
Bath & North East Somerset Council

VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

HANDBOOK FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS

CONTENTS

Section 1: Introduction

- Raising the educational achievement of children in care

Section 2: The Role of the Designated Teacher

- A summary of the main requirements
- Why is learning sometimes a challenge for children in care and what strategies work well?
- How children in care are supported beyond school
- Further reading on children in care

Section 3: The Virtual School

- What is a virtual school?
- Contact details

Section 4: Personal Education Plans

- Writing a good Personal Education Plan
- Questions and Answers about PEPs
- Support available from Bath & North East Somerset
- Young people in care and care leavers over the age of 16
- Admissions and exclusions

Section 5: The Pupil Premium and Children in Care

- Using the Pupil Premium
- Additional Virtual School support for children and young people in care
- Should schools use the Pupil Premium to provide computers for children and young people in care?

Section 6: Accountability

- Ofsted and performance measures
- The report to governors on children in care

Appendix 1

- Checklist for Designated Teachers

Appendix 2

- Supporting children in care through school transitions checklist

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Raising the educational achievement of children in care

Why do children in care often underachieve?

Every child in care is capable of learning and success in life, yet too many underachieve in education, for a wide range of reasons:

- They have experienced significant family disruption and often neglect and abuse before coming into care which can all create significant barriers to learning.
- Movement between care placements and between schools can disrupt learning.
- Children in care often need to catch up with learning they have missed.

The reasons for underachievement are explored in more detail later.

What is being done about it at government level?

In the 2007 white paper *Care Matters: Time for Change*, the government set out a wide range of measures to improve outcomes for children in care, including educational outcomes. In a follow up paper, *Improving the Educational Outcomes of Children in Care (2009)*, the DCSF proposed the following:

- In every local authority, a senior official or 'virtual school head' (VSH) should rigorously track the schooling of every child in care, making sure in the first place that schools know when they have a child or children in care on their roll, and that the school is putting in place appropriate additional targeted provision for this child or children
- In every local authority, the VSH should be looking to ensure continuity of schooling for every child in care, even where stability of placement cannot be achieved, using appropriate admissions powers and school transport where necessary
- In school, there should be a designated teacher to work with each child to plan to raise their attainment and respond to their needs, including providing one-to-one tuition wherever appropriate.

What does the term 'looked after' mean?

'Looked after' is a legal term which applies to children who are in the care of the local authority. There are two main types of being looked after:

- The child's parents may agree that the child goes into care. This is often referred to as a 'section 20'.
- The child may be legally removed from their parents without the parents' consent. This is when the court concludes that a child could be harmed if they stay at home. This is referred to as a care order.

The vast majority of children live with foster carers – very few these days live in care homes. Most are taken into care because of the problems their parents have, usually because they have been mentally or physically abused or because they have been neglected.

It can take some time before cases come before the courts and this can add to a child's anxiety. If the court decides that the child is to stay in care ('permanency') then the child may still have to change foster carers, for example if the original carers are deemed to be too old.

The local authority has a statutory duty to look after the child – this includes ensuring they receive the best education possible. The local authority assumes the role of 'corporate parent'. This responsibility is held by every adult employed by the local authority including those who work in schools.

What is the difference between 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care'?

None, although 'looked after children' is more commonly used in government and legal documentation.

What other care arrangements are there?

Children may be in other arrangements where they live with adults other than their birth parents. This includes:

- Kinship care – children who live with other members of the family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or older siblings.
- Private fostering arrangements - children who live with other adults such as friend of the family

Children who live under these arrangements are not 'looked after' in the legal senses and therefore do not have access to the same benefits that legally children in care do. This has been a matter of some controversy.

Social workers may be involved with children in these arrangements and will make a judgement about how suitable they are or whether the child should be taken into local authority care. If the arrangement is working well then it is unlikely that they will decide to do this. The social worker may decide that the child should be taken into care and that the adults currently caring for them can be deemed foster carers, provided they meet the criteria for the role.

Sometimes schools become aware of care arrangements such as these and should let the social services duty desk know about it.

It's a good idea for the designated teacher for children in care to maintain a list of all children in the school who do not live with their birth parents with brief details of what the arrangements are and who has responsibility for them.

What about children in the care of other local authorities?

Schools carry responsibility for all children in care, whether they are in the care of Bath and North East Somerset or other local authorities. Children can move in and out of care quite frequently – the best way to find out the on the most up to date information on children in care is to contact their social worker directly. You can also contact the Virtual School for the authority.

What are the responsibilities of the school for children in care?

These are set out in three key government documents: which can be downloaded or ordered online at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked After Children: statutory guidance for school governing bodies.

Ref: DCSF-01046-2009

Improving the attainment of Looked After Children in primary schools: Guidance for schools DCSF-01047-2009

Improving the attainment of Looked After Children in secondary schools: Guidance for schools DCSF-01048-2009

SECTION 2: THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS

Who can be a designated teacher for children in care?

The designated teacher for children in care must be:

- A qualified teacher working at the school as a teacher OR
- A headteacher or acting headteacher OR
- A person who has had responsibility for children in care for at least 6 months before September 1st 2009 and who is training to become a teacher by September 2012.

Most of the tasks of the role can be delegated to a competent member of staff but the designated teacher is accountable for children in care at the school.

What must the designated teacher do?

- Promote a culture of high expectation
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets
- Be a source of advice for staff
- Prioritise children in care for 1:1 tuition
- Support and communicate with carers
- Lead on the development and implementation of the PEP
- Monitor progress children if they leave care.
- Produce a report for governors at least once a year.

