



Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy

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1. Aims

Blackdown Education Partnership aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children in all its schools.
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Staff, parents and carers know the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.
- The nominated Safeguarding Link Governor ensures that the needs of looked-after children are considered at a school management level and that support is provided to the Designated Teacher.
- All staff support looked after and previously looked after children to make good progress and reach their potential supporting them to develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.
- Pupils enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Support for looked after and previously looked after children is realistically planned and uses the school's resources efficiently to ensure their needs are met.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#).

The policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2023) 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'
- [Section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010.

3. Definitions

"Looked after children" are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the Local Authority (LA) has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

"Previously Looked after children" are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

Personal education plan (PEP)

- A 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.
- The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child. The PEP will be reviewed termly.
- The school, with other professionals and the child's carers, will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances. All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

Virtual school head (VSH)

The 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 carers in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Admissions and transitions:

BEP will:

- Prioritise looked after children within our own admissions procedures and admit pupils as quickly as possible, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability.
- Ensure pupils are warmly welcomed to our schools by providing appropriate induction for all looked after children so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers and parents where appropriate.
- Make sure that on admission or transfer, all relevant information is obtained at the outset.
- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition where the receiving school is made known.
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.

5. Identity of our designated teacher

The designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out below.

Our designated teacher is Mrs Austine Gavin.

You can contact them by email on AGavin@castle.bep.ac or telephone on 01823 274073 (int 366).

6. Roles and responsibilities

Designated Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build relationships with health, education, social care and other external partners so that they, and the VSH, to understand the support available to looked after and previously looked after children.• 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.• Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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.• Ensure a copy of relevant legal documentation that pertains to Care Orders, Special Guardianship Orders or Legal documents (redacted where necessary), is understood by staff in key roles and on file.• 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 where looked after and previously looked after children are encouraged, and supported, to engage with their education and other school activities.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and parents, to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations. • Take a 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 carers of previously looked after children in decisions affecting their child’s education. • Ensure that the established attendance and absence procedure is followed and inform the Carer / Attendance Improvement Officer / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance. Acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if regular attendance is a concern. <p>Further details can be found in 6.1 under ‘Supporting looked-after children’</p>
Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint the designated teacher and ensure they receive sufficient training. • Allow the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties. • Oversee this policy and monitor its implementation, feeding back to the governing board annually on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The number of looked after and previously looked after children in the school – An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups – The attendance of looked after and previously looked after children, compared to other pupil groups – The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups • Ensure all members of staff are aware that supporting looked after and previously looked after children is a key priority.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure PP+ for previously looked after children is managed effectively.
Designated Safeguarding Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up-to-date records of looked after children’s respective social worker and VSH. • Promote to staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding looked after and previously looked after children as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm. • Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keep up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.
SENDCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for looked after and previously looked after children. • Liaise with the class teachers, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of looked after and previously looked after children
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider pupils who are looked after and previously looked after children and provide them with support and encouragement to improve their self-esteem, sense of belonging and value. • Preserve confidentiality, where appropriate, and show sensitivity and understanding. • Be vigilant for any signs of bullying towards looked after and previously looked after children. • Be vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding looked after and previously looked after children due to their increased vulnerability to harm. • Report any concerns to the DSL.
Governing Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the school has a coherent policy for looked after and previously looked after children. • Review the school’s policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance. • Ensure the designated teacher has received the appropriate training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legal status (i.e. whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. – Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA. • Ensure there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst looked after and previously looked after children. • Ensure looked after and previously looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
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6.1 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure 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 attendance and 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 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.

6.2 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked after 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 and attendance.
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked after 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 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.
- 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 and previously looked after children and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary.
- Ensure staff can identify signs of potential mental health difficulties in looked after and previously looked after children and understand how the school can draw on specialist services.
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of looked after and previously looked after children.

6.3 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 carers 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 will work 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 carers.
- Make sure that for each looked after child:
 - There's an agreed process for how the school will work in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, 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:
 - Actively follow the school behaviour policy but also give due regard to both statutory guidance and protocols available from the local authority.
 - 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 carers before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

7. Safeguarding

- BEP recognises that many looked after and previously looked after children have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care. Therefore, BEP will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these, can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.
- All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that there is extra vigilance around observing and identifying these indicators amongst looked after and previously looked after children as soon as possible.
- Where a looked after child or previously looked after child has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.
- The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of looked after and previously looked after children can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.
- Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have about looked after and previously looked after children in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a looked after and previously looked after child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the school will collaborate in the multi-agency strategy discussion where appropriate to determine the pupil's welfare and plan rapid further action as necessary. The school's representative at any strategy discussion meetings will be sufficiently senior, skilled and experienced, and authorised to make decisions on the school's behalf. Information and analysis about the pupil and their family will be provided as required.
- Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a looked-after child or previously looked after child is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

8. Pupil Mental Health

- Looked after and previously looked after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.
- The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on looked after and

previously looked after children, and know how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

- The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health difficulties amongst looked after and previously looked after children may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with looked after and previously looked after children, are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

9. Suspensions and Exclusions

- Past experiences of looked after and previously looked after children will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy and Suspension and Exclusion Policy.
- BEP staff will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' and recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.
- Where the school has concerns about a looked after child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a looked after child to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour.
- As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.
- Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy, and where, allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.
- Where a looked after child is at risk of being suspended or permanently excluded, the school will engage with the designated teacher and the pupil's parents, or other individuals involved in the pupil's care. The designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible to work together, and with other relevant individuals, to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the pupil's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

- Where a looked after child is excluded, the school will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP.

10. Pupils with SEND

- Support for looked after children with SEND, who do not need an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, will be considered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.
- The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents /carers when considering interventions to support the child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for a previously looked after child.
- The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that looked after and previously looked after children with SEND are supported in line with the SEND Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for looked after children, e.g. where looked after children are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident.

11. Information Sharing

- School staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of looked after and previously looked after children. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.
- Staff members will ensure that fear of sharing information does not stand in the way of their responsibility to promote the welfare and safety of looked after and previously looked after children. If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will speak to the DSL.
- BEP will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, if it is safe to do so.
- Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data will be put in place to ensure that the education needs of looked after and previously looked after children are understood and met.

12. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees at the Blackdown Education Partnership.

13. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Admissions
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Child protection and safeguarding
- SEND