



SETTLEBECK SCHOOL

Designated Teacher for Looked-After & Previously Looked-After Children Policy

<i>At the time of publishing the following roles were held:</i>	
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Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs S Campbell
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Position:	Chair of Governors
Signed:	
Date:	May 2026
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Review Sheet

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Review
1	New Document	February 2022
2	Reviewed in line with policy schedule. No updates in DFE Statutory Guidance	March 2023
3	Reviewed in line with policy schedule. No DFE guidance updates since 2018	

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1. Introduction

This policy is based on statutory guidance from the Department of Education including '*The Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children*' (2018), *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)*, and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)*. It outlines how the school supports the educational achievement and safeguarding of looked-after and previously looked-after children. It outlines how the school supports the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

2. Definitions

Looked-after children are pupils that are:

- In the care of the local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

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

- 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
- Kinship care

They appear to the governing to board to have:

- Been in state care in place outside of England and Wales
- Ceased to be in state care because of being adopted.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual School Head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authorities looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these children. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents, and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

3. The role of the designated teacher

The designated teacher is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. This includes ensuring high expectations; monitoring progress; collaborating with social workers, carers, and the Virtual School Head; and ensuring safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly.

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4. The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

(a) The PEP and its importance

All looked-after children must have a care plan which 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.

- i. 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.
- ii. It 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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 team, although class and subject teachers would have considerable input. If the child has SEN, the SENCO will also contribute.
- v. 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.
- vi. It 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 team and the Virtual School 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 their pupils.
- vii. It will detail, and evaluate, the termly spend of the local authority additional funding (Pupil Premium Plus – PP+) that is provided to ensure that students make expected or better than expected progress.

(b) 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 will ensure that the designated team is notified and receives the up-to-date PEP as a matter of urgency.

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.

To make sure the child's PEP meets looked-after children's needs, the designated team 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 will form the basis for the development or the review and refinement of the PEP. Although the designated team will lead on the plan within the school, other staff in the school may need to contribute to it. The PEP is also likely to contain information about what the local authority and other agencies will do to support the child.

The designated team have 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 will:

- 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 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 and 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 4 in relation to English and Mathematics, and at achieving success in public examinations;
- 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;
- 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 team 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.

(c) Monitoring and reviewing the PEP in school

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

- judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing; and
- 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 team will be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them 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 will have access to the most up-to-date PEP. The IRO chairs the review meeting and is also responsible for monitoring the performance of the local authority's functions in respect of each review.

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 team 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; and
- they pass the updated PEP to the child's social worker and Virtual School 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 will be completed through a meeting involving the social worker, the young person, carers and other relevant parties, such as the Virtual School team.

(d) Transfer of the official school PEP record

The designated team 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; and that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most recent version of the PEP.

Settlebeck School will ensure that a transition meeting is scheduled to share information and provide a necessary introduction to the new child looked-after team at the new school/college.

(e) 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 teams will 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 team have a duty to promote their educational attainment. As part of this, the team will continue to maintain links with Virtual School Heads 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.

(f) 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 designated team will ensure that the child has completed their part of the PEP document prior to the review meeting and that this voice will be part of a regular sustained interaction of support with the school.

(g) Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Looked-after children and children adopted from care, on a special guardianship or child arrangements order are eligible for PP+ funding. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children and close the attainment gap between this group and their peers.

All pupil premium spending will take account of the specific needs of eligible pupils. Whilst there will be some overlap with needs of economically disadvantaged children who attract the pupil premium, looked-after and previously looked-after children's needs can be very different to others eligible for Pupil Premium. The extra funding provided by the PP+ reflects the significant additional barriers faced by looked-after and previously looked-after children. The designated team have an important role in ensuring the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by the school's staff and reflected in how the school uses PP+ to support these children.

For looked-after children, PP+ funding is managed by the Virtual School Head (VSH) for the purpose of supporting their educational achievement. The VSH and schools, including the Settlebeck designated team, will work together to agree how this funding can most effectively be used to improve looked-after children's attainment. All PEPs will include information about how that looked-after child is benefitting from the use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

For previously looked-after children, PP+ funding is managed by the child's school. The amount a school receives is based on the number of eligible children recorded in the school's annual January School Census return to the Department for Education.