NB By all means carry out PEP reviews at the same time as other reviews e.g. SEN annual reviews.

What must the governing body do?

- Make sure that the designated teacher receives appropriate training
- Consider an annual (minimum) report from the designated teacher on children in care
- Work with the Leadership Team to act on issues raised in the report

What must go in the report to governors?

This is covered later in this toolkit but briefly the report must cover:

- Workload implications of being the designated teacher
- Levels of progress made by children in care
- Patterns of attendance and exclusions
- Any process or planning issues arising from the Personal Education Plans
- Progress gifted & talented or special needs children in care
- Whole school planning – does it cover children in care?
- Training undertaken by the designated teacher
- Work with the LA
- Impact of school policies on children in care

Remember, the designated teacher does not have to do it all! Make sure the responsibility for children in care is shared amongst all staff in the school.

Why is learning sometimes a challenge for children in care and what strategies work well?

Psychologists often refer to attachment theory to explain why children in care can find learning and school difficult. Attachment refers to the bonds children form with their primary carer (e.g. their mother) from infancy – when this is not secure, longer term problems can set in for the child.

Children who have developed secure attachments will have:

- A capacity to tolerate frustration and uncertainty
- A sense of self as worthy of affection and respect
- A capacity to relate to others with sensitivity and respect
- A sense of personal agency – they believe can make a positive difference by what they do for themselves and for others

These will be reduced or missing in children with attachment difficulties. These children can find learning and school life difficult for many reasons, for example they may experience some or all of the following:

- Fall behind with learning due to family break up, absence, change of school.
- Have an overwhelming fear of failure and limited capacity to tolerate frustration or uncertainty. Low self esteem.
- Harbour intense feelings towards others – hyper-vigilance in the classroom e.g. to comments made by other children
- Be preoccupied and harbour unresolved hostility e.g. over family problems leading to difficulties in concentrating. Traumas can freeze learning for a long time.
- Be confused about numbers, and be inhibited about reading

Children with deep attachment difficulties may behave in ways that are very challenging to the school community:

- The child may need help with a challenging task which triggers anxiety, but will reject it when offered (the child has learned that adults always let you down; accepting help is an admission of failure and a letting go of control).
- They can seek to provoke feelings in adults and children they find unbearable in themselves e.g. anxiety, fear, humiliation, for example:
 - Humiliation of others, for example for being successful.

- Bullying
- Heap insults on those perceived as having slight but recognisable differences from other children in the class.
- Where a child has managed to get control over the primary carer and gets everything from them, they will try to gain control over other adults and other children.
- These behaviours can provoke strong feelings in adults in schools who are busy trying to balance the needs of other children. They often need considerable emotional resilience to cope with these feelings. Adults can react in exactly the same way that caused child to have attachment problems in the first place e.g. criticism and punishment. This is a reaction the child with attachment difficulties is familiar with – anything else such as praise is alien and threatening.
- Adults in schools need to try to respond to the meaning of behaviour and objectify it, rather than react to their own difficult feelings. This then helps them to help diagnose the problems and come up with ways forward. Support groups in schools can help adults share their feelings and ideas when working with such challenging children.

So what works? Research suggests that the following strategies can help children with attachment difficulties learn and behave in school:

- **Improving learning:**
 - 1:1 tuition – research shows that many children in care really value this as a way of catching up with work and getting help. Lesson should have clear plans with concrete tasks which can be completed with little help from the teacher. Needs to have choice too.
 - Structuring writing can help rather than giving them a blank page.
 - Think carefully about the impact of lessons involving family issues (for example autobiographies, family trees, bringing in baby photographs) on children in care and how these might be circumvented,
 - Pair or small groups can moderate intensity of feelings such as fear of failure
 - Differentiate tasks and do turn taking. A timer can moderate anxiety and board games can help with learning about turn taking.

- **Improving behaviour:**
 - Focus on the positive and give specific praise for managing behaviour well
 - Help them recognise feelings – name and describe them if possible. Accept not all children can talk about their feelings
 - Tell them well in advance about any changes
 - Agree on safe place to go to calm down when necessary
 - Accept they can get angry and that they know that this is OK so long as they don't hurt themselves or others
 - Don't insist they look at you – it may be hard for them to do this but it doesn't mean they are ignoring you
 - It may be easier at times to draw or write a story than talk about it
 - Older pupils such as sixth formers can act as very effective mentors

- **Planning for transitions (and see appendix 2):**
 - Get them familiar with physical environment – maps; photos; buddy up; lunch in canteen; visits (3-4 with familiar adult from previous school)
 - Make transition as gradual and planned as possible
 - Create a secure base they can go to with familiar staff
 - Identify a key adult - needs to be a relationship, not a name on paper; could be chosen by child later on
 - Exchange transitional objects between child and key adult in new school during long break (e.g. summer) such as a photo. Highly significant in providing a secure base.
 - Provide check in cards with key adult instead of being on report. Good systems should allow both adult and child to relax into relationship
 - Paperwork must arrive well ahead of pupil. It is not good for schools to say "we don't want to prejudge".
 - Provide opportunities for 'second chance learning' e.g. 1:1 tuition
 - Endings need to be handled well too i.e. when they leave. Create opportunity for growth.
 - Key adult to meet & greet in the morning to make sure they are ready for the day
 - Key adult to absorb pressure from them to remember e.g. use of mobile phones
 - Help them be organised e.g. pens, diary etc.
 - Key adult to be key link person with home and social workers

How children in care are supported beyond school

Social workers

Children who are taken into care will probably have had a social worker for some time who will know them well.

