



# FOLVILLE JUNIOR SCHOOL

## Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked-After Children 2023-2024

**Statement of Intent:**

Folville Junior School intends to ensure that all looked after and previously looked-after pupils are fully supported by appointing a designated staff member. It is our intention that the designated teacher will promote the educational attainment of all looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members, to do so. Staff, parents, carers and guardians will be made aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

**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 February 2018.

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

**Definitions**

**Looked-after children** - are registered students 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.

**Previously looked-after children** are registered students 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 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

**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 students 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.

### **Why looked-after and previously looked-after children need the support of a designated teacher?**

- Many looked-after and previously looked-after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning. Excellent practice in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children already exists in many schools. The designated teacher role is statutory to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.

- Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children shows that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 when compared to non-looked-after children.
- The support that schools and designated teachers give to children who are looked-after and previously looked-after should not be seen in isolation. All looked-after and previously looked-after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked-after children, parents or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority, the VSH4 will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school.

### **Identity of our designated teacher**

Our designated teacher is Bruce Wells.

Contact 0116 282 4368

Our designated teacher takes 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.

## **Role of the designated teacher Leadership responsibilities**

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 VSH (Virtual School Heads).
  - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these students 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 students.
  - 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 students.

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.
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children.
- 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 understand where the school can draw on specialist services.
- Put in place arrangements to ensure that looked after children have their wishes and feelings recorded, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs.
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children.

### **Developing the Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

- All looked-after children must have a care plan. This is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority responsible for the child.
- It should identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to their emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills.
- The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP.
- The PEP is a record of the child's education and training.
- It should describe what needs to happen for a looked-after child to help them fulfil their potential and reflect, but not duplicate, any existing plans such as EHC plans.
- The PEP is a vital document because it provides a 'collective memory' about the child's education. It is an integral part of a looked-after child's wider care plan.
- The care plan and PEP may have been drawn up before the child becomes looked-after and is placed. However, if a child becomes looked-after in an emergency, the PEP must be



initiated within 10 working days of the start of the first placement. An initial version must be available for the 20 working-day review of the care plan.

- The PEP should be initiated by the social worker as part of the care plan but developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. Where the child is on the roll of a school, this will include the designated teacher, although class and subject teachers would have considerable input. If the child has SEN, the SENCO or head teacher would also contribute.
- The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a looked-after child's official school record. If a child moves school, the PEP should be forwarded as a matter of urgency, along with other school records, to the new school when known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.
- The PEP should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress and meet the child's educational needs, describing how that will be provided.
- For this reason, both schools and local authorities, through strong links between the designated teacher and the VSH in the authority that looks after the child, have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document. The most effective PEPs reflect the individual planning that all schools undertake for all of their pupils.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking or refugee children are entitled to the same local authority support to promote their educational outcomes as any other looked-after child. Education for unaccompanied children may include a period of time in a setting where their full educational needs can be assessed and integrated into the PEP.

### **Receiving the PEP in school**

- When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after or a looked-after child transfers to the school, the local authority which looks after them must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the up-to-date PEP as a matter of urgency.

### **What the designated teacher should do with the PEP**

- To make sure the child's PEP meets looked-after children's needs, designated teachers will need to work closely with other teachers to assess their specific educational needs without delay, the SENCO may be asked to contribute along with key members of staff working with the child.

- This assessment of learning needs will help to identify strengths, weaknesses and any barriers to learning and should form the basis for the development or the review and refinement of the PEP.

## **Mental Health**

- Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.
- Designated teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as CAMHS and educational psychologists. The SENCO is responsible for making links with mental health services, with whom designated teachers can work closely. The SENCO and the designated teachers should work with the VSH to ensure that they, and other school staff, have the skills to:
  - Identify signs of potential mental health issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable; and
  - Understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning. It is also important that the designated teacher,

officer with responsibility for links with mental health services, where the school has one, and other school staff are aware that these issues will continue to affect previously looked-after children, and that the school will need to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.

**Designated teachers may find it helpful to refer to the following documents with respect to supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children's mental health.**

- *Mental health and behaviour in schools*
- *Promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children*
- *Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care*
- *Improving mental health support for our children and young people*
- *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green pap*

## 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.

**This policy will be reviewed annually.**