Designated teacher policy (looked-after and previously looked-after children)

Overley Hall School

Approved by:	Support & Scrutiny Board, Proprietor	**Date:**	07/09/2026
Next review due by:	06/09/2027		

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1. Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this too
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for

1.2 We recognise our duty of care towards all of the pupils placed at Overley Hall School and endeavour to provide a caring, nurturing and stimulating environment which offers unconditional acceptance. All young people at Overley Hall School are valued and their individuality is celebrated. We understand the importance of multi-agency partnerships and sharing of information in order to meet the needs of a child including 'Looked After' children. We believe that both Education and Residential departments must work closely together to support maximum progress. Progress can be further enhanced by school having good links with parents, social workers and associated professionals. We understand that much of the information involving 'Looked After' pupils is sensitive and we are mindful to the fact that access to information needs to be in the best interests of the child and on a need to know basis. We recognise the need for confidentiality and share information in accordance with the underlying ethos of the Children's Act 1989.

1.3 All children in our care, including 'Looked After' children are vulnerable children, and monitoring systems outlined in the school policies such as: Behaviour Management and Anti-bullying policies, and monitoring systems that enable us to review and evaluate individual pupil development and modify approaches at an early stage if difficulties arise. We work in close collaboration with parents and carers to ensure that the highest quality educational opportunities are offered, special needs of individual pupils are met, recognise, and celebrate the educational achievements of all our pupils

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

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

It also takes into account section 20 and section 20A of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities February 2018
- Court orders and pre-proceedings - For local authorities April 2014
- The children's act 1989
- Statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children 2014, updated February 2018 Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Statutory guidance: The DfE published Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 in March 2026
- Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015.

Children and Social Work Act 2017

2017 Chapter 16: Looked After Children (Part 1 Chapter 1)

Corporate parenting principles

(1) A local authority in England must, in carrying out functions in relation to the children and young people mentioned in subsection

(2) have regard to the need –

a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.

b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

c) To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.

d) To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.

e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

f) For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education work.

g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3. Definitions

Looked-after children are registered pupils that are:

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

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer.

Each UK nation has a slightly different definition of a looked after child and follows its own legislation, policy and guidance. But in general, looked after children are:

- living with foster parents
- living in a residential children's home or
- living in residential settings like schools or secure units.

Scotland's definition also includes children under a supervision requirement order. This means that many of the looked after children in Scotland are still living at home, but with regular contact from social services.

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people enter care.

- The child's parents might have agreed to this – for example, if they are too unwell to look after their child or if their child has a disability and needs respite care.
- The child could be an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them.
- Children's services may have intervened because they felt the child was at significant risk of harm. If this is the case the child is usually the subject of a court-made legal order.

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, returns home or turns 18. However local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21.This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

(Taken from NSPCC website)

Definitions:

What is a care order?

When a child is made the subject of a care order, the local authority has legal responsibility for the child.

As parents you continue to have parental responsibility. However, the local authority can limit your parental responsibility if this is necessary in the interests of the child's welfare.

The local authority will decide where your child should live - this will normally be away from home.

(CAB Website)

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

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them

- A special guardianship order
- An adoption order

- They appear to the governing board to have:
  - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Other Types of order

Children Act 1989

No child can be taken into care without a court order or Section 20 Voluntary Care agreed by the parent(s), that grants responsibility to the local authority. Magistrates in the Family Proceedings Court usually issue court orders although more complicated cases may be held in the county or high court. A number of different orders may be made depending on the child's circumstances.

These include:

- Care Orders - Made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, Care Orders are applied for when the local authority believes a threshold of 'Significant Harm' has been reached. Care Orders continue until the child is 18 unless they are discharged earlier. The Care Order allows the local authority to decide where the child will live and with whom. It gives the local authority parental responsibility for the child and the power to determine the extent to which the child's parents and others with parental responsibility may exercise their responsibility, where this is necessary to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.
- Supervision Orders - These are made under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, Supervision Orders may be used to if they require the supervised child to live at a specified place, meet certain people (e.g. their social worker) at certain times or to participate in certain activities at certain times. Supervision Orders last for one year.

- Emergency Protection Orders - Made under Section 44 of the Children Act 1989, these orders are issued to ensure the short-term safety of a child. They are usually made when the child protection team feels it needs urgent access to the child. In exceptional circumstances, an EPO may be granted without notice to the parents. EPO's are granted for a maximum of eight days, with a possible extension of a further seven days, up to a maximum of 15 days.

- Secure Accommodation Orders - Made under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989, these orders permit a local authority to place a child or young person who is looked after by the local authority in secure accommodation. They are usually used for children with a history of running away or who may be a risk to themselves or others. They maximum period that can be authorized for a child to be kept in secure accommodation is three months on the first application and then for periods of up to six months thereafter. Children under the age of 13 cannot be held in secure accommodation without the consent of the Secretary of State. A child may also be taken into care for police protection, remand or detention under section 21 of the Children Act 1989, or through involvement in the youth justice system.

- Voluntary care agreements - Another way of entering care is for voluntary accommodation arrangements to be made under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. These are made with the consent of parents and often at their own request. Under these arrangements, the local authority does not acquire parental responsibility, but undertakes day-to-day parental responsibilities.

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 authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Role and responsibilities

Our designated teacher (DT) for Looked After Children is: Peter Smith (Teacher) You can contact them by email: Petersmith@overleyhall.com Lorna Deakin (SENCO) You can contact them by email: lornadeakin@overleyhall.com

Administrator and co-ordination of PEPs for Looked After Children: Lorna Deakin (SENCO) You can contact them by email: lornadeakin@overleyhall.com

Our designated teachers take lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

4.1 Responsibility of the Head Teacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below. It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of Looked After Children and act where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- To monitor the use of Pupil Premium monies.

4.2 Responsibility of the Designated Teacher

The following is based on the responsibilities listed in the DfE's statutory guidance. Although the designated teacher must always have lead responsibility, the school can decide how individual functions, including pastoral and administrative tasks, can be appropriately delegated.

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
  - Working with VSHs
  - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
  - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
  - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils
- Ensure that:

- A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
- PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
- The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan

- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding
- Access training and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them
- Liaise with VSHs to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children, including encouraging them to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

Relationships beyond the school.

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
    - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
    - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
    - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
    - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
    - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
    - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
    - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
    - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
    - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion

<u>The responsibilities of all Staff</u>

All our staff will:

Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all pupils.

- Maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.

- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children.

4.3 Responsibility of the Scrutiny and Support Board (SAS Board)

Procedures: the SAS Board will:

- Monitor the academic progress of Looked After Children, through an annual report
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Head Teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are recognised and met.

5. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Lorna Deakin (SENCO) and ratified by the Support and Scrutiny Board.

6. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Exclusions
- SEN
- Supporting pupils with medical needs

Useful Links

Telford and Wrekin Council
https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20642/virtual_school_for_children_in_care

Shropshire Council

https://shropshire.gov.uk/looked-after-children/shropshire-virtual-school/

Staffordshire
https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Virtual-school/Home.aspx

Central Bedfordshire
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schools-and-education/virtual-school

Northamptonshire
https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/virtual-school

Leicestershire

https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/leicestershire-virtual-school

Westminster

https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/kb5/rbkc/fis/service.page?id=wYXkhp6DHiA

Birmingham

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/bvs

Buckinghamshire

https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/the-virtual-school/

Solihull

Solihull virtual school

Essex

Essex Virtual School | Essex Schools Infolink

Peterborough

Welcome to Peterborough Virtual School