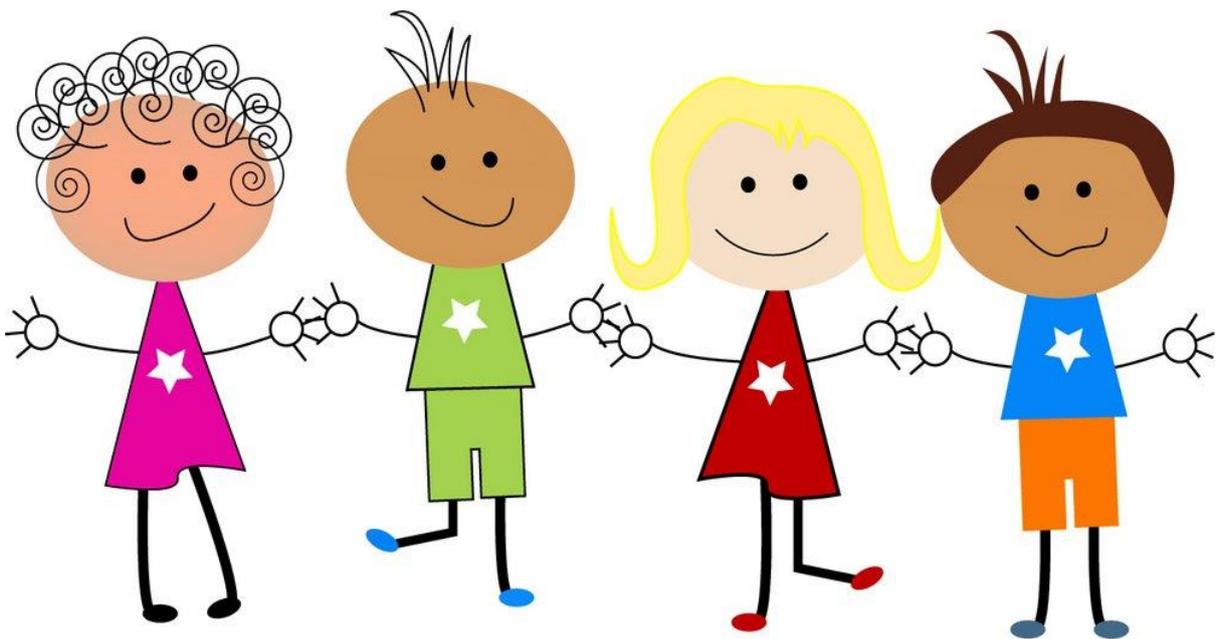


A School's Handbook

How to Support Looked After Children



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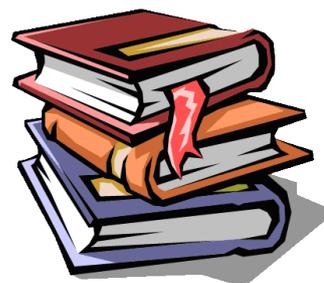
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Introduction

Whatever may be happening in the lives of Looked After Children, the fact that they are in care usually means that something traumatic has occurred in their family life.

The best chance Looked After Children have of overcoming these difficulties is if we, as professionals, vigorously take on the role of 'Corporate Parent' ensuring that they get the service we would want "as if they were our own children."

This guide supports schools to maximise outcomes for their Looked After Children, through monitoring and supporting their progress via Personal Education Plans and effectively communicating with the appropriate people and agencies involved in the life of each young person.



Background

The Virtual School is a small, joint agency, countywide team of specialist staff from education and social care set up in 2001 to improve the educational achievement and experience of Buckinghamshire's children in care.

- **There are approximately 465 children in care in Buckinghamshire and about 300 of these are of statutory school age.**
- 50% of children in care nationwide reach school leaving age with no educational qualifications and a significant percentage are unemployed a year after leaving care.
- Educational underachievement and social isolation are clear issues for this very vulnerable group.

Our Aspirations and Aims:

The Virtual School strives to work in partnership with schools and social care teams, and is committed to the ideals:

- Every child is educated in a setting that understands their needs and has high expectations for their future achievements.
- All our children fulfil their potential and strive to achieve more academically, socially and emotionally.
- All our children benefit from a child centred approach that values academic achievements as well as recognising the importance of their place in local communities including organised social groups, enrichment activities and with their peers.

School Checklist



Do you know how many Looked After Children are on roll?

