

Residential Education Policy



Educational Achievement For Looked After Children

‘As corporate parents, local authorities must demonstrate the strongest possible commitment to helping every looked after child, wherever they are placed, to achieve the highest possible educational standards the child possibly can. This includes supporting their aspirations so that they have all the help necessary to progress into further and higher education.’ (2.114 - Children Act 1989 – Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5: Children’s Homes).

Legislation

[Children’s Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)

[Promoting the education of looked-after children Statutory Guidance for local authorities 2014](#)

[Participation of young people: education, employment and training](#)

[1989 Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children’s Homes \(2013 as amended\)](#)

[Children Act 2004](#)

[Keeping children safe in education](#)

AMENDMENT

This chapter was reviewed and links were updated in the February 2016 edition of the manual.

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1. Mission Statement

"As Corporate Parents Walsall Children's Services is committed to promoting a learning culture to enable young people to gain maximum life chances from formal and informal education."

- We will have high expectations for the young people it looks after;
- We aim to support young people to manage formal educational placements, by providing practical and emotional support, and learning opportunities;
- We will liaise with professional networks to ensure that all young people in their care have appropriate education provision that meets their needs;
- We will advocate on behalf of all young people with regards to their educational needs;
- We will promote a positive attitude to education recognising the value of learning through informal alternative approaches as well as formal provision. This includes the wider curriculum and out of school hours provision;
- We will consult young people in decisions about their education;
- We will ensure that no young people are discriminated against because of their age, gender, ethnicity, ability or any other factor, and that all young people have the support to achieve their potential. Any act of discrimination will be challenged.

2. Introduction

2.1 References to educational policy and procedure for young people in residential care include:

- Walsall Virtual School for Looked After Children Strategic Plan;
- Corporate Parent Strategy;
- White Paper - Care Matters;
- Personal Education Plan - The PEP Process Explained;

- Working Together - Listening To The Voices of Children & Young People;
- Children Act 1989 – Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5: Children’s Homes;
- Children’s Homes Regulations 2015.

2.2 In line with the requirements set out in the Government Guidance (Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care) Residential Children's Homes need to compile an education policy which lays out the Home's provision for:

- Regular school attendance;
- Homework support;
- Regular supported reading;
- Monitoring and support of Personal Educational Plans.

2.3 All staff will positively promote the education of young people.

3. Regular School Attendance

All young people are expected to attend school and there will be a proactive approach from staff to achieve this.

3.1 Each evening shift will identify a member of staff responsible for assisting a young person to get ready for school the next morning. Uniform and other items should be prepared the night before wherever possible.

3.2 Details of equipment that a young person needs to take to school on any particular day will be listed in their weekly plan, i.e. sportswear, cooking ingredients, completed homework.

3.3 Details of a young person’s uniform requirement are to be included in a young person’s Residential **Placement Plan**.

3.4 Staff will endeavour to arrange regular appointments such as therapy and meetings at which a young person is expected to attend out of school hours to minimise the disruption to school attendance.

3.5 There may be occasions when a member of staff would accompany a young person to school and remain with them as part of a support package (e.g. introductions to a new school). This would be in agreement with all parties involved.

3.6 Transport to and from school needs to be arranged as far in advance as possible. The young person and the school need to be made aware of any changes in who is taking or collecting them from school. This information should be recorded in the Personal Education Plan. It is important that the young person arrives at school on time.

3.7 Sickness

Staff should inform school on the first morning and successive mornings if appropriate that the young person is ill. If sickness continues, depending on the nature of the illness, other professionals may need to be informed.

3.8 Details of the Designated Teacher will be noted on the Residential Placement Plan and a copy of the Personal Education Plan for each young person attached

3.9 Holidays will be arranged to fit with school holiday dates. There may be exceptional circumstances where a young person would go away in term time. This would need to be in agreement with the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

4. New Placements

4.1 When students join the home as a planned move, the Virtual School needs to know as soon as possible in advance, so that an educational package can start as soon as the young person arrives.

