

Looked After Children Policy

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Policy for the Education and Care of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

1. Context

At Hatton Academies Trust we recognise that pupils in public care (LAC) or previously in care (PLAC) nationally, significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers.

They are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and are likely to have emotional difficulties. The most common reason for children becoming looked after is a result of abuse and/or neglect. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

Helping LAC and PLAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority for Hatton Academies Trust. In line with the approach identified in the Admissions Code, this policy considers both children in the care of the local authority and those who have been.

“Keeping Children Safe in Education” 2018 makes clear the expectations of schools to support these vulnerable groups. Other key documents are:

“A guide to looked after children statistics in England” March 2018

“Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities” February 2018.

“Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers. Statutory guidance for local authorities” February 2018.

“The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities” February 2018.

2. Definitions

2.1 A Looked After Child (LAC)

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

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with the parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (section 38)

- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child (section 44)

For the purpose of school admissions, **a looked-after child** is a child who is:

- (a) in the care of an English local authority, or
- (b) being provided with accommodation by such a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions (see Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

2.1 A Previously Looked-After Child (PLAC)

A PLAC is a child adopted from the care of an English local authority under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children's Act 2002 or who, immediately after being looked after by an English local authority, became the subject of a special guardianship or child arrangements order and are still subject to such orders. A PLAC remains vulnerable and staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep PLAC safe.

3. Objectives

The key purpose of this policy is to promote the educational achievement and welfare of Looked After Children as defined under section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and amended as Children and Families Act 2014.

At Hatton Academies Trust we believe that all looked after children and previously looked after children should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and should be able to achieve at a similar level to all Trust children.

All staff and Directors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for LAC and PLAC. This can be measured by improvement in their achievements and attendance.

The Hatton Academies Trust's approach to supporting the educational achievement of LAC & PLAC is based on the following principles:

- prioritising education
- promoting attendance
- targeting support
- having high expectations
- promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes
- achieving stability and continuity
- early intervention and priority action
- listening to children
- promoting health and well-being
- provide a safe and secure environment
- reducing exclusions and promoting stability
- working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals and outside agencies
- encourage carers to be involved in education.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

4.1 The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Hatton Academies Trust are committed to providing quality education for all pupils and will therefore:

- Give high priority consideration to LACs in the trust academy's oversubscription criteria - in line with the *Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (England) Regulations 2006* and the *School Admissions Code 2014*, which require admissions authorities to give top priority for admission to LAC in their oversubscription criteria
- Ensure a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is appointed and have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe, are enabled to carry out the responsibilities set out below, and given appropriate training to enable him/her to carry out this function
- Ensure a Personal Education Plan is put in place, implemented and regularly reviewed for every looked after child
- Identify a Director as a designated lead for Looked After Children, and give appropriate training to enable him/her to carry out this function
- Receive an annual report from the CEO which will summarise the trust academies work and support for LAC and PLAC. See Appendix 1.

NB. The report will not identify individual children by name.

The CEO will monitor the implementation of this policy in the trust academies on behalf of the Board of Directors.

4.2 Principal/Head of School

The Principal/Head of School will:

- Ensure that the needs of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After are given appropriate priority
- Ensure that the programme put in place by the Designated Teacher raises awareness and challenges negative stereotypes about LACs
- Along with the Leadership team give appropriate support to the Designated Teacher
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has the necessary information they need:
 - In relation to the child's looked after legal status
 - Contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility
 - Information about the child's care arrangements
 - Levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her
 - Details of the social worker

- Name of the relevant Virtual School Head.

The way in which the role of the designated teacher is carried out varies from academy to academy. It will depend on the number of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll, and their individual needs as well as, for example, whether the academy caters for primary or secondary age children. Some academies may never have had a looked-after or previously looked-after child on roll, and the designated teacher may not, therefore, be familiar with some of the issues and processes they need to know about.

Not all aspects of the role of the designated teacher need necessarily be carried out by a single individual or by a qualified teacher. While lead responsibility for raising attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll must rest with the designated teacher, academies will need to decide how functions within it, including pastoral and administrative tasks, are most appropriately delegated to suit their own circumstances. If, for example, a secondary academy had a significant number of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll, the governing body may decide to designate more than one teacher, perhaps with one responsible for pre-16 and a second for post-16 pupils.

4.3 The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children

Children and Young Persons Act (2008) requires schools to appoint a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children. Amendments made in 2017 gave similar duties to academies. The DfE updated the guidance in this role in February 2018.