Once a decision is made to take the child into care the social worker has a long list of tasks that need completing urgently – it may even include going and buying luggage for the child to carry their belongings.

A care review will be held within three months of the child going into care to make sure that all requirements have been complied with and that the placement is going well. These care review meetings are chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) who are experienced social workers. They will carry out reviews on the same child as long as they remain in care. The care review will include the Personal Education Plan.

The social worker will keep in regular contact with the child to provide them with support and will also arrange contact meetings between the child and their parents. They may be helped in this by a social worker assistant.

Once a placement has become permanent the child will transfer to the Children in Care/Moving On Team and the child will get a new social worker. A 'Pathway Plan' will be written around the child's sixteenth birthday which will include planning the next steps in the education and training.

Foster carers

People who wish to become foster carers have to be trained and assessed before they can foster children. Foster carers will also have their own social worker who can support them through their work. Schools should view foster carers as co-professionals who have a particular expertise in parenting children in care.

Here are some things that foster carers say about schools:

FOSTER CARERS SAY...	
Things many schools do well	Things some schools could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide readers and scribes for tests and exams • Lots of counselling and support offered • Very welcoming to new child joining special school • Carer helps out at the School • Very good at one to one talking • Good communication • Good at understanding children's difficulties • Activity encouraged child to take part in after school activities • Certificates sent out for attendance • School dealt very well with bullying because child was in care • Really good contact between young person and staff at school • Letters home for achievement - tutor points, trying hard, homework. • Different room for teaching young people who have behavioural issues • When young person is excluded work is sent home very promptly • Good Connexions workers • Telling carers when is an appropriate time to call school • Tolerance, they are understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not treating a child differently to another child (because he/she is in care) • Over empathising with children rather than giving them skills for coping. Kindness can go too far and can be inappropriate • Communication started well but then deteriorated • Child has upset teachers in the past and is stigmatised, Teachers don't expect the child to change • Wrong information has been sent home re child's behaviour • Teacher not open to challenge by foster carer • Exclusion – this does not provide deterrent to young people • EMA system doesn't seem to work that well to get young people to attend • Weak Connexions guidance • Not helped to make friends when they live too far away from school • Not enough time given to Pastoral Care. • Being taken out of class for PEPs • Struggle to meet with learning difficulties. • Need one person for carer to relate to and make contact with • Not reporting a problem quickly enough

Children in care may also access other support services, including the following:

Off the Record

Off The Record is an informal, friendly service offering information, support, advice and counselling for young people aged up to 25 who live, study or work in Bath and North East Somerset. This can include:

- Housing and homelessness
- Caring for a relative
- Rights/legal issues
- Getting your voice heard
- Being a young parent
- Relationships and family problems
- Keeping safe, child abuse, bullying

Off the Record can also provide advocates to speak on behalf of children in care, including at Personal Education Plan meetings.

117

The 117 Project works with young people aged 10 - 17 years and their parents and carers to find solutions to difficult problems and conflicts. All referrals are made by Social Workers. 117 can help with a range of problems, from slight concern about a child's behaviour to families in crisis. They aim to allocate all referrals to a worker within five days and they have a duty officer service to help families facing immediate crisis.

Mentoring Plus

Mentoring Plus is a youth crime prevention project working with vulnerable young people who are at risk of offending. The project provides an intensive mentoring and education support programme structured over one year.

Compass

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Children's Fund jointly run the Compass Project which is a voluntary service for 8-13 year old who are assessed to be at risk of offending.

CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) promotes the mental health and psychological wellbeing of children and young people, and provides high quality, multidisciplinary mental health services to all children and young people with mental health problems and disorders to ensure effective assessment, treatment and support, for them and their families.

Further reading on children in care

Attachment in the Classroom Heather Geddes 2006 Worth Publishing

Teenagers and Attachment: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning Ed A Parry 2009 Worth Publishing

What About Me? Louise Bomber Worth Publishing 2011

Adoption UK The Wall – just type this into a search engine for a brief but excellent summary of the effects of a neglectful or abusive upbringing.

Kate Cairns and Chris Stanway *Learn the Child – Helping looked after children to learn. A good practice guide for social workers, carers and teachers.* British Association for Adoption and Fostering Tel 020 7421 2604
Email: pub.sales@baaf.org.uk

SECTION 3: THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

What is a Virtual School?

There are over 140 children in the care of Bath and North East Somerset - some two thirds are educated in Bath and North East Somerset schools and the rest in state schools outside the LA or in the independent sector. The virtual school supposes that they all attend one school – the virtual school. By collecting data on progress, attendance and behaviour we can monitor their performance and can work with schools to target support for those who are falling behind.

What can the Virtual School do for children in care and schools?

- Provide support to **children, social workers and carers** right from Early Years to FE on a whole range of issues, ranging from which school to attend to planning for 14-19 and HE.
- Support the creation and monitor the quality of **Personal Education Plans** (PEPs) to ensure they are strongly focussed on learning outcomes.
- **Target resources** such as the Learning Support Team where it is needed most.
- Ensure that **school placements** continue wherever possible, even when care placements change, and support transition when school placements do change.
- Provide support to **designated teachers, social workers and carers** through training and networking, including a termly newsletter.
- **Get involved** quickly when things go wrong.
- Help **speed up decision making** where several agencies and teams are involved with a child.
- Procure **extra resources**, for example for boarding provision, gifted and talented pupils and Aim Higher projects.
- Listen and respond to the voice of our **children in care**.

