

Children in and previously in Care policy
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Revision History

Document version	Description of Revision	Date Approved
V1	New	Summer 2020
V2	Update following direction from Northants Virtual School	November 2021
V3	Update from KCSIE 2022- role of virtual head	September 2022
V4	Update in title to reflect common language	



Introduction

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Nene Education Trust (NET) ensures that staff within our schools have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe. In particular, NET ensures that appropriate staff have access to the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and the child's contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.

Designated staff also have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her. The designated safeguarding lead has details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child. A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

To fulfil our Trust school's role as 'corporate parents' we recognise that we have a special duty to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children on our school roll; to narrow the gap between their achievements and the achievements of their peers and to prepare them for their transition to adulthood. We recognise the many barriers that can make it difficult for looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve their potential and we will do our best to reduce them. As corporate parents to looked-after children we want to make a difference to children's lives by supporting their education in the best way we can, asking ourselves the question: '*Would this be good enough for my child?*'.

Key documents

Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, February 2018)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children: Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities (DfE, February 2018)
[Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

The Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014
[The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/The_Children_Act_1989_guidance_and_regulations.pdf)



The Children and Social Work Act 2017

[Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (DfE, 2015)

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Keeping children safe in education 2023 [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- a '*looked-after child*' is one who is looked-after by a local authority within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- a '*previously looked-after child*' is one who is no longer looked-after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement 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 (a child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if they are in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society).

Looked-after children (LAC)

Each school principal will designate a member of staff (the designated teacher) to have the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of LAC (including those aged between 16 and 18) who are registered pupils at the school. NET will ensure that the designated teacher (DT):

- is a qualified teacher who is a member of the school's senior leadership team¹

or

¹ It is the advice of Northamptonshire Virtual School that the Designated Teacher should be a member of the senior leadership team or, in exceptional circumstances, a school leader who commands the same authority as a senior leader within the school.



- is a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a teacher at the school or is a head teacher or acting head teacher of the school
- undertakes appropriate training (e.g. has a good knowledge of the needs of LAC; including special educational needs and social, emotional and mental health support)

The role of the NET Lead for looked after children is to:

- Ensure designated teacher attends appropriate training and this is checked and updated following an academy visit
- Keep abreast of local and national issues affecting looked after children
- Ensure that a report regarding progress and attendance of looked after children, training undertaken by staff, opportunities for looked after children to play a particular role in the life of the school etc is produced with the NET designated Teacher (at least annually)
- Ensure that the school has an overview of the educational needs and progress of looked after children including procedures that are in place for looked after children to have up to date personal education plans, that challenging targets for are set and additional support is offered to meet the needs of looked after children in danger of under achieving
- Monitor that looked after children participate in out of school activities where possible
- Will visit the school and attend appropriate meetings and participate in any other relevant activities in relation to Looked after Children and safeguarding and report back to the trust board according to policy procedure.
- Attend relevant CPD to keep skills and knowledge relevant to the role.
- Assist in data collection and produce concise reports to the CEO on achievements and educational attainment of LAC
- Provide structured supervision for DT within NET
- Sustain links with Virtual School head and locality link officers.

Previously looked-after children (PLAC)

Each NET school will designate a member of staff to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of PLAC. Our schools will ensure that the designated staff have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State and that they undertake appropriate training.

The designated staff will satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their PLAC status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked-after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, designated teachers will need to use their discretion. In such circumstances,



designated teachers could discuss eligibility with the Virtual School Head (VSH) to agree a consistent approach.

School policies

The needs of (P)LAC may have implications for almost every school policy and we will identify which policies will need consideration of P(LAC)'s needs. Issues that will be considered are:

- that there are no unintended barriers to the admission of (P)LAC (either at normal transition or any other point of the school year)
- whether there are any issues arising as a result of the number of (P)LAC on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved
- whether (P)LAC have made the expected or better levels of progress (educational, social and emotional) over the past twelve months in line with their peers
- whether the pattern of attendance and exclusions for (P)LAC is different to that of other children at the school
- (for LAC) whether the school's policies are sensitive to their needs (e.g. in accessing out of school hours learning, respecting the children's wishes and feelings about their care status or generally meeting their needs as identified in their personal education plans)
- whether any (P)LAC are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met
- whether any (P)LAC face additional safeguarding challenges of which the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) should be aware
- whether any (P)LAC have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are being identified and met at the appropriate level
- whether any (P)LAC have mental health needs and whether those needs are being identified and met
- whether the school's behaviour management policy is sufficiently flexible to respond to challenging behaviour in the most effective way for (P)LAC
- how the teaching and learning needs of (P)LAC are reflected in school policies, in particular in relation to interventions and resources
- what the impact is of any of our school's policies (e.g. on charging for educational visits and extended school activities) on LAC



- what impact Pupil Premium / Pupil Premium Plus (PP / PPP) has in supporting the educational achievement of (P)LAC

NET DT will, through the DT, hold the school to account on how it supports its (P)LAC, including how PPP is used, and their level of progress.

The role of the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children

The DT will be a central point of initial contact within the school. This helps to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.

