



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

DESIGNATED TEACHER

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The Education of Children and Young People who are/were Looked After by Local Authorities

Key Principle

Corporate parenting – the role of the school

Schools have duties and roles under the auspices of the corporate parent.

Corporate parenting; the local authority has a moral and legal duty to do everything a good parent would do.

Corporate parent; the local authority as a whole, including wider services such as health and the agencies who work on behalf of the local authorities such as independent fostering providers. Ultimately the elected lead member and the Director of Children's Services are responsible for the outcomes of looked after children.

Four important duties for local authorities

In regard to looked after children's educational achievement, local authorities must ensure that:

- Looked after children have educational outcomes comparable to their peers;
- All local authority processes demonstrate a proactive commitment to educational outcomes for looked after children;
- All looked after children are encouraged to have high expectations;
- There is sufficient training and support for all local authority staff to facilitate understanding of the needs of looked after children.

The importance of the designated teacher's role is reflected by its place in legislation and statutory guidance. (The Children and Young People's Person's Act 2008)

- The designated teacher's over-arching objective is to ensure steps are taken to improve the educational progress and attainment of looked after children within the school.
- In acting upon this objective, the designated teacher's role can be broken down into a number of subsidiary aims, including developing and implementing the looked after child's personal education plan, and being aware of his or her wellbeing more generally.
- In order to see that the child receives the best possible support in his or her education, the designated teacher must co-ordinate effectively with members of staff, carers and professionals outside school.
- A designated member of staff has a crucial role as a leader and manager because of the complexity of the looked after population (In Our Hands, 2011 www.cymru.gov.uk)

The Role and Responsibility of the designated teacher

Key information – required qualifications for the designated teacher/person

The designated person should be: (In Our Hands, 2011 5.11)

- Where there is a significant number of looked after children, it is recommended that a member of the leadership team, already working in a strategic, inclusion or pastoral role, is given the responsibility
- A headteacher and/or acting headteacher of the school
- A qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period and is working as a teacher at the school or
- May not necessarily be a qualified teacher, although this is likely to be the case in the majority of the schools.

The principle duties of the designated teacher/person

- To work with other teachers to identify the looked after child's educational needs;
- To take lead responsibility for the child's personal education plan;
- To have high expectations for the looked after child;
- To ensure that the looked after child has access to extra learning support;
- To be aware of the wider wellbeing of the looked after child; and
- To work effectively with others, both inside and outside the school, in supporting the looked after child's learning.
- To establish school policy and oversee its implementation
- To assess work during periods of non attendance
- To liaise with social workers, foster carers and designated members of staff in children's homes on a regular basis

The Headteacher

In designating a member of staff the Headteacher will maintain a responsibility and ensure that:

- There is a policy on looked after children in school;
- The Governing Body is conversant with their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents;
- There are clear and well established processes to communicate with internal staff and key partners such as social service departments, local authority education departments, foster carers, youth services and youth offending teams;
- Training is regularly given to all members of staff on the personal education plan and issues associated with being in care;
- They know who all the looked after children are in their school;
- They know where the looked after children are receiving their education, particularly for learners who are on a 14-19 learning pathway.

The designated teacher, the school and the care placement

- Looked after children are likely to have many more adults involved in their lives that their non-looked after peers
- The designated teacher forms a crucial part of the network of people and services around the looked after child, and will need to be able to effectively communicate

with these people and services to ensure that the looked after child's education is supported.

- The designated teacher should be aware of the particular role that different people and services play and how changes in other areas of the looked after child's life may affect their educational progress and attainment.

Key Information

The designated teacher role is fundamental to making sure there is a central point of initial contact – not necessarily the designated teacher him or herself – within the school who can manage the process of how the school engages with others from outside the school.

Designated teachers are responsible for:

- Ensuring an agreed means of working with other professionals to review and develop educational attainment;
- Seeing that school policies are communicated to the carers, social workers and, as appropriate, the parents of looked after children;
- Ensuring the child's teachers know who to contact for different reasons, e.g. in an emergency, or for signing permission slips;
- Creating strong communication and partnerships between school and the relevant services, including the looked after children service, and specialist services such as youth offending teams and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Good Practice – working with Foster Carers/Carers

- Get to know the looked after child's foster carers, make an introduction and exchange contact details
- Put together a specific induction pack of school materials and information for carers including information for carers including information about the role of the designated teacher and the personal education plan.
- Make sure the foster carer knows the child's form tutor and year head and has opportunities to attend parent's evenings, school events and awards events.

The Role of the Residential Home

Residential homes generally provide 24 hour care for young people, rarely younger children under eleven years.

The Responsibilities of a Children's Home

The children's home must communicate with the teacher to ensure:

- They are up to date with the home-school agreement;
- There is an understanding about time keeping and attendance;
- They are happy with any arrangements for maintaining the looked after child's homework diary;
- The child's personal educational plan is on track.