The designated teacher should 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 most effective designated teachers have a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on the school's roll. This involves, working with VSHs to promote the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children and promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked-after and previously looked-after child matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

Designated teachers should take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked after children 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 looked-after and previously looked-after children's learning 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 behavior

- Understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children 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 looked-after or previously looked-after status
- Appreciate the central importance of the looked-after child's PEP 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, VSHs 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 previously looked-after children, 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.

Designated teachers are also likely to have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation. This can be achieved by:

- Contributing to the development and review of whole academy policies and procedures to ensure that they do not unintentionally put looked-after and previously looked-after children at a disadvantage
- There is effective induction for looked-after and previously looked-after children starting in an academy, new to the academy and new to care
- There are effective procedures in place to support a looked-after child's learning; particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the academy and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he 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 previously looked-after children are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+
- Working with the VSH to ensure the most effective use of PP+

- And there are no barriers to looked-after children 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 looked-after children to attend meetings);
- Promoting a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children 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; and 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 looked-after or previously looked-after children
- The use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of looked-after and previously looked after children, 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 looked-after and previously looked-after children 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 looked after children's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary

- Working 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.

When supporting previously looked-after children, designated teachers should be aware of the following:

The VSH must provide information and advice to parents and designated teachers on meeting the needs of these children - this may be general information, including training opportunities, or information and advice on individual children at the request of their parents or designated teacher. The designated teacher should fully involve parents and guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, including any requests to the VSH for advice on meeting their individual needs.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Have lead responsibility for raising the attainment of LAC and PLAC
- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how Looked After Children learn
- Ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities, and are briefed on the regulations and school policy with regard to Looked After Children
- Ensure that the child knows where to seek support and has a nominated person to share concerns with
- Ensure prioritised one-to-one tuition for each child, should this be necessary. Including use of external tutors
- Take lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the PEPs within school (See Appendix 1)
- Attend local authority training regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the education of Looked After Children and other training as required
- Provide a central point of contact for all professionals working with each child (Appendix 2)
- Monitor the educational progress, attendance, and behaviour record of each child and intervene at an early stage if issues arise
- Share school policies with social workers and carers
- Should work to understand reasons which may be behind a Looked After Child's behaviour and understand how important it is to see a Looked After Child as an individual
- Ensure that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home

- Produce an annual report for the Principal and CEO (see above)
- Monitor and evaluate the work of the academy's provision for Looked After Children (see Appendices 2 and 3) and produce an annual report for the CEO and Board of Directors (Appendix 1), plus a SEF and Improvement Plan.

Some tasks may be delegated as agreed with the academy principal.

The Designated Teacher regulations 2009 require that the designated person is:

A qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period and is working as a teacher in a school or is a head teacher or acting head teacher.

See also:

Appendix 4. Guidance on PEPs

Appendix 5. Guidance on the relationship of the Designated Teacher with others beyond the academy.

5. The Virtual School Head (VSH)

LAC and PLAC start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs. VSHs have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential- an important part of why this role is statutory.

For LAC, as part of a local authority's corporate parent role, the VSH needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others.

VSH are not in the corporate parenting role of PLAC but are a source of advice and information for parents and to promote the educational achievement of PLACs.

6. Admissions

The Directors will prioritise Looked After Children and will ensure that they are admitted promptly after a request for a place has been made to avoid unnecessary disruption to the child's schooling. On admission records will be requested from the pupil's previous school. All Looked After Children will have a current PEP (Personal Education Plan) as part of their overall care plan.

If a looked after child joins a trust academy without a PEP the designated teacher should pursue the matter with the child's social worker who has a statutory duty to initiate the PEP.

7. Provision

- Staff are aware that being or becoming 'looked after' has a major impact on children's lives and due consideration must be given to each child

- Staff will ensure that educational recommendations in the PEP will be followed in order that any looked after child will have the opportunity to achieve his/her targets
- The academy will liaise with relevant agencies as appropriate so that each child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential
- There will be a proactive approach in cooperating with and supporting the local authority with regard to the education of Looked After Children attending the academy
- We will encourage each Looked After Child to access out of school hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self- esteem and learning
- A key worker will be provided for each Looked After Child to ensure that any issues or pastoral support are dealt with
- Staff will be aware of the PEP in order for progress to be made and education targets will include:
 - ✓ a record of planned actions
 - ✓ information on how progress will be monitored
 - ✓ details of interventions, targets and targeted support.

