



**SOUTH DOWNS**  
— **LEARNING TRUST** —

# **DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) POLICY**

Date approved by Trustees	March 2025
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Status	Statutory
Lead Author	Lienna Walsh

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## OUR VISION

A community of primary and secondary academies that are the first choice for students and families in Sussex, with an outstanding reputation for high aspiration and high achievement

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### 1. Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children.

The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children and supports other staff members to do this too.

Staff, parents, carers, and other partners are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

### 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](#). See Appendix A for more information.

### 3. Definitions

**Looked-after children** 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.

**Previously looked-after children** are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority in the UK or abroad 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

- They appear to the governing board to have:
  - Been in state care because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care because of being adopted

**Personal education plan (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.

**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 and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

## **Our school works with Virtual Schools**

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are your initial point of contact. The DT for Ratton School is Lienna Walsh and the DT for Ocklynge School is Sylvia Berhane

## **5. Role of the designated teacher**

The responsibilities of a Designated Teacher are outlined in the [DfE's statutory guidance](#).

The designated teacher has lead responsibility, but individual areas may be appropriately delegated.

Appendix B refers to emotional wellbeing of LAC children.

### **5.1 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.

Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:

- Working with Virtual School staff
- 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 carers, parents 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 lead 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.

## **5.2 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 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 and 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 VS within 10 days of the meeting being held.

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.

## **5.3 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.

Use the APDR process to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.

Work with parents of previously looked-after children to provide support for these children.

Work together with parents and others to decide on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children.

Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these impact on all areas of school life e.g. behaviour, attendance, homework 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 and that liaise effectively with SENCos and other specialist staff eg Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing coordinators.

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 they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services.

Put in place mechanisms for understanding the social and emotional needs of looked after and previously looked-after children e.g., formal assessment Thrive, Boxall, SDQ alongside more informal information gathering.

**For further roles and responsibilities refer to Appendix C**

## **5.4 Relationships beyond the school**

The designated teacher will:

Proactively engage with social workers and other care professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Work with local authority and external services 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 guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education.

Consider how school staff 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 VSs 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 guardians. Make sure that for each looked-after child:

- There's an agreed process for how school staff work 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:

- 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 support/ strategies need to be put in place to support more positive behaviour.

## 6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Lienna Walsh/Sylvia Berhane. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

## 7. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Inclusion/ relationships/ behaviour
- Child protection and safeguarding
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with medical needs
- Anti-bullying policy
- Teaching and Learning policy.
- PSHE and Citizenship policy
- Attendance policy
- Children with medical needs policy
- Staff code of conduct

## Appendix A

### **Provision about staff member for looked after and previously looked after pupils.**

(1)An Academy agreement must include provision requiring the proprietor of the Academy—

(a)to designate a member of staff at the Academy (the “designated person”) as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of relevant pupils at the Academy,

(b) to ensure that the designated person undertakes appropriate training and has regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State, and

(c) in complying with provision included in the agreement by virtue of paragraph (a) or (b), to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

(2) An Academy agreement made before the day on which section 6 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 comes fully into force is to be treated as if it included the provision required by subsection (1).

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations—

(a) require an Academy agreement to include provision requiring the proprietor of the Academy—

(i) to ensure that a designated person has qualifications or experience (or both) prescribed by the regulations, and

(ii) in complying with provision included in the agreement by virtue of sub-paragraph (i), to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

(b) provide that an Academy agreement made before the day on which the regulations come into force is to be treated as if it included any provision required under paragraph (a).

(4) For the purposes of this policy a ‘pupil’ is a child registered at this school and ‘relevant pupil’ in relation to Academy, means a pupil at the Academy who—(a) is looked after by a local authority, (b) was looked after by a local authority but has ceased to be so looked after as a result of a relevant order, or (c) appears to the proprietor of the Academy—(i) to have been in state care in a place outside England and Wales because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately, and (ii) to have ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted; “relevant order” means—(a) a child arrangements order (within the meaning given by section 8(1) of the Children Act 1989) which includes arrangements relating to—(i) with whom a child is to live, or (ii) when a child is to live with any person,

(b) a special guardianship order (within the meaning given by section 14A(1) of the Children Act 1989), or (c) an adoption order (within the meaning given by section 72(1) of the Adoption Act 1976 or section 46(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002).

(5) For the purposes of this section a person is “looked after by a local authority” if the person is looked after by a local authority for the purposes of the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (anaw 4).

