



Education for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter applies to all Looked After Children and sets out the arrangements for the Walsall Virtual School, which is an education support service and a model by which we can provide services and support for the education of Looked After Children.

Note:- This chapter is being revised to reflect the Local authorities duty under Section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by Section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) to promote the educational achievement of Previously Looked After Children in their area by providing information and advice to:

- Any person who has parental responsibility for the child;
- Providers of funded early years education, designated teachers for Previously Looked After Children in maintained schools and academies; and
- Any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

The duty applies to children who are in early years' provision (secured by the local authority under Section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.

Previously Looked After Children are those children who are no longer Looked After in England and Wales because they are:

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 they are 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).

A Previously Looked After Child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep Previously Looked After Children safe. When dealing with Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken on concerns to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

1. Introduction

It is a high government priority to enhance the life chances and educational outcomes of children and young people in the care of the local authority, sometimes referred to as Looked After Children. At the present time the extent of the gap nationally between the outcomes of those in care and outcomes for all children is too large and this is very worrying as these children are our collective responsibility as probably the most vulnerable group of children and young people, through no fault of their own.

A Virtual School is a local authority education support service. It is a model by which we can provide services and support for the education of Looked After Children, those in the care of the local authority. The students are of course still educated in their own schools.

As leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their Looked After Children, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure that:

- Closing the attainment and progress gap between Looked After Children and their peers and creating a culture of high aspirations for them is a top priority;
- Looked After Children have access to a suitable range of high quality education placement options and that commissioning services for them takes account of the duty to promote their educational achievement;
- VSHs are in place and have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively;
- VSHs have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after.

2. What is a Virtual School?

The overriding purpose of the Virtual School is to improve educational attainment, progress; general outcomes and life chances of Looked After Children and young people by:

- Improving attendance;
- Raising attainment;
- Accelerating progress;
- Promoting positive participation.

Our specific objectives which together will help us achieve this aim are reflected by the targets that we set ourselves each year, i.e. seeking continuous improvement in the number of Looked After students who:

- Achieve the expected levels in 17 early learning goals at the end of reception
- Achieve the required standard in the KS1 phonics test
- Achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 1;
- Achieve the expected standard in reading writing and maths at the end of at KS2;

- Make at least expected progress between Key Stages
- Are entered for public examinations / tests;
- Achieve 5 4-9 grades including Maths and English at GCSE or equivalent;
- Achieve 5 5-9 GCSE grades including maths and English or equivalent;
- Have at least 90%+ attendance;
- Have a positive post 16 destination when they leave year 11 .

We will also seek to:

- Reduce the number of days Looked After students are excluded, fixed term and permanent, and ensure that excluded students receive alternative provision from day one;
- Secure objective evidence that:
 - Fewer students feel bullied at school;
 - There is increasing student involvement in extra curricular and extension activities;
 - Special Educational Needs are being met and appropriate interventions are implemented and reviewed in terms of the graduated response;
 - Fewer students do not have a school place at any one time;
 - The average time taken to secure a school place for a child is being reduced;
 - The average number of school days missed per term by children is falling;
 - The average number of school moves in any 12 week period is being reduced;
 - The number of children who have an up to date good quality PEP is increasing.

3. Virtual School

The Virtual School provides support and challenge to schools and education settings to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children and ensure each young person reaches their academic potential .

Together with the child's social worker the staff at the Virtual School will:

- Work with schools to raise the educational attainment and aspirations of Looked After Children;
- Promote and support positive participation in enrichment activities;
- Be a key point of contact for students and develop a working relationship to ensure progression;
- Provide in-class support for specific students
- Provide additional support and training for parents / carers;
- Work with staff and partner agencies to ensure that a holistic approach is adopted to support children and young people.
- Raise awareness of the impact of developmental trauma and unmet attachment needs on the education of looked after children

The VSH should ensure that there are effective systems in place to:

- Maintain an up-to-date roll of its Looked After Children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress;
- Inform headteachers and Designated Teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is Looked After by the VSH's local authority;
- Ensure that social workers, Designated Teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP;
- Ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes and that all Looked After Children, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP;
- Ensure the educational achievement of children Looked After by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare;
- Report regularly on the attainment of Looked After Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

Social workers, Virtual School Heads and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), school admission officers and Special Educational Needs departments should work together to ensure that - except in an emergency - appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement.

