Designated Teacher for Looked-after and previously Looked-after Child Policy

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Orchard Vale Community School

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Author/owner	**Fran Brinicombe**
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1. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Policy Date / Version	Summary of change	Contact	Review Date
April 2026 V2.0	Annual Review • Addition of school commitments • Listing of Devon Guidance • Clarification of PEP process • Addition of section on attendance • Addition of section on exclusion • Elaboration of monitoring processes • Links to Devon guidance detailed	Fran Brinicombe	May 2026
Autumn 2024 / V1.0	Annual Review (No change)	Mr T Lark	November 2025
Autumn 2023 / V1.0	Annual Review (No change)	Mr T Lark	November 2024
Autumn 2022 / V1.0	Annual Review (No change)	Mr T Lark	November 2023
Autumn 2021 / V1.0	Annual Review (No change)	Mr T Lark	November 2022
Autumn 2020 / V1.0	Policy annual review	Mr T Lark	November 2021

2. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Devon Protocol for Supporting Children in Care
- Devon Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Devon Transition Guidance

3. AIMS

3.1 The Trust aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked after/previously looked after children, at each school in the Trust.
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked after/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 at their school, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.
- The admission of looked after/previously looked after children, and those who have been adopted or those who have a Special Guardianship Order, is prioritised within all of their school admission procedures, in order to admit children without delay, recognising the importance of school stability for looked after/previously looked after children.

3.2 Our schools commit to :

- Championing the needs, rights and aspirations of CiC/PLAC
- Ensuring a whole-school ethos where CiC/PLAC are kept in mind by all staff.
- Promoting the educational achievement, social and emotional development, and sense of stability and control over their lives of CiC/PLAC
- Prioritising the admission, transition and ongoing provision of CiC/PLAC, in line with Devon's protocols.
- Ensuring Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are of high quality, updated termly, and drive progress.

4. LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE

4.1 This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after child.

- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice (0–25)

4.2 It also takes into account section 2E of the Academies Act 2010.

4.3 DfE: Promoting the Education of Looked after/previously looked after child
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-child**

4.4 Devon County Council:

- Devon Protocol for Supporting Children in Care
- Devon Virtual School Attendance Policy
- Devon Transition Guidance & Transition Booklet

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

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 Looked after children are registered children 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

5.2 Previously looked after children are registered children 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, from information available, 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

5.3 **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** is part of a looked after/previously 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.

5.4 **Virtual School Head (VSH)** is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked after/previously looked after children, working across schools to monitor and support these children, 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/previously looked after children.

6. IDENTITY OF OUR DESIGNATED TEACHER

6.1 The designated teacher at Orchard Vale Community School is Head Teacher.

6.2 You can contact them by emailing the school office orchardvale@thsp.org.uk and adding "FTAO The Designated Teacher" into the subject line of the email, or by phoning the school office 01271 375074.

6.3 The designated teachers take lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after/previously looked after children in Trust schools. They are the initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

7. ROLE OF DESIGNATED TEACHER

7.1 Leadership responsibilities

7.1.1 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/previously looked after child.
- Embed a whole-school culture that prioritises CiC/PLAC needs.
- 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 children matter and are prioritised.
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
  - trauma-related barriers, attachment needs, and implications for learning.
  - The things which can affect how looked after/previously looked after children learn and achieve.
  - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these children.
- Contribute to the development and review of school and Trust policies, ensure school policies (behaviour, SEND, attendance, exclusions) incorporate Devon-specific requirements for CiC/PLAC.
- Promote a culture in which looked after/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/previously looked after children.

- Work directly with looked after/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/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.
- Meet with a nominated school governor on a regular basis, to ensure the needs of looked after/previously looked after children are fed back to the governing body and taken into account at a leadership level, within the school.
- Monitor the attendance, progress and attainment of looked after/previously looked after children and provide this information to the SLT and Headteacher, to include in the Headteacher's reports to local governors.