4.2 Once an educational placement is established, residential staff will:

- Inform the Virtual School of the placement;
- Do all they can to ensure the young person attends e.g. provision of transport;
- Contact the Youth Service (YPS) and as appropriate, to work with the young person;
- Involve other agencies as necessary to provide support.

4.3 Points to Consider

- The Social Worker needs to be as active as possible when they have a young person in a residential placement;
- The Virtual School is a support and not a primary provider, and first responsibility for education will be with the school, New Leaf, Shepwell or the SEN Team;
- Where a young person is still of compulsory school age, there needs to be a particularly concerted effort to engage him/her in education and there cannot be

too big an emphasis on allowing the young person independence at this age;

- Residential staff should ensure that transport is arranged for necessary education based and liaison meetings;
- Education providers should provide residential staff with extra work as needed for young people, which they can supervise at the home;
- The aim is that the culture at the home is one where it is accepted by young people that they will access education off site on a regular basis;
- In certain circumstance funding/resources maybe required to enable the young person to access education i.e. transport, school uniform, alternative placements. This will be discussed at the 72 hour Post Placement meeting and the PEP meeting and relevant services will be contacted to secure appropriate funding. A member of the Virtual School should be invited to this meeting.

5. School Refusal/Truancy/Non-Attendance

5.1 A young person may be away from full time formal education for a number of reasons:

- Exclusion from school (permanent or fixed term);
- Sick or ill young people (long term);
- No full time provision available;
- Bullying;
- Emotional distress (following trauma or emotional upheaval);
- Mental health issues (e.g. depression or social phobia);
- Truancy.

It may be that we need a different approach for each scenario. The commitment to providing quality education will remain the same.

5.2 In the event of school refusal staff need to contact:

- The Designated Teacher for the school;
- The Virtual School;
- The parents (where appropriate);
- The Social Worker.

This should happen on the first day of refusal / truancy / non-attendance.

If there is continued absence an educational planning meeting must take place, attended by the child, the Designated Teacher or the form teacher, the carer, the Social Worker, Education Welfare Officer and the Virtual School in order to review the Personal Education Plan. Strategies will be put in place to re-integrate the young person back into education.

In exceptional circumstances when a young person is at home the Virtual School will liaise with residential staff to organise a short-term programme. This should include:

- The young person being supervised during the activities organised for the day;
- The educational activities provided at the Home will prioritise literacy and numeracy skills;
- There will be a clear structure to the day with planned breaks;
- No access to television except as part of the educational programme;
- A room will be provided where a young person is able to work with minimal disruption;
- A computer will be available to young people. The school will provide suitable material.

5.3 If a young person is on 'long term sickness' and has been declared medically unfit to attend school a referral will be made by the Designated Teacher to the Shepwell Centre (01902 632719) to arrange home tuition.

5.4 When a young person is on the role of a school, the school will have the key responsibility for providing suitable educational resources/work for the young person to complete.

6. Support For Homework and Learning

6.1 All staff will be responsible for creating an environment within the Home that will support and encourage learning.

This 'learning environment' will acknowledge the educational value of all positive experiences and value and support the children's personal development and achievement.

6.2 Where a young person does not have formal homework, alternative social and cultural educational activities could be provided where this is felt appropriate. The young person's **Care Plan** will outline their needs. Social and cultural educational activities might include: - swimming, visits to museums, art galleries etc.

6.3 A young person's residential keyworker will obtain a copy of the school or education providers' homework schedule, which will then be placed in a young person's current file

and entered on to their weekly plan.

- 6.4 Each Home is responsible for acquiring the basic resources necessary to enable a young person to do homework; this may include reference books, computer programmes, desks and stationery. The Home should also ensure that any computer equipment is made available as a priority for the completion of homework.
- 6.5 Staff need to make space and time available for young people studying for exams. Support at this time is crucial. Each Home is responsible for ensuring there is adequate revision material and will promote access to suitable revision courses run by either the school or the Virtual School. Staff should contact school for a copy of a young person's examination timetable.
- 6.6 Each Home is responsible for considering any special provision that may be necessary for young people with identified special educational needs to complete their homework such as the provision of computers for young people with Specific Learning Difficulties and the use of interpreters for those young people where English is not their first language.
- 6.7 During school holidays, staff will endeavour to provide a range of social and learning educational opportunities for young people.