8. Pupil Premium Plus

For each academic year pupil premium plus funding is in place for each child. This is administered by Northamptonshire County Council Virtual School Headteacher and will be issued once appropriate plans are submitted and approved.

The Pupil Premium Plus will be provided to meet the needs identified in a high quality plan in the PEP with clear quantitative [and exceptionally qualitative] targets for improvement, underpinned by well-targeted support.

The Pupil Premium Plus should be used to improve outcomes for children in:

- Academic achievement and progress
- Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is gifted and talented
- Attendance
- Inclusion [by reducing internal and external exclusion
- Social skills and emotional aspects related to learning
- Transition into the next key stage and/or a new learning provider

- Mental health (including overcoming the effects of attachment and developmental trauma) where this affects learning
- Out of hours activities that support any of the above.

9. Special Educational Needs

Any Special Educational Needs, including English as an additional Language (EAL), will be promptly identified, bearing in mind that a Looked After Child may have missed some schooling. It is important to ensure that any barrier to learning is quickly identified.

Suitable learning support will be provided and the SENCO and Designated Teacher will be responsible for liaising with carers and other professionals

10. Exclusions

The 2004 Statutory Guidance states: "It is important to be especially sensitive in relation to exclusions where looked after children are concerned. Every practicable measure should be tried to maintain the child in school"

11. Links with Virtual School

All children in the care of Northamptonshire County Council belong to the Virtual School as well as their mainstream school, whether in Northamptonshire or out of county. Each academy will maintain close links with Northamptonshire Virtual School. Liaison will occur for the team to attend PEP meetings and be involved with the monitoring of progress of our Looked After Children.

12. Equal Opportunities

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that Looked After Children's needs are taken seriously and given appropriate priority.

13. Monitoring and Review

Within each trust academy, the Designated Teacher and Academy Principal will keep the working of the policy under review and will report to the CEO and the Trust Safeguarding Committee.

The CEO will report to the Board of Directors on the Trust's provision for LAC/PLAC and evaluate procedures.

The annual report to the CEO (appendix 1) will form the basis of this evaluation.

Guidance on monitoring and evaluating the trust and individual academy's provision for Looked After Children is given in Appendix 2 and 3. This should be used to produce the academy SEF section for LACs and the improvement plan for LAC/PLAC provision.

14. Resources

Northamptonshire County Council Virtual School website contains guidance and policies.

Appendix 1. Content of the Annual Report to the CEO/Board of Directors

To protect a child's need for confidentiality it is important to ensure that the reports do not mention individual children by name. The report should enable the CEO and Board of Directors to make judgements about the academy's provision for children in care:

- The number of LAC and PLAC at the academy and the number of local authorities which are involved
- Any issues that have arisen as a result of the number of children in care and children previously in care or local authorities involved
- Whether looked-after and previously looked-after children have made the expected or better levels of progress over the past twelve months in line with their peers (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress)
- The pattern of attendance and exclusions for looked-after and previously looked-after children is different to that of other children at the school
- For looked-after children, 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 (PEPs)
- How the academy is responding to any additional safeguarding challenges for LAC/PLAC of which the academy's designated safeguarding lead should be aware
- Whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and whether those needs are being identified and met at the appropriate level
- Whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children have mental health needs and whether those needs are being identified and met
- Whether any are identified as 'gifted and talented' and how those needs are being met
- How the academy's behaviour management policy has been adapted to be sufficiently flexible to respond to LAC and PLAC's challenging behaviour in the most effective way for those children
- Any process or planning issues arising from the implementation of the action plan to raise achievement in the personal education plans (PEPs)
- What impact PP+ has had in improving the educational outcomes of each LAC/PLAC child

- How the teaching and learning needs of children in care are reflected in school development plans and are being met in relation to interventions and resources
- Training undertaken by the Designated Teacher to impart knowledge and understanding about the education and wellbeing of children in care to colleagues
- Work with the Virtual School leadership team and external agencies both in Northamptonshire and their equivalence in other Local Authorities
- The impact of any of the academy's policies, for example on charging for educational visits, extended school activities and transport on children in care.

Source

The designated teacher for looked after children and previously looked after children: Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, DfE, February 2018 (with effect from September 2018)

Appendix 2. Developing Good Practice- Guidance on monitoring and evaluating the academy's provision for Looked After Children

1. Audit

How effective are your current approaches in the following aspects of support for looked after young people?

