



Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children Policy

This policy is applicable to the Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP)

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Aims

The Trust will ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children in every Trust school.
- 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

Introduction

Why looked after and previously looked after children need the support of a designated teacher?

We recognise that, nationally, there is educational underachievement of looked after children, when compared with their peers, and we are committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in the statutory guidance, “The roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children” and “The Children and Young Persons Act 2008”, also the “Designated Teacher (looked after children etc.) (England) Regulation 2009”. This policy references the guidance of “Improving the attainment of looked after young people in Secondary Schools”.

The Children Act places a duty to safeguard looked after children, to promote their educational achievements and to ensure that they are able to “achieve to and reach their full potential”. We will be guided by the ‘Improving Attainment Guidance’ which recognises the collective responsibility of Local Authorities and schools to support looked after young people by setting out these principles:

- Doing the things, they do for all young people but more so
- Balancing high levels of support with real challenge
- Skilfully linking each young person to a key person, they relate well to
- Making it a priority to know the young people well and to build strong relationships.
- Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities, and specialist agencies
- Making things happen and seeing things through.
- Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility
- Actively extending the horizons of each young person
- Planning for future transitions

We recognise that many looked after and previously looked after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress.

The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning. We recognise that the support that our school and designated teachers give to children who are looked after and previously looked after should not be seen in isolation. All looked after and previously looked after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked after children, parents, or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority, the Virtual School Headteacher will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school.

Guiding Principals

- The voice of the child is of paramount importance.
- All care-experienced children will receive high quality education, which is inspiring and challenging, resulting in the best possible outcomes, thus closing the educational gap between these children and those who are not care experienced.
- Every care-experienced child will have a positive educational experience which promotes social and emotional learning and wellbeing alongside academic success to ensure readiness for adulthood.
- Wonder Learning Partnership will meet the needs of care-experienced children through effective liaison and integrated work with all key partners including relevant Virtual Schools.

Definitions

Looked After Children (LAC)

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection.
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement. The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision.
- Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children's home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be 'looked after children' - LAC.

'Previously looked after children' (PLAC)

The February 2018 guidance stated that: 'a previously looked after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales'.

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 Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher:

Following amendments made by the 2017 Act, section 20A of the 2008 Act and Section 2E of the Academies Act 2010 various duties were placed on the Trustees of an academy in England.

Therefore, we have:

- Designated a member of staff to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children who are no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order, or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.
- Ensure the designated person undertakes appropriate training.
- Ensure the designated teacher has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. We understand that the Secretary of State has the power to make regulations to prescribe the necessary qualifications or experience of the designated member of staff for previously looked after children.

The Wonder Learning Partnership designated teachers takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our schools. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher and Local Governing Committee (LGC) will ensure that the Designated Teacher for children in care has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority and sufficient time and experience to fulfil this statutory role.

A named governor will be nominated to link with the Designated Teacher and all governors will be fully aware of the statutory guidance for care-experienced children.

The Headteacher and nominated governor will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all care experienced children make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff have relevant skills, knowledge and understanding.

- Regular communication between the Headteacher and Governing Body and the Designated Teacher should include:
- The number of care-experienced children on roll
- Compliance and quality of individual children's Personal Education Plan (for Children in Care)
- The use and impact of the Pupil Premium Plus grant in raising educational outcomes.
- Attendance and exclusion data (in comparison to children who are not care-experienced)
- Progress and attainment data (in comparison to children who are not care-experienced)
- Destinations for care-experienced children that leave Wonder Learning Trust schools.

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children.
 - Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
 - Working with Virtual School Headteachers (VSHs)
 - 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, and previously looked-after children learn and achieve.
 - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils.
- Contribute to the development and review of whole-school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Promote a culture in which looked-after 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 and previously looked-after children.

- Work directly with looked-after 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.
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- 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 VSH ahead 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 and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version.

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 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.
- 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's 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 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 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 exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

Appendix A

Designated Teachers and contact information.

| School | Designated Teacher | Contact Number |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Melbourne Primary School | Vicky Burdett | 01759 318369 |
| Pocklington Junior School | Sophie Kirk | 01759 302224 |
| Stamford Bridge Primary School | Nicola Massey | 01759 371403 |
| Woldgate School & Sixth Form College | Sarah Geary | 01759 302395 |