Our aim is to help schools and social workers develop and share expertise on the needs of children in care so that good practice can be disseminated across the authority.

CONTACT DETAILS

Contacting the Virtual School

- The Head of the Virtual School is Michael Gorman –
Michael_Gorman@BATHNES.gov.uk
- The Education Coordinator is Lynne Whitfield –
Lynne_Whitfield@BATHNES.gov.uk
- The Virtual School Administrator is Sarah Candy–
Virtual_School@BATHNES.gov.uk

E mail is the best way to contact us. Mike covers Years 10 to 13 and Lynne covers Early Years to Year 9 although we are flexible around this. With well over 140 children in care in the authority at the time of writing we are unable to attend every meeting on every child. However we want to be involved in all:


- Initial PEP meetings concerned with complex cases or where the school or designated teacher would like our input
- Any review meetings of complex cases – this include PEP review meetings and other meetings such as SEN annual reviews.


How do I know if a child is in care?


- Check with the social services duty desk for your area. The B&NES switchboard number is 01225 477000.
- Check with the Virtual School (Virtual_School@BATHNES.gov.uk)
- Some children in care will be in the care of other LAs – we can give you their contact details.

CONTACT LIST

 Virtual_School@bathnes.gov.uk

 Virtual School for Children in Care, PO Box 25, Riverside, Temple Street, Keynsham, BS31 1DN

 01225 396932

 www.bathnes.gov.uk for blank PEP forms and more information - find Virtual School under V in the A-Z.

SECTION 4: PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS

The Personal Education Plan is part of the overall care plan for the child and is the 'collective memory' of the child's education. The Bath & North East Somerset PEP is available from the Virtual School webpage. It must be completed within 20 days of a child going into care and then be reviewed every six months, more often in complex cases. **Page one of the PEP sets out exactly who does what.**

Writing a good personal education plan

It is important that the PEP is an accurate, detailed, living and useful document, and it should be easily comprehensible to carers and any school that subsequently receives it. As far as possible, pupils should not miss lessons for PEP meetings.

Once a child has gone into care their educational needs should be assessed immediately. The PEP should set high expectations of rapid progress and put in place the additional support the child needs in order to succeed. A good PEP will need to:

- Be written with a wide audience in mind, most of whom will not be familiar with social work and education terminology. It may also be read in court as it is part of the child's care plan.
- identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences;
- set short and long term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate; ***the expectation is that children in care will make as least as good progress as their peers. Targets should be set with this in mind.***
- be a record of planned actions, e.g. on homework, extra tuition, study support (including the date by which these should be done), that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child based on an assessment of his or her educational needs;
- include information on how the progress of the child is to be rigorously monitored;
- record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics and at Key Stage 4 in achieving success in public examinations. In particular, one-to-one tuition appears to have a

particularly significant impact on children in care's progress and so this should be employed wherever appropriate as one of the key strategies for raising attainment;

- say what will happen or is already happening to put in place any additional support which may be required – e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist, CAMHS or local authority education services;
- set out how a child's aspiration and self confidence and ambition is being nurtured, especially in consideration of longer term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans;
- be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development, community);
- provide information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for him or her;
- have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

Questions and answers about PEPS

Does the child have to be present throughout the PEP meeting?

The child should be involved in all decisions made about them but it may not always be practical or desirable that they are present for the whole of the meeting. Schools should arrange for the pupil to have a discussion with an adult a few days before a PEP so that their views are heard at the meeting.

What if the child just moves school and there is a PEP in place already?

The sending school sends the PEP to the new school worker as soon as possible. A transition PEP meeting should be held to make sure the new school receives all the necessary information and there should be a PEP review meeting soon after the child has started to check on progress.

What if the child's social worker changes?

The former social worker lets the designated teacher know they are changing and who the replacement will be. The new social worker should attend the next PEP Review or contact the school to set a revised date.

What if the designated teacher changes?

The designated teacher informs the social worker and the Virtual School Administrator.

What if the foster placement changes?

The social worker will keep the school informed and arrange a PEP Review if needed. The social worker should inform the school of all essential information e.g. contact details etc. The new foster carer should make contact with the school to agree day-to-day contact arrangements and attend the next PEP Review.

Who gives permission for school trips, both locally and abroad?

Foster carers are usually empowered to give permission for local school trips although if a child is in care short term and/or by voluntary agreement (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) the carer may need to consult the social worker and/or parents first. The social worker will advise.

For trips abroad the foster carer will always need to consult the social worker. Parents will also usually need to be consulted. The social care Service Manager can consent to a trip abroad for a child on a care order, the court will

need to agree if the child is still subject to care proceedings, and parents' consent must be sought if the child is in care by voluntary agreement (s.20). It will also be necessary for the social worker to apply for a passport if the child does not already have one, and this process often takes longer than usual for a child in care due to the thorough checks carried out by the Identity and Passport Service.

If a child is living with relatives such as their grandparents, does this mean they are 'looked after'? What is the school's responsibility towards them? Is there any funding to support them?