Review 1 = very effective 4 = in need of development

	1 Very effective	2	3	4 In need of development
1. Doing the things they do for all young people but more so				
The extent to which the PEP identifies barriers to learning and strategies for overcoming these				
The current range of interventions used to support looked after young people, including the appropriateness of one-to-one tuition				
Whether the progress of looked after young people is tracked sufficiently closely and if actions and resulting impact are critically evaluated				
2. Balancing high level support with real challenge				
The current expectations for progress across a year and key stage				
Practice in dealing with inappropriate behaviours				
Opportunities (with support when necessary) for the young people to take part in appropriate group work to facilitate learning				
The extent to which the review of progress ensures that targets remain challenging				
3. Skilfully linking each young person to a key person they relate well to				
The extent to which each looked after young person has ready access to the support of a 'key person'				

The opportunities for looked after young people to have contact with positive role models				
The opportunities and facilities available for looked after young people to take 'time out' or to access a 'listening post' or 'haven'				
The communication between the designated teacher and the key person and their roles and involvement in the process of the statutory review of the PEP section of young person's care plan				
4. Making it a priority to know the young people well and to build strong relationships				
The frequency and quality of communication between the designated teacher and other staff				
The procedures in place for monitoring and reporting incidents involving looked after young people				
Whether mentors have opportunities to show a genuine interest in the young person				
5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies				
The opportunities for carers to have easy contact and to work productively with school staff				
Additional strategies for helping carers to support their young person's learning				
The effectiveness of communication between the school and the full range of agencies that can support the young person				
6. Making things happen and seeing things through				
The capacity to be able to respond very quickly to urgent situations				
How mentors mediate to secure the best support for learning for the young people				

Awareness of the full range of support that is available through outside agencies				
7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility				
Staff development focused on how flexibility can be achieved without the appearance of favouritism				
Finding viable alternatives to fixed-term and permanent exclusions for the young people				
Providing small group support and development when needed				
8. Actively extending the horizons of each young person				
The level of involvement in out of hours learning				
How mentors can extend the participation of looked after young people in activities to increase social contact and build self-confidence				
9. Planning for future transitions				
Procedures to smooth the transfer between classes within the school				
Procedures to smooth transition between schools and further/ higher education				
Using strategies to raise aspirations and ease the routes to further and higher education				
Key priorities for development:				

Appendix 3. Developing Good Practice: Checklist of Questions

The following questions are useful as a starting point for reviewing policies which impact on how the role of the Designated Teacher is carried out in the context of wider school policies and taking account of numbers of looked after children on roll. These are taken from non-statutory guidance for governors which the DCSF published jointly in 2006 with the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) and The Who Cares? Trust.

Planning

- How will the school include raising the attainment of looked after children in the school improvement plan?
- What policies have the school developed that encourage collaboration with other agencies and services eg health professionals, CAMHS, school attendance services?
- What is the policy on professional development for all staff in contact with vulnerable children?
- How does the school assist local authorities with requests to provide data on attendance, attainment and exclusions?

Raising staff awareness

- What safeguards does the school have in place for sharing sensitive information about individual looked after children with relevant staff members?
- What is the procedure for liaising with carers/residential children's homes and social services to ensure that the school has relevant information about a child's care history?
- How are the child's achievements communicated to the carer?

Admissions

- How are applications handled after the normal admission round?
- What are the arrangements for welcoming new (looked after) pupils and do they take into account that looked after children (perhaps arriving mid-term) may have additional support needs?
- What does the school do to ensure that new admissions are well supported by their peers?
- How does the school provide information to carers and social workers about the school's admission and appeal process?
- Who liaises with other agencies to ensure that an education placement works?

Record keeping and transfer

- Who reviews and keeps the child's PEP up-to-date?

- Who updates school records with current addresses of carers, birth parents, social worker, etc?
- What is the procedure to prepare information for transfer if a looked after child changes school?

Promoting inclusive schooling and good home-school communication

- Have the needs of looked after children been considered in the context of the school's curriculum policy?
- What is the process when making a decision to place a young person on an alternative curriculum at KS4? Does the school always consult relevant professionals, the young person and their carers?
- Is flexible personalised learning available to looked after children?
- Does the school have a good baseline of information – informed by transfer of school records and thorough assessments – so that barriers to learning are quickly identified and pupils placed in appropriate groups and sets?
- Is the school timetable flexible with regard to outside fixed activities?