7. Regular Supported Reading

- 7.1 Young people will be encouraged to buy books for themselves to read and keep.
- 7.2 The Home should encourage an ethos of reading, through the purchase of papers, magazines and books for the home as a whole, reading of stories to young people and the purchase of a weekly magazine for each young person. A range of magazines should be provided to cover a variety of needs and interests.
- 7.3 Staff will make time to read to, and with young people and should encourage young people to read to them.
- 7.4 Story tapes may be used as an alternative to books.
- 7.5 Each young person should be encouraged to have a library card and staff should promote the use of the library for reading material/reference books for schoolwork, music, computer and internet use.

8. Monitoring and Support of Personal Education Plans

- 8.1 The residential keyworker should ensure that a current copy of the young person's **Personal Education Plan** is kept in their current file and that appropriate information from it is transferred to their Residential Placement Plan. The keyworker will liaise with the social worker and/or Designated Teacher to ensure this happens within 20 school days of a child being admitted to the home.
- 8.2 A copy of a young person's Personal Education Plan should be given to the Residential Home prior to admission, if appropriate.
- 8.3 The residential keyworker should be involved with any review of the Personal Educational Plan and to highlight any required changes to the Designated Teacher and Social Worker. Where a young person has no Personal Education Plan clear guidance and a summary of action for the completion of the Personal Education Plan is available outlining roles and responsibilities.
- 8.4 Staff will support young people with the development and implementation of their Personal Education Plans and **Pathway Plans**.

9. Liaison between Schools, Families and Residential Homes

- 9.1 Contact is made with a young person's school and the Designated Teacher either before, or within 24 hours of a young person's admission or move within care, to advise of changes in circumstances, to share information and to establish future liaison arrangements.
- 9.2 A member of staff (keyworker or other) and a parent, where appropriate, should attend all parents' evenings and consultation meetings and where possible other school activities.
- 9.3 The residential keyworker has lead responsibility within the Home for liaison with education providers. Regular, informal contact is extremely important. It demonstrates an active interest in the educational progress of young people.
- 9.4 A member of the Virtual School must be invited to attend the young person's pre-admissions or the post placement (72hr) meetings.
- 9.5 The Designated Teacher, and where appropriate, the Virtual School will be invited to the young person's **Looked After Review**.
- 9.6 The young person's Care Plan should clearly state arrangements for a young person's educational attendance, transport arrangements and contact names and addresses within the school.

- 9.7 Where appropriate the Home should encourage the young person's parents to be actively involved in their education. Parents should be informed of significant dates in the school calendar and achievements of the young person.
- 9.8 The residential keyworker should immediately alert the Social Worker and the Virtual School to educational issues and problems so that their respective roles and responsibilities can be agreed.
- 9.9 In conjunction with the young person's Social Worker, the Home should immediately alert the school to any instances of bullying.
- 9.10 The Home should keep copies of records of achievement, certificates and progress files. All achievements should be recognised by staff verbally and the young person's Social Worker should also be informed.
- 9.11 Young people will be encouraged to attend and participate in their **Looked After Reviews**.
- 9.12 Information about a young person's background history or current difficulties should only be shared with the Designated Teacher or in their absence another appropriate person. The information shared with the rest of the staff team would be on a need to know basis. Young people should be made aware of who holds such information.
- 9.13 The young person's Social Worker should be involved in the planning and implementation of educational provision and should ensure that the Personal Education Plan is completed and in place.
- 9.14 Communication between members of staff within the Home is essential to ensure plans are implemented effectively and to avoid too many people being involved in checking up/advising the young people over the same issue i.e. homework.
- 9.15 Staff need to be aware of the rules within which a school operates in order to help the young person understand and work within them.
- 9.16 With regard to school leavers, staff will ensure that the young people do not take up active employment until the school year has officially ended.
- 9.17 Staff should be fully aware of all school holiday dates. A clear note should be made in the main diary.
- 9.18 When a young person is starting a new school, the Designated Teacher will arrange an induction meeting, involving the young person, the young person's Social Worker, staff

from the home, the Virtual School and the young person's parents where appropriate.

