

Education of Looked After Children in Schools Policy

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V1.3	Oct 2023	B Manning	6/7. New Advocate role incorporated. 12. Exclusion replaced with suspension 13. targets updated to SMART.
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1. Introduction

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust believes that all Children in Care, and those previously in Care, should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Devon children. As a community we aim to be champions for Children in Care and those previously in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development.

This policy is based on the Devon Virtual School Model Policy.

2. Definition: Who are our Children in Care?

Most Children in Care will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the Care of the Local Authority if he or she is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- a) Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
- b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order;
- c) Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child.

3. Definition: Who are our Children Previously in Care?

- A Previously Looked After Child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because he/she is the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order which includes arrangements as to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been Adopted from state care outside England or Wales and;
- A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if he/she is in the Care of, or accommodated by, a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation, the sole or main purpose of which, is to benefit society.

4. Legal Framework

- From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care;
- The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Children in Care was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their

educational outcomes;

- Previous legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Children in Care;
- The 2018 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities which extended some responsibilities to Children Previously in Care. These responsibilities are not as extensive as those for Children in Care but the expectation is that there is a Designated Teacher and the likelihood is that it would be the same person as for Children in Care.

5. Our commitment

We will commit to:

- Ensuring that Personal Education Plan is up-to-date and of a high standard;
- Supporting Children in Care to raise their aspirations and ambition;
- Giving children and young people a sense of the control they have over their own lives;
- Ensuring that the Designated Teacher contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who may be to be involved in supporting Children in Care to achieve, so that each staff member keeps Children in Care in mind;
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption;
- Ensuring that they have a trusted adult who they feel they can go to for support during the school day;
- Ensuring they have the best provision the school can offer to help them make good progress in all areas;
- Working closely with the Virtual School, Carers and Social Workers;
- Ensuring a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent;
- Providing a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children;
- Bringing the educational attainments of our Children in Care in line with those of their peers;
- Making sure that Children in Care have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- Balancing high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress;
- Having a Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with Carers, parents (as appropriate) and

Social Workers on a wide variety of educational and Care issues;

- Working alongside the Social Worker, PEP Coordinator, Area Learning Advocate and other professionals to ensure that each Child in Care has a current, good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and numerical progress targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person and helps them make excellent progress;
- Ensuring that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Closely monitoring each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes;
- Ensuring there is a well-planned and coordinated approach to meet the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented;
- Planning for future transitions effectively including planning for transport.

6. Responsibilities

Trust Leadership

- Trust Safeguarding Lead will appoint a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations.

School Leadership

- Nominate a School Governor to meet regularly with the Designated Teacher, to ensure that the needs of Children in Care in the school are taken into account at a school leadership level and to support the Designated Teacher;
- Support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training to support Children in Care;
- Support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making;
- Liaise closely with the Virtual School, Carers, parents (if appropriate) and the child's Social Worker on a variety of issues, including homework, kit and equipment required;
- Share positive messages about behaviour and achievement;
- Have a clear understanding about the role and responsibility of staff in relation to the child and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved;
- Share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child;
- Be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of the parents;
- Ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned on time, to comply with statutory obligations;
- Encourage each of our Children in Care to access out of hours learning activities

realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.

7. Governors and Local Stakeholder Boards

Each Secondary Local Stakeholder Board will designate a governor with responsibility for Looked After Children. They will ensure a knowledge of:

- The number of Looked After Children on the school roll;
- The number of Looked After Children with up-to-date PEPs and have they been assessed as good quality;
- Overall attainment and progress of Looked After Children in the school / performance compared to peers.
- Number of Looked After Children with SEN and with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of Looked After Children;
- Number of Looked After Children who have had a suspension in the previous 12 months;
- Seek assurances that the school is making effective and efficient use of the Pupil Premium for its Looked After Children.
- Ensure that the school is meeting its statutory duties with respect to the Designated Teacher? (qualifications, experience, etc.) and that they are provided with appropriate professional development and time to fulfill the role?
- How the LA supports educational achievement of Looked After Children.

The Governors will:

- Ensure the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that school staff, Advocates and Governors are aware of the DfE Statutory Guidance.
- Have knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance 2015 (Promoting the Education of Looked After Children);
- Ensure that Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Principal;
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, Looked After Children;

8. The Designated Teacher

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- Promote the attendance and educational achievement of every Child in Care on the school's roll;
- Set up systems to regularly record the achievement of Looked After Children, monitor their attainment and progress and, where progress is not being made, take appropriate actions to support the pupil. Within the Trust we are set challenging, aspirational academic targets guided by the Department for Education's expectations and based on prior attainment, baseline assessments and ongoing summative and formative assessment of which will be triangulated
- Ensure effective expenditure of the Pupil Premium Plus funding;
- Ensure the voice of the child is heard;
- Build a good working relationship with the Area Learning Advocate from the Virtual School and the child's social worker bringing to their attention any concerns;
- Regularly report progress and attainment for every Child in Care to the Virtual School;
- Promote a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every Child in Care matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised;
- Facilitate the training of school staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Looked After Children learn and develop;
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Looked After Children at a disadvantage;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- Ensure timely completion and return of the annual teacher Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for each Child in Care;
- Be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in Care;
- Make sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/interventions promoted by the Department for Education;
- Promote good home-school links through contact with Carers and effective communication. In line with the school policy, if a parent or carer contacts the school, the phone call is returned within 24 hours;
- Work with curriculum leaders to monitor the educational progress of Looked After Children and intervene, drawing upon external agency support if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy or other similar concern;