Promoting high expectations and achievement

- What targets are there for looked after children in the academy
- Does the school include 'value-added' measures of individual children's progress?
- What are the specific barriers to achievement facing looked after children and can the academy take action to remove them?
- Is there good liaison with foster carers and children's homes to support children's learning?
- If looked after children get behind, how is this identified and help provided?
- How does the academy celebrate the educational successes of looked after children?
- Is there anything in the academy's qualifications policy that works against the achievement of looked after children?
- Would 'examination mentors' help vulnerable children succeed?
- What revision support is available for examinations for children at risk of underachieving?
- Do looked after children access taster activities for further and higher education?
- Are looked after children engaged in the gifted and talented programme?

SEN

- How does the school ensure prompt identification of special educational needs of looked after children?
- Are carers informed that the child has special educational needs and that they can get help from the Parent Partnership Service?
- How are carers/social workers involved in assessments and reviews?

- How are young people involved in reviews and target setting?
- Is the level of support given to looked after children with special educational needs sufficient considering their status?
- Are there particular staff training needs in connection with meeting the needs of looked after children?

Exclusions

- When considering exclusion, does the principal and the academy committee have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance on exclusion – Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from School and Pupil Referral Units?
- Is there any trend in exclusion rates of looked after children?
- What strategies does the academy use to avoid exclusion of vulnerable children including looked after children?
- Is the appeal process fully explained to social workers and foster carers when a looked after child is excluded?
- Are young people in care encouraged to attend governors' hearings which are reviewing their exclusion?
- Does the principal's letter of exclusion always signpost carers to the ACE exclusion helpline?
- Has the appropriate person/team in the LA with responsibility for children missing education been notified of the child's exclusion?
- Does the academy take vulnerable children, such as looked after children, excluded from other academies?
- What are the reintegration arrangements for looked after children who have been excluded?
- What other agencies are working with the child and have they delivered the necessary support eg clinical psychology/CAMHS?
- Has every looked after child at risk of exclusion got a Pastoral Support Plan?

Promoting Health

- Are the needs of looked after children considered in health-promoting schemes such as cycling to academy; cycling proficiency training; 'walking buses' (pupils collected from an agreed location and then walk together to school escorted in safe groups by volunteers, with other pupils joining them en route); study support and out of school activities?
- Do the citizenship and PSHE curricula take full account of including children whose experiences and understanding of 'family' may be different?

Pastoral Support

- What targeted interventions can the academy initiate that focus on groups of children who have known risk factors, such as being in care?
- How does the behaviour policy pre-empt escalating behaviour problems?

- How does the academy ensure that initiatives such as lunchtime clubs and anti bullying work include specific vulnerable groups such as looked after children?
- Does the academy have procedures for contacting relevant professional help for specific problems, eg LA Behavioural Support team, CAMHS, educational psychologist?
- Are carers contacted on the first day of any unexplained absence?
- Is the academy committee aware of additional funding streams?
- Are carers aware of the school's anti-bullying policies?

Study Support

- Could the study support programme be more flexible to cater for the needs of looked after children?
- Does the academy regularly consult with carers and looked after children about study support activities?
- Is the academy in contact with the local authority study support co-ordinator to discuss ideas?

Questions for the Academy Principal to consider in the evaluation of LAC and PLAC provision.

- Does the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children?
- Does the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and skills to work with the school's senior leadership and governing body to help ensure school policies and approaches appropriately reflect the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and act as a champion for them?
- Does the designated teacher have training opportunities, including time away from timetable commitments⁵, to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including a good knowledge of SEN?
- How does the designated teacher role contribute to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve?
- What resource implications might there be in supporting the designated teacher to carry out their role?
- What expertise can designated teachers call on within and outside the school such as SENCOs, health and mental health support?
- What monitoring arrangements might be appropriate to ensure that the role of the designated teacher is providing appropriate support for looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school roll?

Appendix 4. Guidance on the role of the designated teacher in developing the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

What are PEPs and why are they important?

All Looked After Children must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority which looks after them. The care plan will identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to his or her emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP which are developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. In the case of the PEP, where the child is on the roll of a school, this will be the designated teacher.

The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a looked after child's official school record. If the child moves schools it should be forwarded, along with other school records, to their new school, if known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.