Governing bodies should ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's Looked After legal status (whether they are Looked After under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full Care Order), and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with Parental Responsibility.

They should also have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer. The designated safeguarding lead, through the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the Virtual School Head.

An up-to-date list of Designated Teachers should be maintained to assist with communications and assist other authorities that have placed children within the authority.

4. Walsall Looked After Children and Young People's Health Team

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust has a dedicated team to support the health needs of Walsall's Looked After Children and young people (CYP) wherever they may be placed. The team co-ordinate the required health assessments all CYP (for those under 5 years, this is every 6 months and for those over 5 years every year until the age of 18 years (up to 24 years if a need has been identified). The team also offer bespoke clinics and advice to foster carers, facilitating 'fast track' into specialist services.

The team offer an enhanced health service for this group with named professionals with responsibility to ensure the health needs for this vulnerable group are met. The Team

comprises of an administrator, designated doctor and nurse, named health professionals for Looked After Children and those in transition and leaving care.

5. Information, Advice and Guidance

The Virtual School employs a full time Careers Adviser who provides information, advice and guidance (IAG) to Looked After Children aged 14-19

The service offers consistent, confidential and impartial 1:1 support with a primary focus on progressing young people into post 16 education and training and ensuring that they gain the skills to enter sustainable employment.

6. Personal Education Plans

- Once a child / young person becomes Looked After a Personal Education Plan should be initiated as part of the Care Plan before the child becomes Looked After (or within 10 working days in the case of an emergency placement), and be available for the first Looked After Review meeting;
- The child / young person's social worker or a member of the Virtual School on behalf of the social worker will contact the school to arrange the PEP. The social worker will invite all relevant parties. A member of staff from the Virtual School will attend the first PEP meeting for any Looked After Child;
- The school's designated teacher is responsible for initiating the ePEP and all parties should ensure their section in the PEP is completed before the meeting takes place
- The Virtual School audits the Personal Education Plan and any concerns are imputed into the ePEP discussed at the Senior Managers meeting;
- The PEP should be reviewed termly but an Interim PEP may be called at any time if under performance, poor attendance / behaviour, and emotional social difficulties are impacting on attainment.

"The key mechanism for addressing the needs of the child or young person and improving their attainment is the PEP". It should set high expectations of rapid progress and put in place the additional support the child or young person needs in order to succeed. DCSF (2009), Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (Looked After Children).

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a statutory requirement for all Looked After Children which promote positive educational outcomes for the young person in achieving their full potential.

It is the overarching education plan for the young person which builds on the young person's views and brings together other education plans (such as the Individuals Education Plan, Pastoral Support Plan, Provision Map, EHCP) The PEP is also part of the Care Plan for young people in care.

Best examples of PEPs serve as a record of academic progress and achievement. They also show social and emotional development and clearly set and review short term

targets in support of longer term educational plans and aspirations held by the young person.

The PEP document is a record of important discussions relevant to education. This discussion must be between the young person, the school / setting, Social Worker, carers, parents (if appropriate) and any other significant adults.

PEP meetings highlight the importance of education planning for young people in care. This reflects the commitment of the Social Worker, the school / setting, carers and any other relevant agency such as the Virtual School, in taking joint responsibility for improving educational outcomes under the principles of corporate parenting.

Walsall Virtual School adopts reflective practice and the PEP has been developed through multi-agency evaluation and quality assurance and in consultation with multi-agency partners and young people.

Walsall has a commitment to promote the education of its entire young people in the care of the authority living both in and out of Walsall. We therefore seek to support all professionals in planning carefully to support the education of Looked After Children through training, quality assuring the PEP and constantly reviewing the PEP format design and guidance.