7.2 Supporting looked after/previously looked after children

7.2.1 The designated teacher will:

- Prioritise admission of CiC/PLAC within school admissions processes
- Hold a Planning for Success meeting on admission or planned transition, as outlined in the Devon County Council Protocol for Supporting looked after/previously looked after children in schools.
- Liaise with:
    - Area Learning Advocate (ALA)
    - Social Worker
    - Carers and previous schools
    - PEP Coordinator
    - Virtual School
- Hold a PEP meeting each term for every looked after/previously looked after children that involves the social worker, Foster Carers, child and parents (if appropriate). Additional attendees may include Careers South West, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare Officer and the Area Learning Advocate.
- Ensure child's views are central.
- Ensure PEPs include:
    - Strong academic, social and emotional targets
    - Numerical progress measures
    - Clear actions and responsible staff
- Ensure PEPs are updated before statutory care plan reviews.
- Submit PEPs promptly to the VSH.
- Transfer PEPs within 5 school days where a child moves school.
- 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 looked after children's attainment, progress and attendance in accordance with their PEPs.

- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place and that their impact is monitored.
- Ensure that Child Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the looked after/previously looked after child and used as identified in the Personal Education Plan.
- Use PP+ solely as identified in the PEP and in consultation with the Virtual School.
- Evidence the impact of PP+ through progress data and PEP reviews.
- Ensure PLAC benefit from pupil premium funding in line with Trust policy and DfE expectations.
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for the child/children concerned.
- 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.
    - The 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, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version.

7.3 Attendance (Devon-Required)

- We will:
    - Promote excellent attendance for CiC/PLAC.
    - Notify the Virtual School immediately if attendance falls below 95% or becomes a concern.
    - Implement a first-day-of-absence protocol for all CiC/PLAC.
    - Escalate concerns through ALA/EWO/Social Worker as required in Devon's Attendance Policy for CiC/PLAC.

7.4 Exclusion Prevention (Devon-Required)

- We recognise that challenging behaviour is often linked to trauma. Therefore, we will:
    - Avoid exclusion wherever possible.
    - Immediately inform the Virtual School of any risk of exclusion
    - Engage with REDS – Reducing Exclusions in Devon Schools.
    - Use relational approaches, trauma-informed strategies and Relational Support Plans before sanctions.

7.5 Supporting both looked after and previously looked after children

7.5.1 The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked after/previously looked after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses their Pupil Premium + Funding.
- Work with VSHs to agree how Pupil Premium + Funding for looked after child can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.

- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked after child about Pupil Premium + Funding and other support for these children.
- Play a key part in decisions on how child premium funding is used to support previously looked-after child.
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked after/previously looked after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour, transition and future career planning.
- Be aware of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of looked after/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/previously looked after children, is followed.
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans that looked after/previously looked after children child may have.
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEND issues in looked after/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/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.

7.6 Relationships beyond the school

7.6.1 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/previously looked-after children.
- Discuss with Social workers how the school should engage with birth parents (if appropriate), 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 child's education.
- Proactively build relationships with Local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments.
- Consider how the Trust schools work with others outside of their own school, to maximise the stability of education for looked after child, 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 child is absent, without authorisation, and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action.
    - Promote the attendance of looked after/previously looked after children and where the attendance for a looked after/previously looked after children becomes a concern, and falls below 95%, inform the VSH and work with them and the EWO to improve attendance.
    - 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, within 5 school days.

- Seek advice from VSH 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 is 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.
- Engage with interventions provided by the VSH and the Educational Psychology Service to avoid exclusion, such as the REDS (Reducing Exclusions in Devon Schools) programme.

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

8.1 This policy will:

- be reviewed annually and approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Feature in the Headteacher's reports to governors.
- Be monitored via:
    - Attendance data
    - Attainment and progress data
    - PEP quality assurance
    - Exclusion/behaviour monitoring
    - Stakeholder feedback

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

1. Definition: Who are our Children in Care?

1.1 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.

1.2 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

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

2.1 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;

2.2 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.