

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN & DESIGNATED TEACHER POLICY

BUXTON INFANT SCHOOL

This policy was reviewed by the Governing Body on 21st March 2024

It will be reviewed March 2026

Signed:

Date:

Looked After Children and Designated teacher policy (looked-after and previously looked-after children)

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 Child and Young Persons Act 2008.

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

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

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.

Aim

Buxton Infant School's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained designated teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all 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 members of staff to do this.
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.
- All looked-after children will have a PEP drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require.
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broad based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.

- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Prioritising a reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes. Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children.

Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, looked-after children are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, looked-after children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Buxton Infant School recognises that looked-after children can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that looked-after children may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances. Buxton Infant School recognises that looked-after children may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

Buxton Infant School believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC are able to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Role & Responsibility of the Governing Body

The governing body will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for looked-after children;
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for looked-after children;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body;
- ensure that the designated teacher undertakes appropriate training and is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below;
- As a minimum, governors must consider an annual report from the designated teacher which contains the information described in Annex 1 'Annual Report';
- for child protection and confidentiality reasons, ensure that information will be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity, and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned;
- the governing body and school leadership team should consider the report and act on any issues it raises so as to support the designated teacher and maximise the impact of the role;
- allocate resources to meet the needs of looked-after children;
- ensure that the school's other policies and procedures give looked after children equal access in respect of:
 - admission to school (LAC are guaranteed a school place)
 - the National Curriculum and public examinations
 - additional educational support where this is needed.
 - extra-curricular activities

- Support the Head teacher, Designated teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of looked-after children are recognised and met.;
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

The Governor Responsible is Bridget Ball.

Role & Responsibility of the Head teacher

The Head teacher will:

- Identify an appropriate person 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 exclusion of looked-after Children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of looked-after children to all parties involved annually through the Head Teacher's report to Governors.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Role & Responsibility of the Designated Teacher within the School

Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Chelsea Clayton.

You can contact them by email on c.clayton@buxton-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk.

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 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
- 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 robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, 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

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

Roles & Responsibility of All Staff

Everyone involved in helping looked after children achieve should:

- have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children;
- understand how important it is to see looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status;
- appreciate the central importance of the child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding of the child and what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential;
- ensure entry to examinations for looked-after children;
- be familiar with the Guidance on looked-after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meeting;
- liaise with the Designated Teacher where a looked-after child is experiencing difficulty.

Confidentiality

Information on looked after children will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis. The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Exclusions

In line with statutory guidance we will take active steps to minimise the use of fixed term exclusions for looked after children and avoid permanently excluding looked after children by working with the local authority and other partners to address issues and explore alternatives.

Staff development and training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated Teacher is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of looked-after children.

Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with looked-after children, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include EAL, being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs.

Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs provision and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those looked-after children who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs and will work with them appropriately.

Home-school liaison

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable looked-after children to achieve their potential.

Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working

Admission arrangements

We will adhere to the provisions of the School Admissions Code (DfE 2021) and the Derbyshire Fair Access Protocol to ensure that looked after children receive the highest priority for admission to school and are admitted swiftly to minimise disruption to children's learning.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked After Child or Young Person including Social Care teams; Educational Psychologist; Health Services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. Buxton Infant School is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually and approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Management and Discipline
- Child protection and Safeguarding
- Exclusion of Pupils
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with Medical Conditions

Adopted by the governing board of Buxton Infant School on **21st March 2024**

Annex 1 - Annual Report

The purpose of the annual report is to consolidate the governing body's continuing role in determining the effectiveness of its arrangements to support children in care, in particular whether:

- the school has a clear overview of the educational needs and progress of looked after children on roll;
- the school's policies are effective in reflecting the needs of looked after children;
- resources are allocated to support the designated teacher to carry out their role effectively for the benefit of looked after children.

In line with government guidance the annual report should include:

- any workload issues for the designated teacher or others arising as a result of the number of looked after children on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved;
- levels of progress made by looked after children who are currently or have been on roll within the past twelve months in relation to all children at the school (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress);
- whether the pattern of attendance and exclusions for looked after children is different to that of all children;
- any process or planning issues arising from personal education plans (PEPs);
- whether any children are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met;
- whether any have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are being met through statements or other delegated funding;
- how the teaching and learning needs of looked after children are reflected in school development plans and are being met through particular interventions and resources;
- training provided for the designated teacher in order to impart knowledge and understanding about the education and well-being of looked after children to colleagues;
- work with support services;
- the impact of any of the school's policies, for example on charging for educational visits and extended school activities, on looked after children.

The governing body and school leadership team will consider the report and what needs to be done to address any issues raised by the reports in relation to:

- whether the designated teacher has sufficient time and resources to carry out their role effectively;
- any training, support and development needs required to ensure the role can be carried out effectively;
- the extent to which school policies take account of the particular needs

of looked after children;

- whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as one-to-one tuition or the pupil premium for children in care, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for looked after children to achieve two levels of progress within a Key Stage.

(To protect confidentiality the report will not mention individual children by name.)