The PEP provides a continuous running record of the child's school history and identifies any additional and educational needs that they may have.

The PEP is an integral part of the Care Plan and must be reviewed termly or earlier if needed.

. In some circumstances, especially when a child / young person is not making progress, staff from the Virtual School for Looked After Children will assist in completing the PEP or attend the PEP meeting.

The PEP meeting usually takes place at the child / young persons school / provision. It is the responsibility of the social worker to invite parent / carers and other relevant people to the meeting.

The child's views are gathered by the young person's section of the PEP document. The child's views may be gathered using any format that is age appropriate but the views should be completed before the PEP meeting / review. This ensures that if a young person chooses not to attend his / her PEP meeting for any reason; their views have still been listened to. If any concerns are identified or requests for support it must be recorded in the PEP and followed up at PEP meetings.

The parent / carer also plays a significant role at the meeting and in supporting the child / young person to achieve actions identified thus aiding progress. The carer consultation enables carers to identify their involvement with school, their confidence in effectively supporting the education of the children in their care and identification of any training needs.

In Walsall we currently have an electronic PEP (ePEP)

- Early years - this records the child's progress from the beginning of nursery to the end of reception;
- Primary PEP records progress in years 1- 6;
- Secondary PEP for years 7-11; and the
- Post 16 PEP which is used once the young person leaves year 11.

A member of staff from the Virtual School will attend all first PEP meetings. If an education concern is identified they will continue to attend until the issue has been resolved. This could be in relation to behaviour, an identified special educational need, lack of / limited progress, etc.

The PEP should:

- Identify developmental (including any related to attachment) and educational needs (short and longer term) in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences.

Once written the PEP remains active and must be reviewed **termly**, in accordance with the child's needs and as part of the care planning and review process.

If an educational concern is raised before the next PEP review either by the school, young person, carer, Social Worker or Virtual school, aPEP meeting is held and is completed and attended by the Virtual School.

The child's social worker should work with the child's school between Looked After Reviews (involving the VSH if necessary) to ensure that up-to-date PEP information is fed into those reviews, and ensure that all relevant information about the child's educational progress and support needs is up-to-date and evidenced before the Looked After Review.

IROs should ensure that the PEP's effectiveness is scrutinised in sufficient detail as part of the Looked After Review and at other times if necessary. Where a child has Special Educational Needs, the IRO should ensure that the PEP review is linked with any review of those needs.

The IRO should raise any unresolved concerns about a child's PEP or education provision with social workers and the VSH.

Guidance on completing the PEP

Date and Time of Next Meeting: This needs to be booked at the beginning of the meeting. It will usually take place at the educational setting that the young person attends.

Meeting Attendance Sheet: Keeps a record of who attends the PEP meeting and who was invited to the meeting.

Personal Details: Provides full information on young person including type of placement, legal status, contact details and arrangements for school trips. It is imperative that **ALL** adults **ALLOWED** to collect the child from school are recorded.

School Information: Include child's year group, current school, a brief history of schools and personnel involved with the child / young person on a daily basis.

Attainment - Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post 16: A running commentary of the C/YP's progress must be recorded. This captures comprehensive information on past key stage attainment, current performance levels and predicted end of year targets.

The PEP must include the contact details of the Virtual School Head for the authority that looks after the child.

School Profile: Please comment on any issues, concerns and / or successes around attainment / motivation, relationships, behaviour, attendance and attendance.

Special Educational Needs: SEN Status: if the child / young person has **not** been identified as having a Special Educational Need. The SEN box should be ticked and an explanation of the child's needs and the interventions in place given.

To ensure that partnerships are working at their best, it is imperative that outside agencies involved with the child / young person (C/YP) are recorded. This list is not exhaustive but examples may be Educational Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, Advisory Teacher, Integrated Support Worker, and Child Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Attendance and Exclusions – provide information on attendance, punctuality and exclusions. An attendance print out should be available from school in order that all the required information can be recorded on the PEP.