They are not necessarily 'looked after'. The child is only in care or 'looked after' either if there is an order to this effect – usually a care order or interim care order – or if they are in care by voluntary agreement under s.20. A child in care may be placed with relatives, who will be assessed and approved as foster carers. Foster carers including relatives are paid fostering allowances and provided with support through the fostering service. If the child is in care and placed with relatives acting as foster carers the school has all the responsibilities it has to any other child in care. The school should be informed by the child's social worker when a child comes into care and is placed with relatives. The child's social worker will advise on the child's care status and care arrangements in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

Families may make their own arrangements for children to be cared for by relatives. In this case the child is not in care. The parents may pay their relatives to care for the child, or the relatives may claim the child benefit and tax credits directly. The school has the same responsibility towards a child in this situation as towards any other child living at home with their parents. This would include referring for social work assessment if the school believes the child may be in need, with the family's permission unless there are safeguarding reasons not to seek it.

If a child is living with family friends, does this mean they are 'looked after'? What is the school's responsibility towards them? Is there any funding to support them?

Again, they are not necessarily 'looked after'. The same as a child living with relatives (see above) the child may be in care and placed with family friends as foster carers – in which case the school should be informed by the child's social worker and has the same responsibilities as for any other child in care. Families may make their own arrangements for children to be cared for by family friends. Parents may pay the family friends, or they may claim the child benefit and tax credits in their own right. If this is for 28 days or more in a year, then it is defined as private fostering. Parents, private foster carers and

other agencies including schools have a duty to notify Children's Service of private fostering arrangements. Social workers have a duty to assess private fostering arrangements to ensure children are safe and their needs are met. This assessment will also ensure that any support needs are identified.

What expectations should schools have of foster carers?

Foster carers are generally expected to play the day-to-day role parents would play including ensuring the child's attendance at school and coming to parents' evenings and other events in order to support the child. Foster carers are expected to be ambitious for children in their care, help with home work and to play a full part in drawing up and acting on the PEP.

If the child is in short term care and/or by voluntary agreement under s.20 the parents may also play a significant continuing role in the child's education alongside the foster carer. This should be made clear in the child's PEP.

What is the school's responsibility if a parent of a child known to be in care turns up at the school and wants to see the child?

If in doubt about the plan for a child's contact with the parent the school should always check with the social worker before allowing the parent to have contact with the child. If contact with the child involves a parent collecting a child at the end of the school day and is part of the contact plan, this should have been discussed and agreed with the school. Contact information should be made available by the social worker and carers at PEP meetings. The social worker should inform the school of any changes to the contact arrangements, preferably in writing or recorded on PEPs. Contact should not happen in school time.

Can children in care be referred to the Behaviour and Attendance Panels?

Yes for behaviour and attendance issues - any such referral should be made in consultation with the foster carer, social worker and Virtual School. Children in care needing a school place and who meet the Fair Access criteria should be referred to the head of the Virtual School.

Who takes responsibility for managing a Managed Move between schools, or if a child in care attends alternative provision?

The school has the same ultimate responsibility as it does for any other child in these circumstances. Children in care are particularly vulnerable at times of transition and change and stability is essential to their educational progress.

In the case of a child in care such moves or alternative provision should of course be agreed with the foster carer, social worker and Virtual School. This should be discussed at PEP Reviews and closely monitored.

How can a school find out who has parental responsibility (PR) for a child?

If a child is in care the social worker can advise who has PR. If the child is in care on an order the Local Authority has PR as well as the parents and anyone else who had PR before the child came into care.

What support is there for vulnerable children who are not in care yet but may be placed in care sometime in the future?

All of the support available for any child with additional needs. The Virtual School has been established specifically to support the educational achievement of children in care and not of any other group of vulnerable children.

Children can only come into care following a social work assessment to see if they are a child in need of care. If a school believes this may be necessary a child should be referred for assessment.

A social work assessment will consider what support may be available to avoid the child coming into care, whether the child has been subject to a CAF, what local extended services may be available, whether the child has been referred to the local Integrated Assessment Panel etc. If the child is assessed as a child in need they may receive support from children's social care services for example social work support , 117 Project etc.

**Support available for children in care from
Bath & North East Somerset**

Support	Description	Access
Educational Psychologist	Children taken into care can be assessed by the Educational Psychologist if needed to provide advice on how that child can best be supported in their education.	Through the Educational Psychologist in Bath and North East Somerset.
Learning Support	The Bath and North East Somerset Learning Support Team can provide extra tuition for Looked After Children, usually for an hour over 20 weeks, although this is flexible. This is usually literacy and numeracy support and is for any child who needs this kind of support and who does not receive it through having a statement of special educational need.	Please make referrals to Lynne Whitfield or Michael Gorman at the Virtual School.
Connexions	Making the right choices at 14, 16 and 18 are crucial to the future success of all young people, especially Looked After Children. Connexions advisers in Bath and North East Somerset will attend all PEP meetings of Y11 Looked After Children and will keep in touch with them into adulthood.	Through the school's Connexions Personal assistant.
Teenagers to Work programme	Opportunities for Looked After Children to undertake work experience during the school holidays, usually within Bath and North East Somerset Council.	Through Lynne Whitfield, Bath and North East Somerset Education Coordinator for Looked After Children.
R2K	These are activities for children in the care of Bath and North East Somerset that take place in the school holidays to give respite to foster carers. Activities range from drama, music and sports activity days to residential trips.	These are promoted to carers directly from Bath and North East Somerset.