- 9.19 If it is felt that a young person would benefit from extra subject tuition or mentoring or activity in the wider curriculum, staff should raise this with the Virtual School.
- 9.20 The Virtual School can be consulted regarding relevant training that could be provided to staff to help them support young people through their education.
- 9.21 Each Home will keep an updated list (obtained from the Virtual School) of Designated Teachers for Children in Care for reference.

10. Health and Health Education

- 10.1 Staff will inform a school of any health issues regarding a young person on a need to know basis.
- 10.2 If medication is to be taken into school, staff will inform the Designated Teacher or relevant other staff, giving clear instructions regarding dosage etc. Each school has a clear policy on the administration of medication. Clear arrangements will need to be made to ensure it is administered correctly. In consultation with the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, only medication prescribed four or more times daily or "as and when needed" should be taken into school.
- 10.3 Working alongside the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, staff will promote Health Education within the Home.

11.The Role of Young People

11.1 Subject to age and level of ability, young people will:-

- Prepare for school (e.g. uniforms, books);
- Attend school/educational resource as required;
- Take advantage of all the different educational opportunities offered to them;
- Raise relevant issues regarding their education, particularly when there are problems at school;
- With the help of an advocate where required, attend and contribute to their Reviews and Personal Education Plan;
- Complete homework as required;

- Pass all school letters, forms and information to staff;
- Participate in behaviour monitoring programmes where appropriate.

12. Educational Activities

12.1 It is important that staff provide young people with and encourage young people to participate in as wide a range of educational activities as possible. This will include:

- Encouraging an active interest in sport through the regular attendance at clubs and after school activities;
- Attending sports events;
- Playing sports with the young people;
- Helping a 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;
- Attending regional or national events of cultural interest e.g. Chinese New Year celebrations.

Care Plans should reflect that young people are being encouraged to develop current and new interests. There are projects to develop opportunities for young people to become involved in sport and cultural activities.

12.2 There is a commitment to encourage and enable young people to attend trips/holidays organised by the school. This may at times require a staff member to accompany the young person.

13. Young People with Special Educational Needs

13.1 The Designated Teacher is responsible with the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) for the school, for ensuring that a young person's special educational needs are assessed under the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. The Social Worker, carers and parents will be involved in this process.

13.2 The Personal Education Plan will give details of the needs of a young person and support already provided for them and will provide the rationale for planning future action (i.e. extra tuition) and will note all achievements.

13.3 For children or young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the SEN Department should be contacted on 01922 652863 regarding a school place.

14. Work Experience, Interviews/College/Training/Employment

14.1 All young people in Key Stage 4 will be offered the opportunity of work experience. Communication between Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), School and the Home is essential if the placement is to run smoothly.

14.2 The Home will ensure that the young person is dressed appropriately and is responsible for arranging transport to and from the placement. This can be a stressful experience for a young person and they will require additional support. They may even wish to be taken there on the first day.

14.3 **Personal Advisers** will be responsible for supporting and preparing young people for job/college interviews and will ensure that they arrive in good time.

14.4 The Virtual School/IAG and social worker will provide additional support and guidance through this process.

14.5 Staff from the Home in partnership with the Virtual School, Social Worker and Personal Adviser will provide on-going support and encouragement in post 16 placements. If a young person is experiencing difficulties, and is at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) they will work with the relevant agencies and providers to address barriers to engagement.

14.6 Young people who are NEET will receive intensive support and guidance to identify a career pathway in a bid to secure education, employment or training. This will be coordinated by the young person's Personal Adviser/Social Worker.

It should be noted that Walsall College provide additional support and guidance for looked after children and care leavers. There are access courses that young people can enrol on to provide them with the necessary skills and qualifications to ensure progression into recognised careers.