It is not acceptable for a Looked After Child to be accessing a part time timetable (except where the child attends Nursery provision or it is part of a planned and time limited transition period), or for a child to be educated outside of the year group for their chronological age.

If despite advice and support a Looked After Child is excluded from school, schools are encouraged to provide 1st day provision to avoid the child / young person being sent home.

Extra Curricular Activities: This section celebrates the achievements / activities pursued by the young person after the school day. It also identifies whether the young person would benefit from other activities.

Secondary PEP only: There is a section to be completed for young people in years 9 - 11 regarding careers interviews and post 16 aspirations.

PEP Targets - targets set at the previous PEP must be reviewed.

Targets should be:

S - Specific - the target must say exactly what needs to be learnt or done if using p-levels or NC levels then level descriptors should be used as an aid.

M - Measurable - It must say exactly how this can be measured / assessed.

A - Achievable - The target must not be too hard or too large, better to have several small targets leading to a larger goal.

R - Realistic - It must be possible to get access to any support or resources needed to meet the target.

T - Timed - There should be a set time limit for achieving the target which could be anything from half a term to an academic year.

The targets should identify actions, with time scales, for specific individuals intended to support the achievement of the agreed targets and use of any additional resources (e.g. the pupil premium) specifically designated to support the attainment of Looked After Children.

Key principles in setting targets

- They should be clearly understood by pupils;
- They should be "owned" by those aiming for them;
- Pupils should sometimes be involved in setting their own targets;
- Each pupil should have appropriate targets;
- Each individual should not be faced with too many targets;
- Targets must be based on accurate information about prior achievement;
- There must be clearly understood need for improvement;
- Pupils should not simply be told what to do, but they must understand **why**;
- Having established targets, the teacher should keep referring to them;
- Target setting should be a cyclical process, with monitoring and evaluation built in.

For example:

Year 2

The area of learning is **Speaking and listening especially the use of tense**. The target may be: To speak in the past tense when talking about something that has happened (I ran all the way home).

Year 7

The area of learning is **Writing especially the lack of paragraphs / sectioning of work**.

To organise writing into clear sections or paragraphs considering the purpose and audience.

Year 1

The area of learning is **Knowing the alphabet**.

To know my whole alphabet

I will join in with the practice on the carpet everyday by sitting with everyone.

Mrs Jones will give me a sticker if I sit on the carpet for the practice.

I will get a sticker and Mrs Jones will phone Di (foster carer) when I achieve my target.

Year 11

To move from a 3 to a 4 for Science GCSE.

Talk to the learning mentor about my day and plan what coursework I need to do.
I will listen to the Science Teacher and talk only when I need to discuss the practical work with my Learning Buddy.
To buy a Science revision guide.
To go to the Science museum with foster carers.

7. The Pupil Premium for Looked After Children - Walsall Payment Arrangements

7.1 Introduction

The Virtual School receive £2435 for each child aged 5-16 who are looked after by Walsall local authority

Pupil premium is additional funding provided to enhance the child's education, raise aspirations and academic achievement and narrow the attainment gap between Looked After pupils and their non-looked after peers

£2345 is allocated for each Looked After Child, irrespective of how long they have been in care; however, this does not necessarily mean that Virtual School heads are expected to simply passport this amount of funding on to schools and schools cannot insist that they receive this amount of money for each Looked After Child. This funding is not a personal budget for each child so. The funding, however, should always be to support the educational achievement of the Looked After Child, as described in their Personal Education Plan and overseen by the designated teacher in the school.

The LA has discretion about how the Pupil Premium is used for children educated in non-mainstream or independent settings;

Children educated in Walsall but Looked After by another local authority, will receive their Pupil Premium from their 'home' authority, not Walsall MBC;

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.

For further information see:

- Ofsted Report - *The Pupil Premium – How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement*;
- Ofsted Report – *The Pupil Premium – Analysis and challenge tools for schools*.

8. Department for Education Guidance

The Department for Education (DFE) states that:

- Schools must give priority to Looked After Children on admissions;

- Each school should have a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children;
- Every Looked After Child should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP).