Young people in care and care leavers over the age of 16

This is a particularly vulnerable age group who are over-represented in NEET figures. These young people may:

- Have underachieved at 16
- Have low self esteem
- Have low aspirations
- Be wanting to move into independent living without having the necessary skills
- Want much less contact with social services

To help this group there is:

- A post 16 PEP (from the Virtual School webpage)
- A post 16 bursary of £1200 for those in full time education and training
- Continuing support from Connexions

The 16-19 bursary :

- Is paid directly to schools from the YPLA
- Is to be used to support education e.g. books, equipment, transport
- Can be paid in instalments dependent on attendance work rate etc.
- More information from the YPLA website

Admissions and exclusions

Admissions

Children in care seeking school places who meet the Fair Access criteria are referred to Virtual School, not the Behaviour and Attendance panels. This is because the Code of Practice for admissions makes it clear that children in care must go to the school that is best suited to their needs. The Department for Education draft admissions code removes children in care from Fair Access panels. However, schools will get points for admissions.

Exclusions

The government guidance on exclusions makes it clear that fixed term exclusion for children in care must only be used as a last resort. When they are used, schools must work with social workers to ensure suitable alternative provision is in place. Alternative provision must be in place from day one of exclusion for children in care, not from day 6 – this is to avoid placing additional pressure on foster carers and placing foster placements at risk.

SECTION 5: THE PUPIL PREMIUM AND CHILDREN IN CARE

Children who have been in continuous care for six months or more qualify for the Pupil Premium. It is the responsibility of local authorities to distribute this money to schools and academies.

The Pupil Premium in the financial year 2011-12 is £430 per child in care in Years R to 11. This amount is set to rise in future years. The Pupil Premium is calculated on a daily basis and allocated for the whole term (Summer, Autumn and Spring) even if the child transfers to a new school midterm. The school that a pupil joins mid-term will receive their funding from the following term, and funding will not be backdated. Similarly, funding will not be clawed back from the school a child has left mid-term.

This funding will be distributed to Local Authority mainstream and special schools in the June, October and January cash advances. Academies will also receive their allocations from the local authority at the same time. If schools have children in care from other local authorities on roll, the school will also receive the Pupil Premium directly from those authorities, although the timing of their payments may differ from Bath and North East Somerset. We hold centrally the Pupil Premium for children in care who attend fee paying schools and allocate it if there is a specific identified need.

In deciding how to use the Pupil Premium for children in care note the following paragraphs for the Department for Education website:

It is not the funding itself that will improve attainment gaps, but how schools use it. Some children require additional support to meet their potential, and the Pupil Premium will provide schools with the resources they need to provide that support. Where funding is carefully targeted, UK studies do show an impact on attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils - particularly in English and mathematics.

Research and experience show that individualised tuition is particularly effective in helping children in care catch up on missed learning. If they are already making good progress, then the Pupil Premium could be used for other beneficial activities, for example, dance lessons or sports activities. The Department for Education has said that allocations should be agreed at Personal Education Planning meetings in collaboration with Virtual Schools, carers and social workers. The Bath and North East Somerset Virtual School **therefore asks that the Pupil Premium for children in care is placed in a separate budget in your school which can be accessed by the designated teacher for children in care. This will mean that the funding**

can be used to provide the support according to the individual needs of each child in care.

Children in the care of Bath and North East Somerset may be eligible for additional support from the Virtual School – see table below. Please note that some Local Authorities have cut the Personal Education Allowance altogether as it is no longer a statutory requirement.

Using the Pupil Premium

Examples of the types of activities that the Pupil Premium might be used to support children in care include:

- One to one tuition - you can use your own contacts, or the Virtual School has a team of trained tutors.
- Support for vocational learning
- Alternative education provision
- Personalised learning resources
- Support to build a child's confidence

It may be appropriate to pool the budget for a group of children where this would result in increased levels support - for example, greater efficiency may be achieved by joint commissioning where a number of children have similar learning or development needs. This approach will need to demonstrate how the joint provision links to the individual needs of the group of children and their Personal Education Plans.

The Department for Education has said that allocations should be agreed at Personal Education Planning meetings which are carried out in collaboration with Virtual Schools, carers and social workers. Funding does not have to be used every year – it can be carried over to the next financial year if this is considered to be in the best interests of the child.

The Sutton Trust has published a very useful summary of the interventions that work most effectively to raise standards. This can be found at:

<http://www.suttontrust.com/research/toolkit-of-strategies-to-improve-learning/>

This report suggests that one to one tuition is high cost for medium impact. In fact, Department for Education research indicates that one to one tuition for children in care can be very effective in raising their standards of achievement.

Additional Virtual School support for children and young people in care

The following additional grants are available for the Virtual School in the financial year 2011-12:

Name of support	Notes
Catch up tuition for pupils newly into care	Pupils newly into care who do not yet qualify for the Pupil Premium but who urgently need catch up tuition may access this fund for up to £250.
Pupil Premium Supplement	£170 per pupil where the school has spent the Pupil Premium allocation of £430 on meeting the child's needs AND where the child is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Y6 or Y11 for test/exam preparation or • Not in Y6 or Y11 but is in significant need of tuition
Post 16 tuition grant	£250 per student aged 16-18 in post 16 education who needs extra tuition to help them improve GCSE grades in essential subjects e.g. Maths & English. Must have genuine potential and motivation to move up a level e.g. grade D GCSE to at least grade C.
Extra Curricular activities	Contribution towards costs so children in care can participate in activities outside of school hours – costs to be shared with foster carers.
Transition support (from Joint Agency Panel and requires their approval)	To provide support for children in care changing schools where needed. The child will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of compulsory school age • in care or at the edge of care • transferring schools • not eligible for statementing and SEN funding • in need of temporary additional support during the school transition process, to prevent escalation of situation necessitating more intensive support Maximum grant £2000.
Significant needs (from Joint Agency Panel and requires their approval)	To provide support for children in care who do not meet JAP criteria* but who need significant alternative provision for example, due to serious disaffection and disengagement. The child/young person will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aged 4 – 19 • in care • not eligible for statementing and SEN funding • facing serious and significant barriers to making educational progress • in need of additional support to prevent

Name of support	Notes
	<p>escalation of situation necessitating more intensive support or move to residential placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not meet the criteria for a full JAP grant, but who meets (or nearly meets) JAP criteria for social care or health <p>Maximum allocation to be determined on application.</p>

These funds can be accessed via the Virtual School though PEP meetings.

