret?
4. Is the school struggling for staff? If yes, what effect does this have on teaching?
5. Are the teachers adequately trained, are there any who overemphasise certain learning methods? If yes, are these detrimental to the child and are there any issues that require a visit to discuss things?
6. Do the children have enough time for sport and aesthetic subjects?
7. If the mother tongue isn't English, is there any provision for that in the timetable? If no, what can be done for them to learn the academic mother tongue?
8. If the school is struggling is there any way you could help out?
9. Are the costs an issue?
10. Are you aware of any tensions towards certain groups of MKs or parents?
11. What are the positive things they are gaining from their school? E.g. Friends, good relationship with teachers, happy at school.....

If Boarding

1. How are the children coping with separation?
2. How are you coping with it?
3. Do you get enough contact from the school to let you know how the children are?
4. How do the children relate to the house parents?
5. How do they relate to the teachers?
6. Do they have friends there, how long are those friends likely to stay?
7. Are you able to see the children regularly in term time (if living near enough)?
8. Do you see any benefits in the children from the boarding experience?

If Mixing Options

Examples include attending a local school with home-based academic mother tongue learning, English language school and Korean Saturday school, or correspondence mixed with home education.

1. Is the child coping with the workload?
2. Are you coping with the required supervision?
3. Do the children have adequate time to socialise?
4. If using one main school option with supplementary lessons, is the school aware of the extra learning the children do?
5. Does the school make any allowances for supplementary learning? If not, would they be open to discussion if the children are under time pressure?
6. If there are 2 payments to be made, is cost an issue?
7. If the children are struggling to do all of the required work, are there any measures that you could take to relieve this?