If a child becomes, or arrives at school as, a Looked After Child, who do you ask to arrange a Personal Education Plan meeting? (PEP)

As a discrete group, how do your Looked After Children perform academically compared to the rest of the school and against National expectations?

Does the school's Designated Teacher have sufficient time and support to successfully carry out their role?

What catch up programmes are in place to support LAC?

What procedures are in place to support and monitor the attendance of Looked After Children?

Do you have a specific policy for Looked After Children?

Are all staff and governors aware of the issues surrounding Looked After Children?

Does your admissions policy support the placement of Looked After Children?

What measures are taken to prevent the exclusion and admission of Looked After Children?

Quick guide to Personal Education Plans

The Personal Education Plan should be completed within 20 school days of a child coming into care.

The Virtual School Worker should:

- Contact the Designated Teacher at school and the Social Worker to arrange a meeting for the Personal Education Plan.
- Ensure school has access to the online ePEP document where the PEP is recorded.



- The Social Worker should ensure that the young person and carer are invited.
- Others that may be invited could be the class teacher or learning support, relevant health professionals, any other agencies involved with the child.

Before the meeting:

- The DT should meet with the young person to ensure they are aware of the purpose of the meeting and to help with the young person's contribution to the PEP. **Any issues logging on, please ring 01296 387047 / 7020**
- The DT should complete the education section of the ePEP. This includes attendance, attainment/achievement, any additional needs and support, health and emotional well-being and any other relevant information.
- The Social Worker should make sure all relevant parts such as the legal status etc. are filled in prior to the meeting.

The Personal Education Plan meeting:

- Check all the details and contacts are correct.
- All parties should discuss the Plan and contribute to it.
- All parties should be clear what the targets are.
- All parties should be clear how the Plan will contribute to the young person's educational well-being and what their role will be.
- All parties should be clear how additional resources (Pupil Premium) are to be utilised to meet targets.
- Set a time and date for the next PEP meeting.
- PEPs should be reviewed every term to inform the statutory review on educational progress. These can be either face to face meetings or an online/phone call ePEP.

The PEP documents can be viewed and updated by the DT, The Virtual School and Social Worker at any time.

Copies of the online PEP can be sent to the carers, parents, agencies and other professionals as requested.

Admissions

When a child becomes Looked After, it is imperative that their school place is maintained. School offers stability and familiarity, which is vital at this often catastrophic time. However, there are occasions when circumstances necessitate a move of school. When this happens, everything should be done to assist in securing a new placement. Time is of the essence to avoid the child becoming disengaged from education. Schools, including Academies, need to consider how they can best support the admission of Looked After Children and their admissions policy should reflect this.



Current legislation supporting admissions of Looked After Children requires that:

- A school place should be found as quickly as possible.
- Schools' admission authorities are required to give Looked After Children the highest priority in their admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria; from September 2013 this extends to those who have been adopted, have a Special Guardianship or Residence Order.
- Class size regulations allow for the admission of a Looked After Child as an excepted child if admitted outside the normal admission round but only for the remainder of that academic year after which the qualifying measures must be taken.
- Changes effective from September 2013 will allow schools to continue to treat any pupil placed as an exception to infant class size, as an 'excepted' pupil until they leave Key Stage 1 or the number on roll in the affected year group returns to its admission number.
- LAs have the power to direct schools' admission authorities to admit Looked After Children. It also provides for those authorities to appeal.

Buckinghamshire Council has a Fair Access Protocol which can be viewed at:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/adm_fair_access_protocol.pdf

What is meant by the term “Looked After Child?”

Children are described as ‘Looked After’ if they have a care order or if they are accommodated on a voluntary basis by the Local Authority. These are the ways in which a child can be looked after:-

Under a Care Order (section 31 of the children act 1989)

This is a court order and the Local Authority shares responsibility with parents. A care order will be made when a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm and the making of the order would be better for the child than if no order was made. A care order can last until a child is 18, or an alternative order is made (e.g. adoption) or the order is discharged.

An interim care order (ICO) places the child in the care of the LA and allows the court a period of time to decide whether or not a full order should be made.

Accommodated (section 20 of the children act 1989)

Parents retain primary responsibility with the Local Authority acting as a corporate parent; a person with Parental Responsibility can remove the child from the LA accommodation at any time without giving notice.

Section 44

An emergency protection order is sometimes issued in an urgent situation where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm or abuse. This is a temporary arrangement pending interim care order hearing.