Should schools use the Pupil Premium to provide computers for children and young people in care?

1. School age children - Reception to Year 11

Bath and North East Somerset Children' Services do not normally provide computers for children in care, although there may be some exceptional cases which are covered below.

The Council's expectations of foster carers are as follows:

- a. All Bath and North East Somerset foster placements and residential placements should provide access to a computer for educational purposes for children and young people from the age of 7.
- b. All Independent Foster Care Providers (IFPs), must ensure that children have access to a computer for educational purposes. This is part of their contract agreement with B&NES.
- c. Respite carers are not expected to provide computer access.

Foster carers and residential staff are responsible for:

- a. Supervising and monitoring the child's/young person's use of the computer.
- b. Ensuring that the computer is maintained in good working order, including the use of anti-virus software.
- c. Being familiar with the e-safety policy of the Local Authority and ensuring that the computer and its use is compliant with the policy.
- d. The purchase of consumables such as ink and paper.

Provision of computers:

The Local Authority does not encourage schools or colleges to purchase computers for children in care as it is a requirement that carers provide children with access at home to computers for educational purposes. There may be exceptional circumstances for children with special educational needs (see below). If schools still wish to purchase a computer for a child the following points need to be considered:

- a. Need – how essential is it for the child to have a computer of their own? Are peripherals needed such as a printer?
- b. Purchase and ownership – who will buy the computer? Who owns it - the school, the child, or the foster carer? What happens to the computer if the child leaves the school or the foster placement?

- c. Safeguarding – what parental controls are needed? Who will install and upgrade them? Can they be circumvented by the child? Who will supervise the use of the computer?
- d. Internet access – who will pay for internet access?
- e. Maintenance – who pays if the computer has a fault or is damaged? Who pays for peripherals like printer, ink and paper? Maintenance costs are often considerably higher and sustained than the original purchase cost of the computer.
- f. Software – what special software is needed? Who will install and upgrade it?

Children with Special Educational Needs - Reception to Year 11

Schools often provide computers for use in school with appropriate assistive technology. Bath and North East Somerset Children' Services do not provide computers for schools.

When a child has a Special Educational Need identified by the school, it may be beneficial to the child to have a computer for their own use at the home. The use of the Pupil Premium could be considered for this purpose. Such cases need to be fully discussed at a PEP meeting and evidence provided by the school as to why, in their view, the child would benefit from their own computer. The considerations listed under (1.6) above should inform the decision and written into the PEP. Carers also need to be fully consulted and be able to support the appropriate use of the computer and E-Safety of the child.

Careful consideration will be given by the Head Teacher of the Virtual School to such referrals and information gathered from school staff and social workers, including the foster carer's supervising social worker.

Post – 16 Students in Further Education (college or 6th form).

It is recognised that students aged 16 to 19 may need their own computer to undertake their studies. Colleges often have laptops they can loan to students with special educational needs for the duration of the course. Funding for a computer can be provided from the 16-19 bursary if the school/college are in agreement. They will have their own criteria for allocating computers but may wish to use the following suggested criteria:

- a. The student must be in full-time further education and on a full-time course requiring use of a computer as confirmed by the college/school and as supported by an up-to-date Personal Education Plan.
- b. The student must have a good attendance record (at least 2 previous terms of attendance over 85%).
- c. The foster carer / lodgings provider must be willing to take responsibility for the e-safety of the computer, and be able to monitor and supervise use of the computer and report any concerns to the young person's Social Worker and education provider.
- d. Consumables (such as paper, ink) and internet access to be provided by the 16-19 bursary.
- e. If the student has a history of inappropriate use of IT equipment, the request may be turned down but a re-referral may be made after 6 months.

SECTION 6: ACCOUNTABILITY

Ofsted and performance measures

The Department for Education says on its website:

Whilst schools will be free to spend the Pupil Premium as they see fit, they will be held accountable for how they have used the additional funding to support deprived pupils. New measures will be included in the performance tables that will capture the achievement of those deprived pupils covered by the Pupil Premium. From September 2012, we will also require schools to publish online information about how they have used the premium. This will ensure that parents and others are made fully aware of the progress and attainment of pupils covered by the premium.

Schools can expect the new Ofsted framework for inspections to place particular emphasis on the progress of vulnerable groups such as children in care and will want to see how effectively the Pupil Premium is being used.

It is good practice for designated teachers to record attainment and progress information on children in care on a spreadsheet – this will inform overall planning and can be used for accountability purposes. There is a model tracking sheet on the Virtual School webpage.

The report to governors on children in care

This report should be made at least once a year and should be written so that children in care cannot be identified. The following prompts will help you fulfil the requirements of the report to governors as set out in the DCSF guidance *The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked After Children: statutory guidance for school governing bodies*. A blank template is provided on the Virtual School webpage.

