



Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children Policy

To be reviewed 3 yearly

Chair of Governors, Jane Jones

Signed

East Preston Infant School Policy for Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children

East Preston Infant School is a Rights Respecting School. All pupils, staff and visitors have the right to be healthy, safe, educated, listened to and treated fairly. These principles are at the heart of our school ethos, and our policies and practices support these rights. We are committed to equal rights, mutual respect and shared responsibility.

In this Policy we specifically recognise the following articles from the UN convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 25 – If a child lives away from home (in care, hospital or in prison, for example) they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.

Article 28 – Every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity.

This policy has been produced to take account of the West Sussex Virtual School for Children We Care For (CWCF), West Sussex Corporate Parenting Panel, and National Government strategies for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children. This policy is based on the Department for Education's [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#). It also takes into account [section 20](#) and [section 20A](#) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

Aim

To create a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting looked after and previously looked after children:

- To provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in and promotes the abilities and potential of all children.
- To bring the educational attainment of our Looked-After Children (Children in Care) and Previously Looked-After Children nearer to those of their peers.
- Make sure that they have access to education and support appropriate for their age and ability.
- Have a designated teacher who works alongside the virtual school, social worker and other professionals to ensure that each Child in Care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which is an effective tool to support the young person in making progress.

Definitions

Looked-after children/ Children in Care 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

WSCC refer to this group of children as Children We Care For.

Previously looked-after children 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, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them.
- A special guardianship order.
- An adoption order.

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed and reviewed with the school each term. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential. In West Sussex the Virtual School make use of ePEP to record PEP meetings.

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, carers and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children. When a child is in care the school will have an allocated teacher for the designated teacher to work with. The virtual school also has an advisory service to support the designated teacher in a strategic way in regards to children who were previously looked-after or children with a social worker.

Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Philippa Moulson. You can contact her via dsl@epinf.co.uk

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. The designated teacher is 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 and previously looked-after children.
- Advocate for 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 allocated teachers, the advisory service and 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 parents, carers 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 leads 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 allocated teacher from the virtual school ahead of the statutory review of their care plan.
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version.

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

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the voice of looked-after and previously looked-after children is captured and is a key tool in successfully understanding and meeting their needs.

- 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 plus funding.
- Access training provided by West Sussex Virtual School and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them.
- Liaise with allocated teachers or VSHs to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes.
- Help raise the awareness of parents, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus funding and other support for these children, including encouraging them to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding.
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children.
- Encourage parents', carers' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium plus 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 and previously looked-after children in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning.
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEND) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure other staff 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 the virtual school, 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 that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on 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.
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to 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 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, carers 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 allocated teachers, 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 allocated teachers 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 the advisory service 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 virtual school, via the allocated teacher, 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 allocated teacher 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, carers or guardians before seeking advice from the virtual school on avoiding exclusion.

Useful Contacts:

Virtual School: wsvs@westsussex.gov.uk

westsussex.gov.uk/virtualschool

Advisory Service: vsas@westsussex.gov.uk