The Corporate Parent

This phrase captures the responsibility we all share to help bring up these children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents. The responsibility of the whole Local Authority, including school, is to care about, not just for, our Looked After Children.

This is a wide ranging demand and to successfully achieve it, all agencies and all staff have some level of ‘corporate responsibility’ and have some part to play.

‘As the corporate parent of children in care, the state has a special responsibility for their well-being. Like any good parent it should put its own children first. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything.’

Care matters: transforming the lives of children and young people in care, DFES 2006

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332642/Care_Matters_Transforming_the_Lives_of_Children_and_Young_People_in_Care.pdf

‘Looked After Children have the right to expect the outcomes we want for every child.....to achieve these outcomes for Looked After Children, LA’s as their corporate parents should demonstrate the strongest commitment to helping every child they look after to achieve the highest educational standards he or she possibly can.

‘Promoting the educational achievement of Looked After Children, Statutory guidelines for LA’s DCSF, 2010.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/276468/educational_achievement_of_looked_after_children.pdf

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

It is a statutory requirement that all schools designate a teacher for Looked After Children. They should preferably be a senior member of staff who will act as an advocate for Looked After Children and who will be critical to tackling underachievement

See the role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children)

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/01046-2009BKT-EN.PDF>

The Designated Teacher ensures the school register for Looked After Children is kept up to date.

They ensure that the school holds a current Personal Education Plan for each Looked After Child.

If there is not an up-to-date PEP in place, they ensure that the child's Social Worker is contacted and asked to arrange a PEP meeting.

They monitor the progress of all Looked After Children within the school and inform senior staff and governors.

They report annually to the governing body on progress.

They ensure that the school has suitable catch up programmes to support Looked After Children who may have been out of school for a long period.

They ensure that staff are informed, trained and updated on Looked After Children issues.

They maintain a culture of high expectation regarding Looked After Children ' As if they were our own children' .



What Governors Need to Know

The 2008 Children and Young Persons Act placed a duty upon governing bodies to ensure that they designate a teacher (the Act stipulates that it must be a teacher) who has responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of the school's Looked After Children. This is the case whether or not the school has any Looked After Children currently on roll.

Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies (The role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children DCSF 2009) includes the requirements that they receive an annual report from their Designated Teacher and they ensure that the Designated Teacher has the necessary support and training in order to undertake their duties.

Governors need to know how and why Looked After Children come into care, the number of Looked After Children on roll and how well they are performing compared to other young people in their school. They should know that there are national and local targets for Looked After Children around end of key stage tests and GCSEs. They should know the name of their school's Designated Teacher and how the school specifically supports this group of young people. They should be aware that the attendance of this specific group is closely monitored.

The Virtual School can provide free support and guidance to staff and governors.

Exclusions

Schools should be especially sensitive to exclusion issues where Looked After Children are concerned. Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions; the effect on them can be catastrophic. On occasions foster placements break down as the exclusion takes effect.

Schools need to be proactive, providing support and perhaps alternative educational packages to prevent this from happening. Early dialogue with all involved with the young person is essential and the mechanism of the PEP* can assist this. Schools should try every practicable means to maintain the child in school and should seek Local Authority and other professional advice as appropriate. The Designated Teacher in school may be best placed to do this. The child's Social Worker and Foster Carer should, in all cases, be involved at the earliest opportunity in working with school to avoid the need to exclude.

***The Personal Education Plan should reflect strategies being employed in the Pastoral Support Plan to avoid a permanent exclusion.**

Narrowing the Gap / Diminishing the Difference

The school sets challenging targets for children in care and has high expectations of them, both with regard to attainment and also participation in broader school activities. It recognises, however, that there are often additional hurdles for them to surmount because of their early life experiences; support will be offered where appropriate to help them achieve their potential and 'narrow the gap' between their attainment and that of their peers.

Teachers also recognise that sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum which deal with family values and experiences which are likely to either rekindle distressing memories or put the spotlight on the child.



Data on Looked After Children

It is the responsibility of the school to inform The Virtual School about any new children in care joining the school, or any leaving the school. Through PEP meetings, training courses and the annual conference, Virtual School staff will ensure that systems are in place to support the young people, to discuss their progress and to confirm their willingness to help the school resolve any issues which may arise. Other LA teams, including advisers, The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and School Improvement Partners will also be aware of the names of children in care and may also enquire about their progress.