School governors have an important role to play within the corporate family in promoting the educational needs of Looked After Children on their school rolls.

Looked After Learners – A practical guide for school governors is in sections, each dealing with a phase or area in a child's life, where being Looked After may require the school's governing body to consider what action it may need to take. Each section sets out the key problems and challenges that Looked After Children, schools and the governing body may face. It offers practical advice, a set of key questions and a number of case studies that will help governing bodies and their schools to develop and implement policies and procedures that will be inclusive of Looked After Children to ensure that they will fulfil their potential.

For example:

- The school should be keeping its governing body regularly informed about the systems it has in place to support Looked After Children and also give regular reports on their academic progress and attendance. If this is not the case then please ask your head teacher or the designated teacher for the information;
- Within the school's public examinations results report in the Autumn Term, there should be a section on the achievements, attainment and progress, of Looked After Children at Key Stages One, Two, Three or Four, depending on the age of the student, and how well they have achieved in relation to other students, their progress, and the use and impact of interventions, including the use and impact of pupil premium funds, in closing the achievement gap on their peers;
- Each governing body might consider appointing a governor who is delegated to have specific responsibility for the Looked After Children attending the school.

Designated Teacher – The Roles and Responsibilities of The Designated Teacher – Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies

The role of school leaders and of designated teachers, is central to significantly improving the quality of life and the educational achievements of Looked After Children. They need to understand how the care of and the effectiveness of education for these young people are critical factors, ensuring that multi-agency working and corporate parenting are effective overall.

Government Guidance says that the designated teacher should be 'someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, who should advocate for Looked After Children, assessing services and support and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them'.

9. Training

9.1 Multi-Agency Training

Every term the Virtual School aims to organise and deliver multi-agency training for schools, social care and health colleagues and parents / carers. We are keen to deliver a programme that is useful, relevant and informative.

We also provide training for newly qualified teachers and governors. To help us to plan effective training you can let us know your preferences on the length, content and format of sessions and frequency of training. Please contact the Virtual School - walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

9.2 PEP Workshops

The Virtual School provides briefing sessions for social workers (including newly qualified social workers) regarding Personal Education Plan meetings and completion of quality PEPs. The session includes:

- Knowing what a SMART Target is;
- Understanding how to show progress in the pupil profile;
- Know what is expected from others attending the meeting;
- Being well prepared for the PEP meeting;
- Knowing if the young person should be on the SEN code of Practice;
- Understanding the attainment levels.

A maximum of 4 people per session.

For further information or to book a place contact Lorraine Thompson on or thompsonlorraine@walsall.gov.uk.

Parents / carers are now encouraged to attend briefings to enable them to be more proactive from an informed perspective at PEP meetings.

10. School Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential if pupils are to:

- Achieve their full potential;
- Is the key to enabling pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them in order to fulfil the potential of each individual.

The Virtual School will work in partnership with the child / young person, attendance service, parents / carers, schools and social workers to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

This policy takes into account the:

- Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Disability Discrimination;
- Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

Legal Framework

- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents / carers must ensure that pupils of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise;
- A pupil is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A pupil ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16;
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents / carers secure education for pupils of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session;
- The register must record whether the pupil was present, absent, present at approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Categorising Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is **authorised** or **unauthorised**:

- Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents / carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received;
- Parents / carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note in the home / school contact book, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents / carers, pupils and all corporate parents.

The Virtual School will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents / carers, social workers and corporate parents;
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents / carers;
- Ensure that there is a whole Virtual School approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve;
- ;

- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with;
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource;
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Pupils, Schools and Families as required and on time;
- ;
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site and out of the borough are implemented;
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence;
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions;
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families;
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

Request that Parents / Carers will:

- Contact the school if their pupil is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible;
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours;
- Ask the school / Virtual School for help if their pupil is experiencing difficulties regarding school attendance;
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their pupil's attendance;
- The Virtual School will not support any requests for holiday during school term time and parents and carers should discuss any holiday plans with their child's social worker;
- Avoid taking their pupil on holiday during term-time, where this is unavoidable; send a written leave request to the young person's social worker **in advance of booking the holiday**.