Unlike for other children there will be more adults involved in the child's care and this adds to the complexity of communicating a shared understanding or roles and expectations. In the past this has meant that there has been no common understanding of how to meet a child's educational needs. The PEP is a vital document because it provides a 'collective memory' about the child's education. Where they are used effectively PEPs improve the educational experience of the child by helping everyone gain that clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the child's education needs and how that will be provided. For this reason the academy and local authority (through strong links between the designated teacher and, for example, the local authority virtual school head) have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document. The statutory guidance for LACs (February 2018) details the content of the PEP.

The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in the academy to ensure progress towards the educational target is monitored.

The statutory guidance also advises on the role of the social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Receipt of the PEP template by the designated teacher

When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after the local authority which looks after him or her must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the PEP. This should be pre-populated with basic information. This should include information about:

- The child's details that the school needs to know – such as age; care status; where the child lives; school history and whether the child has a statement of special educational needs
- The child's carers

- The child's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to contact with the child
- Who to contact within the local authority that looks after the child (social worker and looked after children education team contact).

If a child has been looked after for some time the PEP should include information about educational progress and how s/he learns best.

Children who are already looked after when they join the academy should have an existing PEP. This should be transferred to the child's new school. If the local authority has not provided the most recent PEP the designated teacher should make sure that this is followed up with the authority which looks after the child (e.g. through the virtual school head). This does not mean that the designated teacher has to do this him or herself, s/he only needs to make sure it happens.

What should the school do with the PEP?

When a child at the school becomes looked after, or when a looked after child joins the school either at the beginning or during the school year, the designated teacher should make sure his or her specific educational needs are assessed without delay.

The designated teacher should work closely with other teachers as necessary to identify the young person's strengths and weaknesses and any barriers to learning. This assessment of learning needs should form the basis for the development or – if it already exists – the review and refinement of the PEP.

The designated teacher will be responsible for leading on the development and implementation of the PEP once it has been received from the social worker who initiates it as part of the wider care plan.

This does not mean that the designated teacher writes every part of the plan him or herself. Other staff in the school may need to contribute to this plan. The PEP is also likely to contain information about what the local authority and other agencies will do to support the child. The designated teacher should, however, have ultimate responsibility for leading the process of target setting for individual looked after children in school and rigorously tracking their progress. The key thing about a PEP is that it should set high quality expectations of rapid progress and put in place the additional support the child or young person needs in order to succeed.

They should make sure that the PEP is an effective tool to help the school do everything possible to support the young person's educational progress. To be an effective tool in this respect the PEP should:

- Identify developmental and education 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

- Be a record of planned actions, eg on homework, extra tuition, study support, including by when, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child based on an assessment of his or her educational needs;
- Include information on how the progress of the child is to be rigorously monitored;
- Record details of specific interventions and targeted support will be used to make sure personal education 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. In particular, one-to-one tuition appears to have a particularly significant impact on looked after children's progress and so this should be employed wherever appropriate as one of the key strategies for raising attainment;
- Say what will happen or is already happening to put in place any additional support which may be required – eg possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist or CAMHS or local authority education services;
- Set out how a child's aspiration and self-confidence and ambition is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans;
- Be a record of the child's achievements both academic and in taking part in the wider activities of the school and in other out of school learning activities (eg sporting, personal development, community)
- Information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for him or her;
- Have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

Some looked after children will have a statement of special educational needs or disability (SEND). Where this is the case the PEP should be linked to the statement but does not need to duplicate the information.

Making PEPs 'real': reviewing and monitoring in school

The designated teacher should work closely with other staff in school to make sure the child's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated. The designated teacher should:

- Be able to judge whether the learning strategies being used are working
- 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 designated teacher should agree the best way forward with them in order to make progress and that this is reflected in the PEP.

A child's care plan is reviewed regularly by the authority which looks after him or her. These reviews are statutory and must be done six weeks after a child becomes looked after, at three months and thereafter at six monthly intervals. The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO will ask about the child's educational progress as part of the overall care plan review and should have access to the most up-to-date PEP. In order that there can be an informed discussion at the statutory review of the

care plan about the child's progress in school the designated teacher is responsible for ensuring that the PEP:

- Is reviewed before the statutory review of the care plan and that it is up-to-date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being provided;
- Is clear about that 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; and

The school and the local authority which looks after the child have a shared responsibility for helping looked after children to achieve and enjoy. Discussion about how together they can make that happen through the content, implementation and review of the PEP should be done through a meeting involving the social worker, the young person, carers and others such as, where appropriate, the virtual school head.

