



Sharples
S C H O O L

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

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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

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 2E of the Academies Act 2010](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

This policy should be read alongside the following current guidance:

[Keeping children safe in education 2026](#)

[Working together to improve school attendance \(July 2026\)](#)

[Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance \(effective from 26 July 2026\)](#)

[Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

[Pupil premium conditions of grant for the 2026 to 2027 financial year](#)

[Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children](#)

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

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, carers and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Mrs Wood, Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

You can contact them by email safeguarding@sharplesschool.co.uk or the main school reception

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.

Year Coordinators support day-to-day pastoral contact, gather information for PEPs, implement agreed actions and monitor attendance, wellbeing and progress. Mrs Wood retains lead responsibility for the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, the quality and implementation of PEPs, liaison with Virtual School Heads and oversight of this policy.

5. Role of the designated teacher

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will work with individual Year Coordinators to:

- 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 parents, carers 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
- As the designated teacher is also the DSL, coordinate educational and safeguarding support with the safeguarding team, ensuring concerns are responded to promptly and effectively and relevant information informs support.
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will work with individual Year Coordinators to:

- 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
- Ensure the child's views, aspirations and preferred support are heard and reflected in the development and review of their PEP, using an approach appropriate to their age and needs.
- 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

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

The designated teacher will work with individual Year Coordinators to:

- 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 plus 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, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus 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 plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents', carers' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium plus funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Funding for looked-after children is managed by the VSH of the local authority responsible for the child. The designated teacher will agree how funding supports educational needs and review its impact through the PEP. Funding for previously looked-after children is managed by the school, with the designated teacher contributing to evidence-informed spending decisions and consulting parents or guardians. Pupil premium is not a personal budget for individual pupils; spending will follow current grant conditions and address identified educational needs.

- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas such as 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 other staff 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 complete the school's element of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for looked-after children, liaise with the VSH and relevant professionals and use the findings to inform the PEP and appropriate support.
- 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

5.4 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will work with individual Year Coordinators to:

- 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
- Care status and sensitive family information will be recorded and shared securely with staff who need it to support or safeguard the pupil, in accordance with data protection requirements and the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff will respect the pupil's privacy and avoid unnecessary disclosure of their care history.
- Be open and accessible to parents, carers 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 suspension or permanent 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 suspension or permanent exclusion, talk to the child's parents, carers or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.
- Where a looked-after child is suspended or permanently excluded, the Headteacher will notify the child's social worker and VSH without delay, giving the reasons and duration of the suspension or confirming the permanent exclusion. Where any pupil has a social worker, the Headteacher will also notify that social worker without delay. The VSH's role for previously looked-after children is advisory and does not carry the corporate-parent responsibilities that apply to looked-after children. The school will follow its Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy for notifications, educational provision and reintegration.

6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

The designated teacher will provide a confidential report to the governing board at least annually on implementation and impact. This will cover educational progress, attendance, wellbeing, suspensions and permanent exclusions, PEP actions, the use and impact of pupil premium plus, staff training and priorities for improvement. Reporting will protect pupils' identities, particularly where small numbers could identify individuals. Governors will use the report to scrutinise provision, challenge barriers and monitor agreed improvements.

7. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with medical needs
- Attendance
- Anti-Bullying