



Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy

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1.0	FGB	13.07.2022	New policy

SUMMARY

This document is a statutory requirement from the Department for Education, issued under sections 20(4) and 20A(4) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. Governing bodies of maintained schools must have regard to it when promoting the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies in particular those relating to Child Protection and Safeguarding. If you require further details of this policy then please refer to the Executive Head Teacher or Head of School.

This document will be reviewed annually or updated as and when changes occur. This is to be recorded in the minutes of the Leadership, Staffing and Resources Committee.

REFERENCES

Department for Education: Advice for School Staff on Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools

Department for Education: The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked-After Children Statutory Guidance on their Roles and Responsibilities

Section 2E of the Academies Act 2010 inserted by section 6 of the 2017 Act.

Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 ("the 2008 Act").

Section 20A of the 2008 Act inserted by section 5 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 ("the 2017 Act").

The Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the policy:

CAMHS Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service

EHCP Educational Health and Care Plan

PEP Personal Education Plan

SDQ Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

VSH Virtual School

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INTRODUCTION

At St.Helen's CE Primary School we have a responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. In order to achieve this the school has:

Ensured that a designated teacher is assigned to this role. The designated teacher is the Head of School Kelvin Chappell.

The designated teacher has appropriate training.

Established links between the designated teacher and the Pupil and Family Support Worker.

Ensured that the governing body and designated teacher understand and implement this policy.

For the purposes of this policy:

A child 'looked-after by a local authority' is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating 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 and Wales.

A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if s/he 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.

WHY DO LOOKED-AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN NEED THE SUPPORT OF A DESIGNATED TEACHER

Many looked-after and previously looked-after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning. Excellent practice in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children already exists in many schools. The designated teacher role is statutory to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.

Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children shows that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 when compared to non-looked-after children.

The support that schools and designated teachers give to children who are looked-after and previously looked-after should not be seen in isolation. All looked-after and previously looked-after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked-after children, parents or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child.

Within the local authority, the VSH will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school.

CONSIDERING THE NEEDS OF A LOOKED AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER

The needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children may have implications for almost every school policy and consideration may want to be given to ensure that policies are effective in reflecting their needs. Some of the issues that may be considered are:

- That there are no unintended barriers to the admission of looked-after and previously looked-after children either at normal transition or any other point of the school year.
- Whether there are any issues arising as a result of the number of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved.
- Whether looked-after and previously looked-after children have made the expected or better levels of progress over the past twelve months in line with their peers (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress).
- Whether the pattern of attendance and exclusions for looked-after and previously looked-after children is different to that of other children at the school.
- For looked-after children, whether the school's policies are sensitive to their needs, e.g. in accessing out of school hours learning, respecting the children's wishes and feelings about their care status or generally meeting their needs as identified in their personal education plans (PEPs). These are developed alongside the virtual school.
- Whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met.
- Whether any looked-after or previously looked-after children face additional safeguarding challenges of which the school's designated safeguarding lead should be aware.
- Whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are being identified and met at the appropriate level.
- Whether any looked-after and previously looked-after children have mental health needs and whether those needs are being identified and met.
- Whether the school's behaviour management policy is sufficiently flexible to respond to looked-after and previously looked-after children's challenging behaviour in the most effective way for those children.
- How the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked after children are reflected in school policies, in particular in relation to interventions and resources.
- What the impact is of any of the school's policies, e.g. on charging for educational visits and extended school activities, on looked-after children.
- What impact Pupil Premium (PP) has in supporting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The role of the governing body is as follows:

Ensure that the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Ensure that the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and skills to work with the school's senior leadership and governing body to help ensure school policies and approaches appropriately reflect the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and act as a champion for them.

Ensure that the designated teacher have training opportunities, including time away from timetable commitments.

To ensure that the designated teacher acquires and keeps up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including a good knowledge of SEN?

To understand how the designated teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve?

Understand any resource implications might there be in supporting the designated teacher to carry out their role?

To understand what expertise the designated teacher can call on within and outside the school such as SENCOs, health and mental health support?

To put in place monitoring arrangements might be appropriate to ensure that the role of the designated teacher is providing appropriate support for looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school roll.

Hold the school to account on how it supports its looked-after and previously looked-after children (including how the PP+ is used) and their level of progress.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

The role of the designated teacher must be either a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a teacher at the school or a head teacher or acting head teacher of the school. Ideally the designated teacher will have a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on the school's roll. This involves, working with VSHs to promote the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children and promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked-after and previously looked-after child matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised

The designated teacher is the central point of initial contact within the school. This helps to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.