All pupils' attendance will be monitored half termly. Once a child's attendance drops below 90% their attendance will be monitored weekly or daily if the child has missed 15 days or more. This information is shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. If there is not a good reason for a child not attending school. i.e. illness, placement move a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer where a home visit will be made if necessary.

Virtual School Attendance Monitoring Process

- The attendance of all Walsall Looked After Children is collected on a half termly basis.
- If a child / young person is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee the Personal Education Plan should be recalled to identify any attendance issues and put in strategies to improve the attendance;

- If a child / young person has persistent absence a referral to the Education Welfare Officer for Looked After Children is made and a home visit is carried out;
- When a Looked After Child is given a fixed term exclusion the school is contacted for the reason of the exclusion and reminded that first day provision should be used;
- Unauthorised absences are recorded and followed up with schools and parents/carers.

Holidays During Term Time

Walsall Children's Services and the Virtual School does not support holidays for Looked After Children during school term time. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on coursework they have missed; this may affect test results and can be a particular problem for children in the last year of their schooling.

Any parent / carer who is considering arranging a holiday during term time, must get permission from the Director of Children's social care before booking any holiday.

11. Exclusions from School

At the Virtual School we seek to avoid the exclusion of any Looked After Child. However, if this is the decision made by a Head teacher, it is expected that where it is appropriate for the child, then 1st day provision at another school is sought. If school does arrange 1st day provision at another educational establishment, this should be marked as a 'D' on the register at the home school.

If a child is excluded for any reason the parent / carer and or social worker should inform the Virtual School. The reason for exclusion will need to be investigated so that the most appropriate support / intervention can be put in place. A PEP maybe called at this point.

12. Provision for 2 Year Olds

In May 2012 the Government confirmed that two-year-olds who live in households which meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals will be entitled to a free early education place, along with children who are Looked After by the state.

The government's aspiration is that all eligible two-year-olds are able to receive early education in good and outstanding settings. Good quality childcare gives children a head start even before they walk through the school gates for the first time. No child should miss out on this just because of the circumstances of their birth.

Research shows that two year olds who attended high quality childcare made more progress than children from similar backgrounds that remained at home or attended lower quality provision. The quality of childcare can make a big difference to the development of young children, especially the most vulnerable.

The Virtual School works with parents / carers, social workers and early year's settings to enable Looked After Children to access good or outstanding early year's provision if deemed appropriate. For more information contact the Virtual School.

13. Enrichment Projects

As part of our continuing efforts to raise the attainment of Looked After Children we involve Looked After Children in various projects. The success of these projects is dependent upon the positive promotion and active involvement of social workers, parents / carers, IROs and corporate parents.

The Virtual School will change / implement new projects following analysis of need, academic data and the changing cohort of children / young people.

Early Years

The Early Years Enrichment project involves sending early years Looked After Children in nursery and reception six project packs.

The programme reflects partnership between the Virtual School and foster carers. The packs are sent out at intervals of six to eight weeks usually arriving during the school holidays. Included in the packs are evaluation sheets for both children and carers. These give feedback to the Virtual School on how successful the materials offered were used.

Objectives

- To enrich the home life experiences of early years Looked After Children and to engage their carers in sharing learning activities;
- To support personal, social and emotional development and promote self-confidence, self-awareness, manage feelings and behaviour;
- To encourage an appreciation and enjoyment of books;
- To provide themed activities to improve physical development during fine motor and cognitive skills;
- To help develop communication and language skills in the aspect of speaking, understanding, attention and listening;
- To develop and improve mathematical ability during number, shape, space and measure activities;
- To improve educational outcomes, narrow the gap and support accelerated learning for all children and young people.

The packs contain activities to support all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: Inspiring and motivating books.