The DT will work with all Virtual Schools in the appropriate authorities to promote the education of (P)LAC and promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every (P)LAC matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

The DT will take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how (P)LAC learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils. This means making sure that all staff:

- have high expectations of the learning of (P)LAC and set targets to accelerate educational progress
- are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour
- understand how important it is to see (P)LAC as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their (P)LAC status
- appreciate the central importance of LAC Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, Virtual School and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child



- (for PLAC) understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress at school

Our DT will also have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of (P)LAC (either directly or through appropriate delegation). This will be achieved by:

- contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that:

- they do not unintentionally put (P)LAC at a disadvantage
- there is effective induction for (P)LAC starting school, new to the school and new to care
- there are effective procedures in place to support the learning of (P)LAC
- particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what they can achieve
- transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground (e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion)
- thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment
- when enrolling at the school, parents and guardians of PLAC are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PPP
- there are no barriers to LAC accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its pupils (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for LAC to attend meetings)

- promoting a culture in which (P)LAC:

- are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning
- are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support
- are encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system
- believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs
- can discuss difficult issues (such as SEN, bullying, attendance) in a frank manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult

- being a source of advice for teachers about:



- differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are (P)LAC
 - the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of (P)LAC, and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning (including any knowledge gaps), where they need to go, and how to get there
- working directly with (P)LAC and their carers, parents or guardians to:
 - promote good home-school links
 - support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians
 - ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home
 - ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy
 - encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment
 - having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of LAC PEPs within school in partnership with others as necessary
 - working closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding (P)LAC are quickly and effectively responded to

When supporting PLAC, our DT will contact the Virtual School for information and advice on meeting the needs of these children, as necessary. Our DT will fully involve parents and guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, including any requests to the Virtual School for advice on meeting their individual needs.

Supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children

Assessment of need

All assessments received are reviewed and educational progress and attainment recorded by the class teacher. The SEN Code of Practice (2015) recognises that around 70% of looked-after children have special educational needs. We will ensure that all newly admitted looked-after children have an assessment of their educational needs, particularly those who are in-year admissions. If receiving assessments identify SEN the assessment of need and further continuation of support will be completed and coordinated by the School SENDCo.

Virtual School Head

Virtual school heads manage pupil premium plus for looked after children; they receive this funding based on the latest published number of children looked after by



the local authority. In maintained schools and academies, the designated teacher should work with the virtual school head to discuss how funding can be best used to support the progress of looked after children in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan. The designated teacher should also work with the virtual school head to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children. As with designated teachers, following the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, virtual school heads have responsibilities towards children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside England or Wales. Their primary role for this group will be the provision of information and advice to relevant parties.

Voice of the child

Listening to the voice of (P)LAC is a vital part of successfully understanding and meeting their needs. To support this, our DT will:

- be available, take the time to get to know (P)LAC
- notice if a (P)LAC is upset or angry and listen to them when they need help
- understand that even though (P)LAC have had a different past than most people, it doesn't mean that they need to be treated differently
- understand the experience of being (P)LAC
- understand that the past will affect the present and future behaviour of (P)LAC (even if they don't recognise this for themselves)

The Personal Education Plan

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a record of the education and training of LAC. The PEP should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress and meet the child's educational needs, describing how that will be provided. Our DT and the Virtual School in the authority that looks after the child, have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document.

When a child becomes LAC, the social worker should liaise with our DT to ensure that a PEP is initiated within 10 working days (the PEP meeting will be held prior to the first LAC Review). Children who are already LAC when they join the school should have an existing PEP.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking or refugee children are entitled to the same local authority support to promote their educational outcomes as any other LAC.

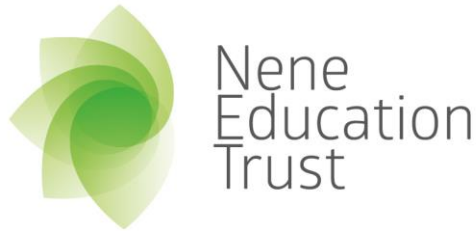


The DT, class teacher, subject teachers, SENCO and head teacher will contribute to the information recorded within the PEP, as necessary. To make sure the PEP meets the child's needs, our DT will work closely with other teachers to assess their specific educational needs without delay. This assessment of learning needs will help to identify strengths, weaknesses and any barriers to learning and should form the basis for the development or the review and refinement of the PEP.

The PEP meeting should involve the social worker, the young person, carers and others (e.g. Virtual School).

Our DT has a key role in making sure the PEP is effective in supporting everyone to help LAC make good educational progress. PEPs will:

- identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences
- set short and long-term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate
- include a record of planned actions, including milestones on homework, extra tuition and study support, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child, based on an assessment of their educational needs
- rigorously monitor the child's progress
- record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to ensure targets are met (especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics, and at Key Stage 4 in achieving success in public examinations)
- detail any additional support which will happen, or is already happening (e.g. action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist, or local authority education services)
- set out information on what will happen or is already happening to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the child's education
- set out how a child's aspiration and self-confidence is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer-term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans
- include the child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective



- be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development)
- provide information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for them, helping to substitute for the role that parents might otherwise provide
- have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen

Our DT will have overall responsibility for leading the process of target setting for LAC in school, should monitor and track how their attainment progresses, and ensure that identified actions are put in place.

Our DT will:

- judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing
- know whether the young person is likely to meet the attainment targets in their PEP

If the young person is not on track to meet targets, the DT will be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in the PEP.

Transfer of PEPs

The DT is fundamental to helping LAC make a smooth transition to their next school or college. This includes the speedy transfer of the child's school records to a new school and ensuring the child's PEP is up to date.