Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After Policy

Date reviewed: July 2026

Next review by: July 2029

Contents

Aims 3
Legislation and statutory guidance 3
Rationale 3
Definition of a Child Looked After and a Child Previously Looked After 3
Personnel responsible for Children Looked After 4
The role of the Designated Teacher 5
Role of all teaching and teaching support staff 8
Monitoring arrangements 8
Links with other policies 8

Aims

We recognise that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers. Closing the gap between the achievement of children looked after, previously children looked after and their peers remains a high priority. We are committed to implementing the principles and practices to ensure our looked after and previously children looked after achieve at least in line with their peers.

The 5 Dimensions Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all schools within the trust, staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Each 5 Dimensions Trust school/academy aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked after and previously children looked after
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children, and supports other staff members to do this too
- Staff, parents, carers, and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on Promoting the education of children looked after and previously children looked after (DfE 2018) and the designated teacher for looked after and previously children looked after (DfE 2018). It also takes into account section 2E of the Academies Act 2010.

Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse. Children looked after (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (PLAC) are particularly vulnerable to underachievement and are at a significantly higher risk of suspension compared to their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences and are compounded where there is instability within the personal circumstances (e.g., multiple placement moves).

Challenges facing CLA and PLAC include:

- **Employment** – 40% of care leavers between 19-21 are NEET
- **Education** – only 14% of CLA receives 5 GCSE's (grade 4 or above including maths and English compared to 55% of all students)
- **Justice** - CLA are four times more likely to be involved in the Youth Justice System
- **Mental Health** – CLA are four times more likely to have a mental health condition

Source: Department of Education, Looked after children in England, 2017; Outcomes for children looked after, 2017; Bazalgette.L et. Al, 2015

Definition of a Child Looked After and a Child Previously Looked After

Looked after children are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours
- Previously children looked after are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A Child Arrangements Order
  - A Special Guardianship Order
  - An Adoption Order
- They appear to the governing board to have:
  - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

A Child Arrangements Order is an order that regulates with whom a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact, and when a child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact with any person. Child Arrangements Orders are governed by section 8 of the Children Act 1989.

A Special Guardianship Order is an order that places a child or young person to live with someone other than their parent(s) on a long-term basis. The person with whom a child is placed will become the child's Special Guardian and granted full parental responsibility [PR] for the duration of the order.

An Adoption Order is an order giving full parental responsibility for a child to the approved adopters, made on their application to the court. An adoption order severs the legal ties between a birth parent and the child, so that the adoptive parent(s) become the child's legal parent(s) throughout life. `An adoption order does not end when a child turns 18 – the child/adult remains a legal member of his/her new family permanently.

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual school head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents, and guardians in respect of previously looked after children. The contact details for the Milton Keynes Virtual School are: Telephone: 07881 875294 – 9am-1pm weekdays, Email: Virtual school head Katy.Enser@milton-keynes.gov.uk or business support Emma.Warner@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Personnel responsible for Children Looked After

- 5 Dimensions Trust – Mr Steffan Healy , Trust Safeguarding Lead
- 5 Dimensions Trust – Mrs Maggie Wykes, Safeguarding Trustee
- Walnut Tree – Mrs Vicky Berry
- Brooklands - Mrs Simone Mather
- Shenley Brook End School – Mrs Sue Butler, Designated Teacher
- The Hazeley Academy –Mrs R Jelly , Designated Teacher
- Shenley Brook End school – Mrs Amanda Green
- Priory Rise School – Mrs Kate Truan
- Emerson Valley – Mrs Hayley White
- Merebrook – Tracey Hurwood

The role of the Designated Teacher

All schools with the Trust will appoint a designated teacher who take the lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children and previously children looked after at each school/academy. Designated teachers provide the initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below:

Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked after children and previously looked after children
- Promote the educational achievement of every child looked after and previously looked after children on roll by:
    - Working with Virtual school head's (VSH)
    - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
    - The things which can affect how looked after children and previously looked after children learn and achieve
    - How the whole school supports the educational achievement and full integration of these pupils
- Work with the Trust safeguarding lead and contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked after children and previously looked after children
- Promote a culture in which looked after children and previously looked after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked after children and previously children looked after
- Work directly with looked after children and previously looked after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked after children's PEPs, these will be completed online where possible, and within 20 days of a child starting on roll
- Where the role is separate to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) role, they will work closely with the school's DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked after children and previously looked after children are quickly and effectively responded to, all concerns will be recorded on CPOMS
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked after children in decisions affecting their child's education

Supporting looked after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs

- Monitor and track how looked after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils
- Ensure that:
    - A looked after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
    - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
    - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and Virtual School Head of the statutory review of their care plan
- Transfer a looked after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date, the most recent version will be kept on the LA's electronic portal

Supporting both looked after and previously looked after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked after children and previously looked after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked after children
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked after children and previously looked after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked after children and previously looked after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked after children, is followed (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked after child may have
    - Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked after children and previously looked after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
    - Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked after children and previously looked after children and understand where

the school can draw on in school emotional wellbeing and mental health services and/or specialist services
    - Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
    - Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked after children

Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked after children and previously looked after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom, parental responsibility records to be kept on Arbor and CPOMS
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked after children, such as:
    - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
    - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
    - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
    - Making sure that, if a looked after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
- Make sure that for each looked after child:
    - There is an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
    - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
    - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked after child is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion:
    - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid suspension/exclusion becoming necessary

    - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
- Where a previously looked after child is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding suspension/exclusion

Role of all teaching and teaching support staff

We require all our teaching and teaching support staff to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after and previously children looked after to:

- Ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentialities are maintained
- Be familiar with, and respond appropriately to, requests for progress and/or attainment information to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews
- Respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with
- Ensure that no child in care becomes the victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly dealt with, reported and eradicated
- Positively promote the self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and mental health of children looked after
- Convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the 5 Dimensions Trust Board or sooner if required

Links with other policies

This policy links to:

- Behaviour policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- School admissions
- Supporting students with medical needs
- SEND policy