(6) For the purposes of this section a person is in “state care” if he or she is in the care of, or accommodated by—

(a) a public authority,

(b) a religious organisation, or

(c) any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

(7) For the purposes of section 569 of EA 1996 (as applied by section 17(4)), regulations under subsection (3)(b) are to be treated as if the statutory instrument containing them fell within subsection (2A) of that section (regulations subject to affirmative procedure).]



## Emotional well-being and care

NSPCC research has found that children living in care are more likely to have problems with their mental health than children who aren't in care and if we don't help children and young people early enough then these problems can get worse.

Data from the Office of National Statistics shows that children in care are 4 times more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty. If a placement breaks down it can have a detrimental impact on a child's emotional wellbeing and mental health and if a child's mental health grows worse, they may need increasingly specialist placements.

We believe we all have a responsibility to break this cycle. We want to inspire system change to support good emotional wellbeing for all Looked after Children and to work in partnership with other agencies to help keep their placements stable.

### Looked after Children may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development.
- be bullied or bully others.
- be prone to mental health issues.
- be isolated with few friends.
- have behaviour issues.
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private.

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life- chances. The Governing Body of South Downs Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- Personal Education Plans for all Looked after Children. In addition, a child may require a separate plan at school. For example, if a child has Special Educational Needs (SEN), they may need a SEN Support Plan. Any additional plans will be linked to their Personal Education Plan.
- A Designated teacher for Looked after Children. The designated teacher will lead on how the Personal Education Plan is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored.
- School staff will work alongside the designated Social Worker to ensure education becomes a key protective factor for the child.
- All staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect Looked after Children.
- Effective strategies that support the education of this vulnerable group.

## Appendix C

### Roles and Responsibilities

Many Looked after Children do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However, we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

The named Governor James Woodward will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all Looked after Children have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with Looked after Children.

### The named Governor should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for Looked after Children
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and DFE guidelines.

the Designated teacher has received appropriate training. This is recorded on the schools training log.

- Looked after Children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
- the Governing Body receives regular safeguarding reports; this includes the number of Looked after Children in the school.
- the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Looked after Children
- resources are allocated to meet the needs of Looked after Children

#### The Head Teacher will:

- appoint the Designated teacher.
- ensure that the Designated teacher has received appropriate training.
- oversee the development of the policy on Looked after Children
- be responsible for all systems to support Looked after Children.
- report to the Governing Body on an annual basis on the following:
  - the number of looked after pupils in the school
  - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
  - the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils.
  - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils.
  - the number of complaints

#### The Designated teacher will:

- ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met. This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.

- ensure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed with the child and any other relevant people. A Personal Education Plan will be initiated by the Social Worker within 20 school days of the Looked after Child starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the Looked after Child. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.
  - ensure that each Looked after Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated teacher but should be based on the child's own wishes.
  - help establish and maintain the ethos regarding Looked after Children of the school by:
    - maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all Looked after Children and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
    - ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by Looked after Children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
    - ensuring that all staff through appropriate training, consider the approach and language they use when discussing sensitive topics. For example, during PSHE, discussions about families may be a theme so staff may discuss the content with the child's carer prior to delivery so that advice can be sought, or preparation work can be carried out at home in advance.
    - acting as an advocate for Looked after Children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
  - The Designated teacher will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all Looked after Children. The Designated teacher will:
    - have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information.
    - maintain records regarding all Looked after Children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child.
    - establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
    - monitor the educational progress of all Looked after Children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern
  - promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage Looked after Children to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
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- act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of Looked after Children.
- set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school – to a new school.
- be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- be aware that Looked after Children are vulnerable to be bullied, so we will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- ensure that attendance is monitored.
- attend training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding Looked after Children.

The Designated teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
- playing 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 all statutory reviews of Looked after Children
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education, including the Virtual Head for the Local Authority
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties
- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings and liaising with the social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

## The responsibility of all staff

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked after Children, as for all pupils.
- Maintain Looked after Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable Looked after Children to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all Looked after Children.
- Understand the key issues that affect the learning of Looked after Children.
- Ensure their teaching approach and language is sensitive to the child's needs, for example, referring to the carer by their name (and not mum or dad).
- Respond positively to a child in request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- Ensure that as with all children, that no Looked after child is stigmatised in any way.
- Provide a supportive climate to enable a Looked after Child to achieve stability within the school setting.
- As with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked after Children.