

# Designated Teacher Policy (Looked-after and Previously Looked- after Children)

RIDGEWAY EDUCATION TRUST

Approved by Trust Board: 12 October 2021

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# Ridgeway Education Trust Policy for the Inclusive Education of Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children

**We believe that all looked-after and previously looked-after children should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and be able to achieve at a similar level to all other children.**

We recognise that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children who have previously been, or are currently in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers.

All staff and Trustees at Ridgeway Education Trust are committed to ensuring optimum educational life chances for looked after children by ensuring that:

## **Advocacy**

- Staff are aware that being or becoming 'looked after' has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and/or behaviour, due consideration will be given
- A suitable member of staff is appointed at each school within Ridgeway Education Trust 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 guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for
- Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher of each school within Ridgeway Education Trust
- There is a dedicated Governor at each school to monitor the work of the school in supporting its looked after children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

## **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](#).

It also takes into account [section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010 and the [School Admissions Code 2021](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## **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 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 have:

- Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
- Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted, including those children who appear to have been in state care outside England and ceased to be in state care as a result 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.

### **Designated teachers at Ridgeway Education Trust schools**

Didcot Girls' School – Dr Martha Hawes ([mhawes@didcotgirls.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:mhawes@didcotgirls.oxon.sch.uk))

St Birinus School – Mrs M Tottman ([mtottman@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:mtottman@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk))

Sutton Courtenay CofE Primary School – Mrs L Potter ([ltri0449@sutton-courtenay.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:ltri0449@sutton-courtenay.oxon.sch.uk))

Our designated teachers take lead responsibility at each school for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

### **Role of the designated teacher**

The following is based on the responsibilities listed in the [DfE's statutory guidance](#). Although the designated teacher at each school must always have lead responsibility, individual functions, including pastoral and administrative tasks, will be delegated to the relevant Key Stage Assistant Headteacher/Head of Year/Student Manager/Key Workers as appropriate.

### **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 VSHs
  - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised

Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:

- The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
- How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils
- Contribute to the development and review of 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

## **Supporting looked-after children**

The designated teacher will:

- Assess each young person's attainment either on entry to the school or on becoming looked after to ensure continuity of learning
- Ensure a high quality PEP is put in place within 20 days of a looked-after or previously looked-after child starting at our school or becoming looked after. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, ISP or Statement of Educational Need)
- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs. The young person's views will be sought by the relevant Key Worker and noted on the PEP. This may be done through the relevant Student Manager, Key Worker or HOY depending on who has the best relationship with the student. The PEP will be quality assured by the Designated Teacher
- If appropriate, invite the young person to attend the PEP
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs

- Ensure that, following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by staff in order that, the young person has the opportunity to achieve his or her targets
- Ensure that they know all the LAC in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. In the first instance, the gathering of this information will be done through the relevant Student Manager, Key Worker or Head of Year
- Monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all looked-after and previously looked-after pupils at regular intervals
- Know about any LAC from other authorities
- Ensure that looked-after or previously looked-after children status is flagged appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- Be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with a looked-after or previously looked-after child if they are not on track to meet their targets, in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils

Ensure that:

- A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
- PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
- The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college in a timely fashion, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version at the point of transition

The designated teacher will:

- send representatives to any review held for the child where appropriate
- send reports to any review held for the child
- take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our Looked after Children
- liaise with other agencies as appropriate in order to deliver optimum educational and life chances
- develop a strong partnership with parents/carers and caseworkers to enable looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve their full potential
- ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

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

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure 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 robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

## **Relationships beyond the school**

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments

- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
  - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
  - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
  - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
  - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
  - Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
  - Make sure that for each looked-after child:
    - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
    - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
    - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
  - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
  - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion

## **Admissions**

- The Trust Board endorses council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against IAPLAC (internationally adopted previously looked-after children), PLAC (previously looked-after children) or LAC (looked-after children)
- Due to care placement changes, looked-after and previously-looked after children may enter school mid-term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle
- Where an application is received for a place for an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, the school will give due attention to the agreed protocol ensuring that these vulnerable young people are swiftly admitted and integrated in to school

## **Inclusion**

- This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, inclusive and broadly based curriculum
- The Trust Board will ensure that each school makes appropriate provision for all looked-after and previously looked-after pupils
- We encourage each looked-after and previously looked-after child to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning
- In the few instances where we review whether a child is still appropriately placed in a school we will:
  - Contact the Virtual School, LA Social Inclusion Officer and, if appropriate, the SEN Officer to discuss appropriate alternative arrangements
  - Involve the child, the social worker and the carer at all stages of decision making

## **Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Exclusions
- SEN
- Supporting pupils with medical needs

## Appendix 1 – Looked-after children say...

“I would like to have a say as to whether I move school or not.”

“Money should not be the most important thing when deciding if I should move schools.”

“I would really like to have a chance to visit the school before I start.”

“I would like my school work and achievements to be passed on to my new school and not forgotten about.”

“I would have liked a buddy or peer mentor when I moved to my new school to help me get settled.”

“We want to be treated as normal. We don’t want to be pitied or treated differently.”

“I’d like to be able to choose a particular teacher to talk to – not just the designated teacher.”

“I want to keep my life private. I don’t want people knowing everything about me unless I say so.”

“I don’t want my teachers hearing embarrassing/personal details about me and my family at review meetings.”

“I want my own copy of school reports and I want my parents to have a copy.”

“The head of year is extremely important in passing on ‘need to know’ information to individual subject teachers.”

## **Appendix 2 – Good practice**

### **All school staff will:**

- Follow school procedures
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC
- Positively promote the raising of a LAC's self esteem
- Ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- Give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate

### **The Trust Board will:**

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the School Admissions Code 2021
- Ensure Trustees and Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- Nominate a governor at each Ridgeway Education Trust school with responsibility for LAC who links with the Designated Teacher
- Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:  
Admission to school
  - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
  - out of school learning and extra curricular activities
  - Work experience and careers guidance
- Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the re-entry meetings for LAC. The Designated Teacher will nominate the most appropriate members of staff to attend the re-entry meeting.