The role of the designated teacher has been assigned to:

The role of the designated teacher is:

To satisfy themselves that the child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents for evidence of their previously looked-after status. For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been looked after by a public authority, a religious organisation or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, designated teachers will need to use their discretion.

To promote the educational achievement of looked-after children.

To report to the governing body how support is being delivered, the impact on pupil premium and levels of progress for children.

Designated teachers should take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked after children learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils. This means making sure that all staff:

- Have high expectations of looked-after and previously looked-after children's learning and set targets to accelerate educational progress.
- Are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour.
- Understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their looked-after or previously looked-after status.
- Appreciate the central importance of the looked-after child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported.
- Have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child.
- For previously looked-after children, understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress at school.

The designated teacher is also likely to have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation. This can be achieved by:

Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that:

- They do not unintentionally put looked-after and previously looked-after children at a disadvantage.

- There is effective induction for looked-after and previously looked-after children starting school, new to the school and new to care.
- There are effective procedures in place to support a looked-after child's learning.
- Particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve.
- Transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion.
- Thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment; o when enrolling at the school, parents and guardians of previously looked-after children are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+.
- There are no barriers to looked-after children accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its pupils (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for looked-after children to attend meetings).

Promoting a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children:

- Are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support.
- Are encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system.
- Believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs.
- Can discuss difficult issues (such as SEN, bullying, attendance) in a frank manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult.

Being a source of advice for teachers about:

- Differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are looked-after or previously looked-after children
- The use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning (including any knowledge gaps), where they need to go, and how to get there.

Raising awareness and staff training:

- Ensuring that they, and other school staff, have strong awareness, training and skills around the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and how to support them. As part of this, designated teachers should proactively build strong links with the VSH to access training and keep up to date with research and good practice.

- Ensure that teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children with regards to, among other things:
 - Special educational needs (including speech, language and communication needs), which the SENCO can also help support.
 - Attendance and exclusions.
 - Homework.
 - Understanding and managing any challenging behaviour
 - Promoting positive educational and recreational activities, and supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children to be aspirational for their future education.
 - Understanding the link between emotional wellbeing and being able to make educational progress.

Working directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents or guardians to:

- Promote good home-school links.
- Support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians.
- Ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home.
- Ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy.
- Encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment.

Having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked after children's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary.

Working 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.

When supporting previously looked-after children, designated teachers should be aware of the following:

The VSH must provide information and advice to parents and designated teachers on meeting the needs of these children - this may be general information, including training opportunities, or information and advice on individual children at the request of their parents or designated teacher.

The designated teacher should fully involve parents and guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, including any requests to the VSH for advice on meeting their individual needs.

Previously looked-after children's challenges and need for support will often continue after they leave care. However, designated teachers' work will need to reflect that their role for previously looked-after children is different to that for looked-after children, as the local authority is no longer their corporate parent.

DEVELOPING THE PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP)

All looked-after children must have a care plan. This is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority responsible for the child. It should identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to their emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP.

The PEP is a record of the child's education and training. It should describe what needs to happen for a looked-after child to help them fulfil their potential and reflect, but not duplicate, any existing plans such as EHC plans.

The PEP is a vital document because it provides a 'collective memory' about the child's education. It is an integral part of a looked-after child's wider care plan.

The care plan and PEP may have been drawn up before the child becomes looked-after and is placed. However, if a child becomes looked-after in an emergency, the PEP must be initiated within 10 working days of the start of the first placement. An initial version must be available for the 20 working-day review of the care plan.

The PEP should be initiated by the social worker as part of the care plan but developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. Where the child is on the roll of a school, this will include the designated teacher, although class and subject teachers would have considerable input. If the child has SEN, the SENCO or Head Teacher would also contribute.

The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a looked-after child's official school record. If a child moves school, the PEP should be forwarded as a matter of urgency, along with other school records, to the new school when known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.

The PEP should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress and meet the child's educational needs, describing how that will be provided. For this reason, both schools and local authorities, through strong links between the designated teacher and the VSH in the authority that looks after the child, have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document. The most effective PEPs reflect the individual planning that all schools undertake for all of their pupils.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking or refugee children are entitled to the same local authority support to promote their educational outcomes as any other looked-after child. Education for unaccompanied children may include a period of time in a setting where their full educational needs can be assessed and integrated into the PEP.