- Suggestions for sharing the books to support personal, social and emotional development e.g. topics to talk about, exercises etc;
- Associated oral games, rhymes, songs and actions etc;
- Activities to help develop physical development during fine motor activities e.g. colouring, cutting, sticking;

- Early Years maths, expressive arts and design, understanding the world and communication and language activities.

The resources provided are intended to improve the engagement of early year's learners and to actively promote learning together as fun! Activities that accompany each book are intended to be used across several weeks so that they can fit in seamlessly into learning and leisure time with the foster carer.

Some of the packs will also contain expendable resources such as chubby crayons, triangular pencils, scissors, glue sticks, etc. The children can keep all the books and resources provided. All resources and activities are age appropriate. (Differentiated)

Reading Project (A book in a bag) – primary aged pupils

Aim

The programme reflects partnership between the Virtual School, and foster carers. The packs are sent out once a term and include book review forms for both children and carers to give feedback on how the materials were used.

Objectives

- To enrich the home life experiences of Looked After Children and to engage their carers in sharing learning activities;
- To encourage an appreciation and enjoyment of books;
- To help develop speaking, attention and listening skills;
- To improve educational outcomes for children and young people.

The project will involve sending primary aged Looked After Children three project packs during the year, one every term.

Our data reveals that areas of literacy at Key Stage 2 are fragile. The project also builds on the Early Years Enrichment Project and provides a continuum of support for Looked After Children addressing literacy and speech, language and communication. It is a practice which we wish to embed with carers and Looked After Children.

The packs will contain:

- A inspiring and motivating book;
- Suggestions for sharing the book (things to talk about, exercises etc.);
- Book review.

The resources provided are intended to improve the engagement of KS2 learners and to actively promote reading together as fun!

To help us monitor the project we will be asking young people to return a simple book review form before the next pack is scheduled to be sent out.

Out of Hours Learning Activities

Walsall Children's Services and the Virtual School actively promotes Looked After Children engaging positively in out of hours learning / activities. There are specific questions included in the PEP to enable children / young people to:

- Highlight activities they attend;
- Ones which they would like to attend; and
- Any barriers which need to be addressed which are preventing access to an activity.

It is important that children and young people are encouraged to participate in as wide a range of activities as possible. This will include:

- Encouraging an active interest in sport through the regular attendance at clubs and after school activities;
- Attending sporting events;
- Helping a child / young person pursue their interest in music through its appreciation or by playing an instrument;
- Visiting art galleries and museums;
- Attending the theatre and cinema.

14. When to Contact the Virtual School

When a child / young person:

- Becomes Looked After;
- Moves school;
- At risk of exclusion;
- Refuses to attend school / provision;
- Requires support with school work;
- Advises being bullied;
- Not making academic progress;
- Careers, advice and guidance;
- Behaviour impacting on learning;
- Enrichment activities;
- Training needs;
- Educational advice and support;
- PEP support and advice.

From 1 September 2014, governing bodies have a statutory duty to make arrangements to support pupils at school with medical conditions. The Designated Medical Officer can support schools with these duties. For more information, see [Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions \(2014\): Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England \(DfE\)](#).

15. Information Sharing

VSHs should have access to a secure email account that enables them to exchange information securely with other VSHs in whose area they have placed children.

Arrangements for sharing reliable data must be in place, particularly in relation to the tracking and monitoring of attainment data and notifications of where children, including those placed out-of-authority, are being educated, and must set out:

- Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured;
- How children and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them;
- How carers contribute to and receive information;
- Mechanisms for sharing information between relevant local authority departments and schools;
- How relevant information about individual children is passed promptly between authorities, departments and schools when young people move. Relevant information includes the PEP, which as part of the Looked After Child's educational record should be transferred with them to the new school.

16. Related Information

[Children and Young People Aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Procedure](#)

Also see following government guidance:

[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools - Guidance \(DfE\)](#)

[Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions \(2014\): Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England \(DfE\)](#)

[Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children and Previously Looked- After Children](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory Guidance for Organisations who work with and Support Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(2015\)](#)

[Personal Education Allowances for Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#), published in 2008

[Guidance on Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs placed out-of-authority](#), published in 2009



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