

R.E.A.L. Education Limited

Designated Teacher Policy
(Looked-after and previously
looked-after children)

Last reviewed: 21/6/23

Policy

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

Introduction

R.E.A.L. Educational and its Independent Schools (to be known as R.E.A.L hereafter) place children and young people at the heart of their learning experience. We focus on the needs of our learners who are looked-after or previously looked after. This policy sets out some of the structures and strategies we have in place to support our aims.

Who is the policy for?

This policy explains the role of the Designated Teacher and the expectations that are on all staff who come into contact with our children in care, or previously looked-after children.

Definitions

The Dfe Statutory guidance (2018) gives the following definitions::

- A child "looked-after by a local authority" is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- A previously looked after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because he/she is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from "state care" outside England and Wales; and
- A child is in "state care" outside England and Wales if he / she is in care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.
- Personal Education Plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's plan that is developed with R.E.A.L. 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 looked-after children, working to monitor and support these learners. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents, carers and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

Aims

At R.E.A.L. Education we ensure that:

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

R.E.A.L. will:

- Ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for looked-after children as for all learners.
- Ensure that all looked-after children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that looked-after children take as full a part as possible in school activities.
- Ensure that carers and social workers of looked-after children are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- Ensure that looked-after children are involved in decisions affecting their future.

Designated Teacher

The designated teacher for R.E.A.L takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are the initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

Role of the Designated Teacher

The following is based on the responsibilities listed in the Dfe's statutory guidance.

Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will:

Act as a central point of initial contact within school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll by:

- Working with Virtual School Heads
- Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these learners matter and are fully met.

Take lead responsibility for ensuring that school staff understand:

- The barriers that can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
- How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these learners.
- Promote a culture in which looked-after children 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 leads 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 members of staff to assess their child's specific educational needs.
- Learning Managers will be responsible for preparing for the PEP meeting and completing the PEP, along with setting targets. The designated teacher will have overall responsibility for quality assuring the PEP.
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEP.
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets the designated teacher will 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 reviews of PEPs, help the school and 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 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.
- Ensure staff have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, behaviour and future career planning.
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure 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 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 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.

Relationships Beyond School

The designated teacher / Learning Manager 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.

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 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 with the transition process.
- See advice from the VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of the parents or guardians.

Make sure that for each looked-after child:

- There is 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.
- Staff must 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 carer, 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.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Partnership Working

At R.E.A.L. We firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents / carers and social workers to enable looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve their potential.

LAC review meetings and PEP meetings are an opportunity to further these partnerships.

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting out looked-after and previously looked-after children.