Receiving the PEP in School

When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after or a looked-after child transfers to the school, the local authority which looks after them must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the up-to-date PEP as a matter of urgency. This should be pre-populated with basic information and should include details about the child, such as:

Their age, care status, where the child lives, school history, whether the child has special educational needs (including whether they have an Education, Health and Care – EHC - Plan or statement of SEN), and how this is being addressed.

The child's carers and their level of delegated authority.

The child's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to their contact with the child

Whom to contact within the local authority that looks after the child (social worker and VSH).

The designated teacher will then develop the PEP.

Children who are already looked-after when they join the school should have an existing PEP. It should contain all the information about educational progress and how s/he learns best, and arrangements should have been made to have it transferred to the child's new school. If the local authority has not provided the most recent PEP, the designated teacher should follow this up with the authority that looks after the child, either through the VSH or the child's social worker.

What the Designated Teacher Should Do With the PEP

To make sure the child's PEP meets looked-after children's needs, designated teachers will need to work closely with other teachers to assess their specific educational needs without delay. This assessment of learning needs will help to identify strengths, weaknesses and any barriers to learning and should form the basis for the development or the review and refinement of the PEP.

Although the designated teacher will lead on the plan within the school, other staff in the school may need to contribute to it, for instance the SENCO. The PEP is also likely to contain information about what the local authority and other agencies will do to support the child.

The designated teacher has a key role in making sure the PEP is effective in supporting everyone to help the looked-after pupil to make good educational progress. PEPs should:

- Identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences.

- Set short and long-term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate.

- Include a record of planned actions, including milestones on homework, extra tuition and study support, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child, based on an assessment of their educational needs

- Include information on how the child's progress is to be rigorously monitored.

- Record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics, and at Key Stage 4 in achieving success in public examinations.

- Say what will happen, or is already happening, to put in place any additional support which may be required - e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist, or local authority education services (information contained within a EHC plan does not have to be duplicated in the PEP, a reference is sufficient as long as the plans work together to meet overall needs).

- Set out information on what will happen or is already happening to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the child's education.

- Set out how a child's aspiration and self-confidence is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer-term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans. Discussions about longer-term goals should start early and ideally well before Year 9 (age 13-14) at school. High aspirations are crucial to successful

planning for the future. They should focus on young person's strengths and capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.

Include the child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective.

Be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development).

Provide information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for them, helping to substitute for the role that parents might otherwise provide.

Have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

The designated teacher would normally have overall responsibility for leading the process of target setting for looked-after children in school, should monitor and track how their attainment progresses, and ensure that identified actions are put in place. The designated teacher will help the school and the local authority that looks after the child to decide what arrangements work best in the development and review of the PEP.

Monitoring and Reviewing the PEP in School

The designated teacher should work closely with other staff in school to make sure the child's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated. They should be able to:

Judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing.

Know whether the young person is likely to meet the attainment targets in their PEP.

If the young person is not on track to meet targets, the designated teacher should be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in the PEP.

A child's care plan is reviewed regularly by the authority that looks after them. These reviews are statutory and must be done at the following intervals: the first review must happen within 20 working days of the date the child became looked after; the second at not more than three months after the first review; and the third and subsequent reviews at not more than six monthly intervals. The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

The IRO will ask about the child's educational progress as part of the overall care plan review and should have access to the most up-to-date PEP.

So that there can be an informed discussion at the statutory review of the care plan about the child's progress in school, the designated teacher is responsible for ensuring that:

They review the PEP before the statutory review of the care plan, it is up-to-date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered.

The PEP is 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.

They pass the updated PEP to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of the care plan.

The school and the local authority which looks after the child have a shared responsibility for helping looked-after children to achieve and enjoy. The content, implementation and review of the PEP enable both the school and local authority to discuss how they can help achieve this. The PEP review should be done through a meeting involving the social worker, the young person, carers and others, such as the VSH.

Transfer of the Official School PEP

The designated teacher is fundamental to helping looked-after children make a smooth transition to their next school or college. This includes arrangements to:

Achieve speedy transfer of the looked-after child's school records to a new school.

Ensure the child's PEP is up to date.

That the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most recent version of the PEP.

TRANSFER OUT OF CARE

When children cease to be looked-after, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. Although they will no longer be required to have a PEP, designated teachers will wish to consider what is best for continuity and meeting the child's educational needs. This will particularly apply to those who leave care through adoption, Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangements Order, where the designated teacher has a duty to promote their educational attainment. As part of this, designated teachers should maintain links with VSHs who must make advice and information available to them for the purposes of promoting the educational achievement of this group of previously looked-after children.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

Listening to the voice of looked-after and previously looked-after children is a vital part of successfully understanding and meeting their needs.