Transfer of the official school PEP record

The designated teacher has a key role in helping children looked after make a smooth transition to their next school or college. They should make sure that arrangements are in place to achieve speedy transfer of the looked after child's school records to a new school and that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most up-to-date version of the PEP.

Transfer out of care

When a child who is under a care order returns home their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because they are no longer looked after. Although they will no longer be required to have a PEP, designated teachers will wish to give consideration to the implications of continuity for meeting the child's education needs.

Appendix 5

Guidance on the relationship of the Designated Teacher to others beyond the academy

The family arrangements for Looked After Children are more complex than for other children. Most will live with foster carers, some will live in residential children's homes and, in very limited circumstances, some may continue to live with their parents. All LAC should have a social worker and some may require the involvement of other professionals, for example, SEN and CAMHS services.

The designated teacher role is key to making sure there is a central point of initial contact – not necessarily the designated teacher him or herself – within the school who can manage the process of how the school engages with others from outside of the school. This is important in order to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements join up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after. That means they must give particular consideration to the implications of any decision about the child's care which has implications for his or her education.

Most local authorities have a dedicated team (sometimes known as the looked after children education service [LACES] team) which is responsible for ensuring that the child's care plan addresses his or her educational needs. Increasingly local authorities are appointing a virtual school head who is a senior local authority manager with lead responsibility in the authority for improving the educational achievement of looked after children by tracking and monitoring their progress as if they were in a single school.

Virtual school heads are likely to work closely with LACS teams or their equivalent and schools in order to support the educational achievement of all looked after children who are educated in schools across the authority as if the children attended a single school.

Designated teachers should ensure that arrangements are in place within the school to facilitate effective co-operation with other professionals, especially the virtual school head (or equivalent) in the authority where their own school is located as well as the virtual school heads from other local authorities which have looked after children on roll at the school.

It is also vital that the school works closely with a child's carers in any way which will support looked after children to achieve their full potential. How this is achieved is likely to depend on the schools existing arrangements for engaging with those who have parental responsibility for a child. These arrangements should be clear to everyone who is involved in caring for the child.

In putting these arrangements in place designated teachers should make sure that:

- There is an agreed process in place for how the school works in partnership with other professionals such as the child's social worker and the child's carer in order to review and develop the child's educational progress and how each person will contribute to driving up the child's educational achievement;
- School policies in relation to, for example; home-school agreements; time-keeping and attendance; homework diaries; parents' evenings are communicated to carers and social workers and birth parents, where appropriate, so that looked after children are not disadvantaged;
- The child's teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary. For example, in some cases authority to sign permission slips for school trips will be delegated to the foster carer by the social worker but for some children permission will be needed from the child's social worker;
- There are positive and effective channels of communication and partnership working between the academy and relevant partners to help looked children get the most out of their school experience. This may result in the need to work with professionals from local authorities such as virtual school heads and dedicated looked after children education teams, SEN and CAMHS services.

Securing stability for looked after children is an integral part of what needs to happen in order to narrow the gap between what they achieve compared to other children. The stronger the working links and cooperation between the school and local authority as well as the child's carers and whoever else is involved in providing support, the greater the chances are of keeping the child's education on track. This does not mean that the designated teacher should, however, make sure that the way in which the school works with others outside of the school maximise the stability of education. In particular, designated teachers should:

- Find ways of making sure that the latest information about educational progress, primarily through the PEP is available to contribute to the statutory review process of the care plan;
- Be consulted by the child's social worker and/or others in the local authority such as the virtual school head or other local authority officer about any decision about changes in care placements which will disrupt a child's education or training.
- Provide advice in such cases about the likely impact of disrupting the child's education and what the local authority should do in order to minimise the disruption if a move in educational placement cannot be avoided.

Every academy does its best to avoid excluding children. In the case of looked after children it is even more important. Designated teachers in partnership with others in the school and the school governing body as necessary should:

- Be involved in any discussions related to decisions about potential exclusions of looked after children on roll

- Make sure that the authority which looks after the child and the child's carers are involved in such decision.

How the designated teacher and others within the academy work with local authorities, other agencies such as residential children's homes and CAMHS, and carers will take account of individual circumstances and local contexts. However, it should be part of a whole academy approach to working with other agencies in order to deliver the best possible education for looked after children.

It is important that in keeping under review how the designated teacher role contributes to promoting the achievement of looked after children the governing body and designated teacher uses this guidance alongside associated statutory and other relevant guidance documents.