Good Practice

- Find out who the looked after child's residential carers are, establish contact and ensure both parties know how to connect with each other;
- Consider putting together a specific induction pack of school materials and information for carers including information about the role of the designated teacher, and the personal education plan;
- Ensure the carer or key worker knows the child's form tutor and year head and has opportunities to attend parents' evenings and awards events;
- Liaise with the social worker to establish practicalities such as who is responsible for signing permission slips, usually this is the social worker but the responsibility can be delegated to the carer.

Key Information

Roles and responsibilities of the Social Worker

- All children looked after by the local authority will have a designated social worker; older pupils may have a Personal Advisor.
- The social worker will assess the individual child's needs following comprehensive assessments.
- The social worker will develop a Care Plan taking into account the information gathered from colleagues, health, education, family and the child.
- The Care Plan will identify outcomes to be achieved to maximise the child's health and well being.
- The information gathered from education colleagues and contained in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) annual reviews, planning meetings is vital in updating the Care Plan.
- Get to know the social worker responsible for the Care Plan.
- Arrange to meet the social worker to gain and exchange information (see guidance – Completion of a PEP).

The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

- The local authority is required under statutory regulations to review the child's Care Plan at regular intervals, initially 28 days, three months and six months thereafter. If the child moves placement or circumstances change the cycle returns to 28 days, three months, and six months.
- The IRO is tasked with ensuring the local authority is fulfilling its legal duty of care and maximising the child's wellbeing and life chances;
- If possible the designated person should attend the review or provide an update report or updated PEP;
- The IRO will ensure that the Care Plans outcomes are being adhered to and have the powers to take appropriate action if there is lack of progress.

Additional Information

Who is looked after?

Children who are looked after and defined in Section 22 of Children Act 1989. They are children who are subject to care orders and those who are provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. They fall into 4 main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20);
- Children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or an interim care order (Section 38);
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (Section 44 and 46);
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Section 21);
- In some cases children subject to a full care order remain living with their parents under a Placement with Parent Agreement. Parents sign a contract with Social Services. If the parent does not adhere to the agreement the child can be removed from their care;
- In some cases children live with grandparents or close relatives. If the carers are paid to care by Social Services this is kinship care. The carers must provide care to the same standard as foster carers.

Guidance Notes for completing the Personal Education Plan

What is a PEP

A PEP is an individual needs lead education plan which focuses on the action that is required for the child to fulfil their potential. It is a working document that plans, sets targets and acts as a record of progress and achievement. It is a school/education based record and an important source of continuity for the child and parent/carer.

Who should have a PEP?

Every looked after child should have a PEP

Who informs the school that a PEP is required?

It is the responsibility of the social worker to initiate the drawing up of the PEP

Whose responsibility is it to draw up a PEP?

It is the school's responsibility, and within the school the designated person ensures it is completed.

It should be noted that the PEP is a working document.

Stage 1

Within 3 days

- The social worker to send the notification that a child/young person is looked after to the school
- The social worker completes the PEP cover and the Care detail pages
- The social worker to send PEP to Designated teacher to arrange date and time of the PEP meeting with the Social Worker
- Child/young person and parents (if applicable) to be invited
- Others may include Class Teacher, Education Coordinator, Learning Support Assistant, Health, Careers Wales, care professionals etc.

Stage 2

Prior to the Meeting

- Designated teacher to meet with child/young person to explain the PEP process and purpose, and to help with the child's/young person's contribution to the Plan.
- Designated Teacher to begin to arrange short term targets with the child/young person. These should include: specific literacy, numeracy and/or subject targets, behaviour, attendance
- Designated Teacher to collect all additional information in preparation for the meeting e.g. attendance statistics, SEN statement, IEP, PSP (Personal Support Plan) etc
- The Social Worker should ensure that all relevant parts such as Legal Status are filled in prior to the meeting
- The Social Worker to inform the Designated teacher of the circumstances of the child/young person that may impact upon education

Stage 3

The Meeting

- PEP meeting to look at the child's/young person's achievements and the positive aspects of their education, social skills etc
- PEP meeting will usually be Chaired by Designated Teacher
- Everyone should be invited to contribute to the Plan, and to clarify the short and long term targets for the child/young person
- Designated Teacher to identify appropriate Link Teacher (taking into account the child's/young person's preferences)
- All parties should be clear how the Plan will contribute to the child's/young person's education, well-being and what their role in it will be
- Check contact details and other details are correct
- Set date and time for Review
- Completed PEP to be distributed by the Designated Teacher to Social Worker, parents, carer and the Education Coordinator (preferably at the time of the meeting)

Stage 4

The Review

- Peps should be reviewed every 6 months initially in accordance with Statutory Reviews
- For children/young people with statements, the PEPs may be reviewed alongside the Annual SEN statement review
- The Review should check the progress against the short term targets in the original PEP
- The PEP should be renewed annually or sooner if there have been major changes
- Set date and time for next Review

NB: The PEP should be completed within 20 school days of changing school/placement