The DfE's document *The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked-After Children Statutory Guidance on their Roles and Responsibilities* states: *"In feedback from Staffordshire Virtual School, children in care agreed that knowing and having a good relationship with their designated teacher was one of the most important factors in supporting them at school. Schools successful in Staffordshire's local Pupil Premium awards consistently showed that looked-after children felt well supported by their designated teacher and the whole school team; even when education would go off track, everyone was rooting for them and supporting them to get back on track."*

Consideration for the Designated Teacher on Listening to the Voice of the Child

Be available, take the time to get to know me.

Notice if I am upset or angry and listen to me when I need help.

Understand that even though I've had a different past than most people, it doesn't mean I need to be treated differently.

Understand my experience of being looked-after.

Understand that my past will affect my present and my future behaviour even if I don't notice.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are significantly more likely to have SEN than their peers. Of those with SEN, a significant proportion will have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC plans).

It is vital that designated teachers are aware of the SEN needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Most children with SEN do not have an EHC plan. Instead, the school undertakes to meet their identified needs through SEN support. However, children with higher levels of need will have EHC plans. A significant proportion of looked-after and previously looked-after children fall in to one of these groups.

In respect of looked-after children, the designated teacher should ensure that:

The special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice 0 to 25 years, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed.

Children's PEPs work in harmony with their EHC plan to, coherently and comprehensively, set out how their needs are being met. Professionals should consider how the EHC plan adds to information about how education, health and care needs will be met without duplicating information already in a child's care plan or PEP. Equally, the child's care plan, including PEP, should feed into the care assessment section of the EHC plan.

Ensure that, with the help of the VSH, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable.

MENTAL HEALTH

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills¹⁵, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.

Designated teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as CAMHS and educational psychologists. In addition, many schools have an officer responsible for making links with mental health services, with whom designated teachers can work closely. Where such an officer is available, designated teachers should work with them, and the VSH to ensure that they, and other school staff, have the skills to:

Identify signs of potential mental health issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable.

Understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning. It is also important that the designated teacher, officer with responsibility for links with mental health services, where the school has one, and other school staff are aware that these issues will continue to affect previously looked-after children, and that the school will need to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.

It is important to have a means of regularly measuring the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by looked-after and previously looked-after children. Currently, this is often done through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The SDQ is a clinically validated brief behavioural screening questionnaire for use with 4-17 year-olds or 2-4 year-olds. The SDQ can help social workers and other professionals form a view about a looked-after child's emotional well-being. It exists in three versions: for parents or carers, teachers and a self-evaluation for children aged 11-17.

Looked-after children may benefit from triangulation of the SDQ scores from their carer, teacher and, if they are aged 11 – 17, their self-evaluation to better inform the health assessment and PEP. Designated teachers should put in place robust arrangements to complete their element of the SDQ and engage with the relevant VSH and, where the school has one, the officer responsible for links with mental health services regarding this. Designated teachers should use the results of the SDQ to help inform the child's PEP.

VSH and schools may also wish to use other screening tools. Pages 16 to 18 of the "Improving mental health support for our children and young people" document linked below include examples of this.

For previously looked-after children, designated teachers should work with senior leaders in the school, the officer responsible for links with mental health services where the school has one, and parents and carers to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of this group of children. The SDQ could be applied to previously looked-after children and their parents where the child's parents or guardian supports its use.

RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND THE SCHOOL

The family arrangements for looked-after children can be complex. Most will live with foster carers, some will live in residential children's homes, some will live with family members, and some, in very limited circumstances, may continue to live with their parents. All looked-after children will have a social worker and some may require the involvement of other professionals, e.g. SEN and CAMHS services.

Designated teachers should proactively engage with these partners to enable their school to respond effectively to looked-after and previously looked after children's needs.

Even though a child is looked-after, this does not necessarily mean that the birth parents will not be involved with their child's education, particularly where children are accommodated by the local authority under a section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Designated teachers should discuss with the child's social worker 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.

Previously looked-after children have parents or guardians with parental responsibility. It is important for designated teachers to get to know those who have parental responsibility and encourage them to be actively involved in their child's education. They should be open and accessible so that those with parental responsibility feel able to approach the designated teacher to discuss the support needs of their child.

WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have a duty, under the Children Act 1989, to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. They also have a duty to make advice and information

available to parents, guardians and others to promote the education of previously looked-after children.