- Maintain records regarding all Looked After Children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- Establish a specific system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Looked After Children;
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of all Looked After Children and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis;
- Play an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to statutory reviews of Looked After Children as required;
- Serve as a named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and Social Care and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- Ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between Key Stages and Year groups and schools where appropriate;
- Ensure that each child who is in Care has a carefully selected Key Worker, who has preferably, received Mentor training through the Virtual School. Part of the PEP process involves checking if the child knows who they can talk to if they have a problem. If the child asks to see the Designated Teacher, then this becomes the priority, as part of the responsibility that this role involves.

9. Other staff involved in supporting Looked After Children

- Ensure that all Looked After Children are treated inclusively;
- Have high expectations of Looked After Children's involvement in learning and educational progress and ensure that more able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential;
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- Be aware of the reasons which may affect the behaviour of Looked After Children and understand that this is often a form of communication which may need a more personalised response or intervention;
- Understand how important it is to see Looked After Children as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- Appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Child's in Care's status;
- Understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, Carers, Social Workers, Area Learning Advocates and, depending on age and understanding, the child him/herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

The role of all those involved in supporting Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs (see our SEN Policy for more information) is to:

- Quickly identify any Special Educational Needs and ensure appropriate provision will be made;
- Have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Looked After Children are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this;
- Ensure that if the child has a Statement of Special Educational Need or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly Care Planning Reviews; dates can be obtained from the Social Worker.

10. Admissions and Transitions

We will:

- Prioritise the admission of Children in Care, and those who have been adopted or who have a Special Guardianship Order, within our own Admissions procedures in order to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Children in Care;
- Arrange a Planning for Success meeting as outlined in the [Devon County Council Protocol for Supporting Children in Care in Schools](#);
- Ensure that all Children in Care meet the Designated Teacher regularly who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral;
- Ensure a warm welcome to our school by providing appropriate induction for all Children in Care, following the Protocol for supporting Children in Care in Schools so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes Carers and parents where appropriate;
- Meet with the Area Learning Advocate to make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are 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) including organising transition meetings where needed;
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience;
- Where appropriate, ensure that Children in Care receive timely and high-quality advice and guidance to support the transition into Post-16 provision;
- Liaise with Carers, previous schools and other professionals to help to effectively manage transitions;
- We recognise that Children in Care often need higher levels of transition support and will use the [Devon County Council Transition Guidance](#) and provide children and young people with the Transition Booklet.

11. Attendance (Associated Policy: Virtual School Attendance Policy)

We will:

- Promote the attendance of Children in Care, and where the attendance for a Child in Care becomes a concern and falls below 96%, inform the Virtual School and work with them and the EWO to improve attendance;
- Implement a first day of absence procedure for all Children in Care whose attendance falls below 96%;
- Inform the Carer / Area Learning Advocate / Education Welfare Service / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance;
- Make attendance a priority in any education meeting, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.

12. Suspension

We recognise that the challenging conduct of some Children in Care and those previously in Care is strongly related to traumatic life experiences.

We will:

- Aim to use alternatives to suspension as a sanction for Children in Care, for example trauma informed and attachment based restorative approaches and the Relational Support Plan;
- Inform the Virtual School as soon as there is an suspension or a risk of suspension;
- Actively follow the [DCC Protocol for Supporting Children in Care in Schools](#);
- Engage with interventions provided by the Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service to avoid exclusion, such as the REDS (Reducing Exclusions in Devon Schools) programme.

13. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Personal Education Allowance (PEA)

We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting each term for every Child in Care that involves the Social Worker, Foster Carers, child and parent (if appropriate). Additional attendees may include Careers South West, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare Officer, Area Learning Advocate, PEPCo etc;
- Ensure that the views of the child are central to the PEP meeting and encourage them

to attend;

- Ensure that PEP is of a high quality for each child and includes appropriate, short, measurable and achievable, realistic and time related (SMART) targets;
- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in the PEP will be shared with all appropriate staff, in order that all our Children in Care have the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set;
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the Child in Care and used as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Make or support applications for a [Personal Education Allowance \(PEA\)](#) eg. those who are at risk of under-achieving academically or for extra-curricular activities through discussions at PEP meetings;

14. School Trips and Special Activities

- We aim to ensure that Children in Care enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible.

15. Related Documentation

- [DfE: Promoting the Education of Children in Care](#)
- [Devon Protocol for Supporting Children in Care](#)
- [Devon Virtual School Attendance Policy](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)