Early Years

As with all young children, those in care will benefit from access to a full range of early years experiences within a secure, nurturing, consistent and non-stigmatising environment. Staff in Early Years settings need to have an understanding of how the care system works, including an awareness of:-

- The effects of separation on very young Looked After Children
- The importance of contact with siblings and other family members
- Their role in ensuring successful planning and intervention.

Identifying a key adult is particularly important for young children in care because of the importance of forming secure attachments in order to develop independence and gain confidence. Young children in care also require adults to advocate on their behalf and to ensure that they have the access to the same life chances as their peers. The Early Years SENCO has a crucial role in:-

- The early identification of and response to special educational needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- Effective liaison and co-ordination with other support services and professionals;
- Supporting the smooth and informed transition into statutory schooling.

Book Bag Scheme

The Virtual School source and post out books to our children in early years, key stage 1 and 2. We offer age and ability appropriate books and games on a loan basis.



Children and Young People who have Special Educational Needs

- Like other children, children in care may at some time have special educational needs. It should not, however, be assumed that all children in public care will have such needs. If they do have learning needs or difficulties accessing learning opportunities they need support and advocacy. The needs of most pupils with special educational needs are expected to be met in mainstream schools through their EHCP and/or Individual Provision Map.
- The needs of the child in care should be known to the SENCO, the Designated Teacher and their Carer and Social Worker. The PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided. It should be used in conjunction with the statement or Individual Provision Map to monitor and record progress and to indicate any barriers with plans to overcome these.
- Children who are separated from their families will have behavioural and emotional responses to that separation and the often traumatic events which led to it. Schools have an important role to play in helping to ensure that unmet emotional needs do not lead to disaffection, difficult behaviour or exclusion wherever possible.



Post 16 Education

The aim of all professionals working with students considering Post 16 education is to overcome the barriers that contribute to the Further and Higher Educational underachievement of young people in care. Professionals should work creatively with young people in care along with their care providers, in order to ensure that an increased proportion take up places in Further and Higher Education and achieve success in them. Schools should be aware that while young people in care will usually be in foster care or residential care, they may be in supported lodgings, living with a greater degree of independence and self-reliance. For these young people, their educational placement in a caring sixth-form is crucial to the stability of their life and to their success in the future.

Young people in care require the following:

- A key adult or mentor whom they can access within school/college for support
- Teachers and school staff to be ambitious for them and ensure that they access the same opportunities as their peers
- Continued monitoring of and support for special educational needs, including Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties and the EHCP conversion
- Effective liaison and co-ordination with other support services and professionals
- Focused, personalised support with the transition to University via UCAS, or into further education or employment
- The vulnerable young person's bursary - £1,200pa

The Virtual School staff help to identify potential high achievers among young people in care and aim to support them in their aspirations as appropriate. This could involve support with their study skills and UCAS applications, as well as with academic tuition (subject to continued funding). The residential Summer School in July for Looked After Children to Buckinghamshire is a key aspect of this work.



The Pupil Premium Summary

The Pupil Premium (PPG) was introduced in April 2011. It was brought in by the Government to tackle disadvantage and to raise achievement by improving outcomes of pupils from low income families. In February 2014 the new conditions of the grant were published:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>

The allocation distributed and spending of the **PPG Plus** for Looked After Children is very different from the other PPG categories and in this document we will only be referring to LAC. (More information can be found using the link above).

| Disadvantaged pupils | Pupil Premium per pupil |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Pupils in Year Groups R to 6 recorded as Ever 6 FSM | £1,320 |
| Pupils in Year Groups 7 to 11 recorded as Ever 6 FSM | £935 |
| Looked After Children (LAC) | £1,900 |
| Children adopted from care under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 ¹ and children who have left care under a Special Guardianship or Residence Order | £1,900 |
| Service children | |
| Pupils in Year Groups R to 11 recorded as Ever 4 Service Child or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence. | £300 |

Children adopted from care

Schools will also receive £1,900 for each pupil identified in the spring school census as having left Local Authority care because of one of the following:

- Adoption
- A special guardianship order
- A child arrangements order
- A residence order

If a pupil has been registered as eligible for free school meals and has also left Local Authority care for any of the reasons above, they will attract the £1,900 rate.

Children who have been in Local Authority care for one day or more also attract £1,900 of Pupil Premium funding. Funding for these pupils is managed by The Virtual School in the Local Authority that looks after the child.

Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After Children, The Buckinghamshire Virtual School

Summary

The overall amount of Pupil Premium for Looked After Children will be based on numbers of Looked After Children aged 4-15 with a mid-year revision to account for additional children and a notional £1900 per child.

There is no requirement for the Authority to pass a set amount of funding onto the school. Instead the money must be managed by The Virtual School to be used to improve outcomes as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher.

This is a child needs driven model, managed through high quality PEPs.

The Local Authority is not permitted to carry forward funding held centrally into the financial year 2017-2018. Grants held centrally that have not been spent by 31 March 2017 will be recovered.

Accountability for Outcomes Rests With:

The Virtual School Heads are responsible for making sure there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium funding to benefit children looked after by their authority. That means:

- Being able to demonstrate how Pupil Premium funding managed by The Virtual School Head is linked to raising achievement for Looked After Children and closing the gap between their achievement and that of their peers.
- Also having arrangements in place to engage with the Looked After Child's school (usually with the Designated Teacher) about how Pupil Premium funding allocated to the school is contributing to meet the needs identified in his/her Personal Education Plan.
- Schools are accountable for the educational attainment and progress of all disadvantaged pupils who attract Pupil Premium on their roll, through Ofsted inspections and KS2/KS4 school performance tables. The Virtual School Heads and others involved in Personal Education Plans will want a constructive dialogue with schools about how best to support Looked After Children using the Pupil Premium.

Criteria for use

- The Pupil Premium Plus will be used to improve outcomes for children in the following areas
- Academic achievement and value added
- Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is gifted and talented
- Attendance
- Inclusion (by reducing internal and external exclusion)
- Transition
- Mental health (overcoming the effects of attachment and developmental trauma) where this affects learning and progress.

Management and accountability

Personal Education Plan (PEP) Targets

- Pupil Premium Plus will only be provided to meet needs identified in a high quality plan in the PEP with clear quantitative targets for improvement, underpinned by multi-agency support. ***All requests for Pupil Premium should be made through ePEP. Please see Appendix A for guidance.***
- The PEP will show the baseline data, target for improvement, expected outcomes and cost of support

N.B. National and international studies have shown the one to one tuition has a disproportionately positive impact for Looked After Children. To aid transparency and audit we will fund one to one at a standard rate of £40 per hour. How and why will the amount of Pupil Plus vary?

- Children's needs vary and can 'spike'.
- For some children £1900 is only a fraction of the cost of the support they need e.g.
- Children who come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are behind academically
- Children who have to move into or out of county in an emergency
- Children placed out of county in other Local Authorities where the level and quality of support may not be the same and who therefore will lose out without additional help
- Children where there is a significant (and often delayed) reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in hard to anticipate behavioural 'spikes'
- In view of this there will be a significant difference in the amount of Pupil Premium Plus distributed.
- Proposals to pool Pupil Premium Plus to enhance services, providing its use is directly linked to children in care via the PEP, are welcomed.

Circumstances in which Pupil Premium Plus will not be provided

- Pupil Premium Plus will not be used to double fund or replace funding which should already go to the child and specifically:
- To fund services that should be provided via a statement, or EHC plan
- Other statutory work e.g. statutory assessment or support from health
- We will only provide extra funding to independent schools and for children 100% educated in Alternative Provision by the Local Authority in exceptional circumstances, because these are already funded at a high level by central budgets.
- Where there is a need to clarify what funding a school is providing from its own resources, the school may need to provide evidence before Pupil Premium Plus can be allocated.

APPENDIX A

PPG Funding requested on ePEP

How a request for PPG is made by school

- Go into the YP on ePEP
- Scroll down to 'Current Formal PEPs'
- Click on 'PEP'
- Scroll down to Section D
- Click on Targets
- In 'DRAFT TARGETS' click on 'ADD TARGET'
- Choose 'Area of focus' from drop down menu
- Complete 'What is the target?' box
- Complete 'IMPROVEMENTS EXPECTED' if appropriate
- Scroll down and click on 'One Off Funding'
- Complete 'What will the funding purchase?'
- Complete 'How much is needed?'
- Scroll down and 'Submit Funding Request'

Virtual School worker

- Go to TARGETS WITH FUNDING AWAITING APPROVAL and Click 'View'
- Scroll down
- If agreed, click on **Sign-off Funding Request**
- Check request now appears in 'Target with funding approved'