For looked-after children, they must give particular consideration to the implications of any decision about the child's care which has implications for their education.

Local authorities are required to appoint a VSH who is a local authority officer responsible for discharging the local authority's duty as a corporate parent to promote the educational achievement of the children it looks after as if they were in a single school.

To maximise their effectiveness, designated teachers should consider what arrangements the school should make to facilitate effective co-operation with other professionals, in particular the VSH and SEND department in the authority where their own school is located as well as from other local authorities which have looked-after children on roll at the school.

The designated teacher should be proactive in building these relationships.

One of the most important factors in improving educational outcomes for looked after children is a secure and stable school placement. It is an integral part of what needs to happen in order to narrow the gap between what they achieve compared to other children. The stronger the working links and cooperation between the school and local authority, as well as the child's carers and whoever else is involved in providing support, the greater the chances are of keeping the child's education and wellbeing on track.

The designated teacher should consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children. In particular, they should:

- Find ways of making sure that the latest information about educational progress, primarily through the PEP, is available to contribute to the statutory review process of the care plan.

- Ensure mechanisms are in place to identify and inform VSHs where looked after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate action to safeguard the child.

- Talk to the child's social worker and/or others in the local authority, such as the VSH or other local authority officer, regarding any decision about changes in care placements which will disrupt a child's education or training.

- Provide advice in such cases about the likely impact of disrupting the child's education and what the local authority should do in order to minimise the disruption if a move in educational placement cannot be avoided.

- Make sure that if a looked-after child moves school the designated teacher at the new school is provided with any information they need to help the transition process.

For previously looked-after children, the VSHs are no longer acting as the part of their corporate parent: their role is limited to providing information and advice to parents and schools, including training to raise awareness and understanding of their needs. The designated teacher may, however, seek the advice of the VSH about meeting the needs of individual children with the agreement of the child's parents or guardians. It is, therefore, important that the designated teacher establishes a good working relationship with the VSH for their area.

WORKING WITH CARERS AND PARENTS

Designated teachers who work closely with a looked-after child's carer will find that this makes a big difference to how they are able to provide effective support for the child. How this is achieved will depend on the school's existing arrangements for engaging with those who have parental responsibility for a child. The local authority should make sure the designated teacher knows about things, such as whether the child is on a care order or is voluntarily accommodated, and the scope of the carer's responsibility for giving permissions.

Carers should take an active role in participation in PEP planning, and schools should consider what they can do to encourage and support carers in supporting the education of the children they look after.

Designated teachers should make sure that:

There is an agreed process in place for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as the child's social worker, in order to review and develop the child's educational progress and how each person will contribute to driving up the child's educational achievement.

School policies in relation to, for example, home-school agreements, attendance, and homework diaries and parents' evenings are communicated to carers and social workers and, where appropriate, birth parents, so that looked-after children are not disadvantaged.

The child's teachers know the most appropriate person to contact when necessary. For example, in some cases authority to sign permission slips for school trips will be delegated to the carer by the social worker but for some children permission will be needed from the child's social worker.

For previously looked-after children, the designated teacher should work closely with their parents and guardians as they will understand their child's needs better than anyone else. The designated teacher should make themselves known to parents and guardians as someone they can talk to about issues affecting their child's education. They should be encouraged to participate in discussions about their child's support needs and strategies to meet identified needs, including how PP+ should be used to support their child. The views and wishes of parents and guardians should be respected at all times.

EXCLUSIONS

The past experiences of looked-after and previously looked-after children can impact on their behaviour (see section on Mental Health). It is important to remember this when considering how best to support the child or young person with their learning and the design and application of the school's behaviour policies. Governing bodies, head teachers and designated teachers must have regard to the Department's statutory guidance on Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England. In line with that guidance, head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any looked-after child.

Where a looked-after child is at risk of either fixed term or permanent exclusion, the designated teacher should contact the relevant authority's 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.

Where a child is at risk of a fixed-term or permanent exclusion, the designated teacher, working with the VSH and the child's carers, should consider what additional assessment

and support (such as additional help for the classroom teacher or one-to-one therapeutic work) needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour and prevent the need for exclusion. The Department for Education's advice for school staff on mental health and behaviour in schools may be helpful.

When a child leaves care, their past experiences may continue to impact on their behaviour. As with looked-after children, the school should look to support the child to improve their behaviour to avoid exclusion becoming necessary. Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, the designated teacher should talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking the advice of the VSH on avoiding exclusion.