For both looked-after and previously looked-after children PP+ is not a personal budget for individual children. The VSH and school manage their PP+ allocation for the benefit of their cohort of looked-after or previously looked-after children and according to children's needs.

The Settlebeck designated team will:

- for looked-after children, liaise with the VSH so that the team can contribute to decisions about how PP+ will support improving the child's educational outcomes;
- help raise previously looked-after children's parents' and guardians' awareness of the PP+ and other support for previously looked-after children - this includes encouraging parents of eligible previously looked-after children to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+ funding;
- play a key part in decisions on how the PP+ is used to support previously looked-after children; and
- encourage parents and guardians' involvement in deciding how the PP+ is used to support their child and be the main contact for queries about its use.

The PP+ can be used to facilitate a wide range of educational support for looked-after and previously looked-after children. It is important that interventions supported by pupil premium should be evidence based and in the best interests of the child.

5. Relationships beyond the School

(a) Family Arrangements

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. The designated team will 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.

The designated team will discuss with the child's social worker how the school will 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 the designated team to get to know those who have parental responsibility and encourage them to be actively involved in their child's education. At Settlebeck we will be open and accessible so that those with parental responsibility feel able to approach the designated team to discuss the support needs of their child.

(b) Working with local authority

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 consider the implications of any decision about the child's care which has implications for their education.

The local authorities Virtual School Head (VSH) is 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, the designated team will consider what arrangements the school should make to facilitate effective co-operation with other professionals, in particular the social worker, the Virtual School team and other supporting agencies 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 team at Settlebeck will 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 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 team will consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children. We will:

- 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 to minimise the disruption if a move in educational placement cannot be avoided; and
- make sure that if a looked-after child moves school the designated team 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 team 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.

(c) Working with carers and parents

A very important aspect of improving the achievement of looked-after children will be the relationship established by the carer with school staff.

The nature of the carer will vary depending on the type of care placement, e.g., a residential care worker for those looked-after children placed in a care home, or a foster carer for children placed with a family. The carer could be a member of the child's family, and some looked-after children are living with their parents – possibly as a prelude to returning home permanently from a care placement.

It will be important for Settlebeck school staff to have accurate and up-to-date information so that they know who should receive information between school and home.

The designated team will 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 team 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 Settlebeck School will consider what we can do to encourage and support carers in supporting the education of the children they look after.

The designated team will 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, 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, time- keeping and 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; and
- 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 team will work closely with their parents and guardians as they will understand their child's needs better than anyone else. The team will make themselves known to parents and guardians as someone they can talk to about issues affecting their child's education. They will 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 will be always respected

6. Behaviour and Exclusions

The past experiences of looked-after and previously looked-after children can impact on their behaviour, when applying the school's behaviour policy this will be taken into consideration.

Whenever possible Settlebeck School will avoid excluding any looked-afterchild, however:

- Where a looked-after child is at risk of either fixed term or permanent exclusion, the designated team will contact the relevant authority's Virtual School 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 team, working with the Virtual School and the child's carers, will 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.
- When a child leaves care, their past experiences may continue to impact on their behaviour. As with looked-after children, Settlebeck will 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 team will talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking the advice of the Virtual School on avoiding exclusion

7. Further information and Links

Useful resources and external organisations

- A good practice guide for parents: meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children ([Adoption UK](#))
- [*A good practice guide for schools: understanding and meeting the needs of children who are looked-after, fostered, adopted or otherwise permanently placed*](#) (PAC, 2013)

- [Become](#) (formerly The Who Cares? Trust)
- Framework and evaluation schedule: children in need of help and protection and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Boards, [Inspecting local authority children's services: framework](#) (Guidance, Ofsted)
- [Framework and evaluation schedule: children in need of help and protection and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Boards](#) (Ofsted 2017)
- National Association of Virtual School Heads
- [National Network for the Education of Care Leavers](#) - Higher education activities and resources for care leavers, children in care and those who support them
- [The National Children's Bureau](#)