THE REPORT TO GOVERNORS ON CHILDREN IN CARE

Date of report:	
Designated teacher for children in care:	
Number of children in care in this school by year group:	

1. Fulfilling the requirements of the role of designated teacher for children in care

- Do you have the time and resources to carry out your responsibilities?
Bear in mind:
 - The number of children in care on role, both from Bath and North East Somerset and other local authorities.
 - The need to produce and ensure the implementation of good quality PEPs for each child in care
 - Extra work arising from more involved cases e.g. where a children in care has complex needs
 - The need to liaise with a wide range of people in and out of the local authority.

- What training have you and other staff received on children in care?

It is completely acceptable to delegate tasks to other members of staff but it is the designated teacher who is ultimately accountable for children in care.

2. Levels of progress made by children in care

Report on the progress made by children in care who are currently on role or who have been on role within the past twelve months compared with other children at the school and national benchmarks. This needs to cover:

- Academic progress – have they made or are they on course to make two levels of progress?
- Gifted and talented – do any children in care fall into the category? What actions is the school taking to support them?
- Special Educational Needs - do any children in care fall into the category? Are their needs being met through statements or school action and School action Plus?
- Support – are they prioritised for 1:1 tuition?
- Social and emotional development – how are these needs catered for? Are they involved with activities outside of lessons?

3. Patterns of attendance and exclusions

- Attendance – is it in line with or better than the attendance of other children in the school? If it is below, what steps are being taken to address this?
- Behaviour – have there been any fixed term exclusions and if so, what action has been taken to prevent a recurrence?

4. Planning issues

- Are all the PEPs up to date?
- How have you and other staff worked with colleagues outside of the school to support children in care for example:
 - The Virtual School
 - Special Needs
 - Educational Psychologists
- Where are the needs of children in care reflected in the school's development planning, staff deployment etc?
- Do any school policies have any implications for children in care that need addressing e.g. charging for school trips, participation in extended school activities?

APPENDIX 1: CHECKLIST FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

This checklist covers the **main administrative tasks** the designated teacher needs to carry out. A further checklist to help audit the **quality of provision** can be found at the back of the booklets for designated teachers in primary and secondary schools.

NAME OF DESIGNATED TEACHER:	
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Action	In place	Partly in place	Not in place	Action needed	Person responsible	Deadline
1. The designated teacher meets the criteria for the post.						
2. The designated teacher has attended appropriate training.						
3. The school has an up to date list of the children in care in the school in the care of Bath and North East Somerset. ➤ <i>Not sure? Call the Bath and North East Somerset social services duty desk.</i>						

Action	In place	Partly in place	Not in place	Action needed	Person responsible	Deadline
<p>4. The school has an up to date list of the children in care in the school in the care of other authorities.</p> <p>➤ <i>Not sure? Call the relevant LA's social services duty desk, or contact the Virtual School and we can put you in touch.</i></p>						
<p>5. Each child in care has an up to date personal education plan (PEP) in place.</p> <p>➤ <i>Note: It is the responsibility of the designated teacher to ensure that the PEPs are of good quality. They need to be completed within 20 school days of the child going into care or joining a new school.</i></p>						

Action	In place	Partly in place	Not in place	Action needed	Person responsible	Deadline
<p>6. The PEP is focussed on education and has the right balance of challenge and support.</p> <p>➤ <i>Note: the expectation is that children in care will make as least as good progress as their peers.</i></p>						
<p>7. PEPs line up with other documents in the school e.g. IEPs, PSPs etc.</p> <p>➤ <i>Note: it is completely reasonable to carry out PEP and SEN reviews at the same time.</i></p>						
<p>8. The school can show that it closely monitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic progress • Attendance • Behaviour <p>and acts where concerns show up.</p>						

Action	In place	Partly in place	Not in place	Action needed	Person responsible	Deadline
9. The Pupil Premium is used to support the education of each individual child in care. Interventions are arranged where needed <u>and the impact is assessed.</u>						
10. Carers and social workers are fully involved in decisions about children in care.						

APPENDIX 2: SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN CARE THROUGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS CHECKLIST

Based on Louise Michelle Bomber, "Survival of the Fittest'...: Teenagers finding their way through the labyrinth of transitions in school'. In *Teenagers and Attachment: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning* A Perry (ed,). 2009

Preparation:

1. Get them familiar with physical environment – maps; photos; buddy up; lunch in canteen; visits (3-4 with familiar adult from previous school)	
2. Make transition as gradual and planned as possible	
3. Create a secure base they can go to with familiar staff	
4. Identify a key adult - needs to be a relationship, not a name on paper; could be chosen by child later on	
5. Exchange transitional objects between child and key adult in new school during long break (e.g. summer) such as a photo. Highly significant in providing a secure base.	
6. Provide check in cards with key adult instead of being on report. Good systems should allow both adult and child to relax into relationship	
7. Paperwork must arrive well ahead of pupil. Not good for schools to say "we don't want to prejudge".	
8. Provide opportunities for 'second chance learning' e.g. 1:1 tuition	
9. Endings need to be handled well too i.e. when they leave. Create opportunity for growth.	

Support in school from day 1

1. Key adult to meet & greet in the morning to make sure they are ready for the day	
2. Key adult to absorb pressure from them to remember e.g. use of mobile phones	
3. Help them be organised e.g. pens, diary etc.	
4. Key adult to be key link person with home and social workers	

School staff development

1. School staff need to understand the delayed development of these children – they will learn later than other children	
2. Good to set up school Team Around the Child lead by somebody with clinical specialism.	
3. Good to support school staff too who can experience secondary stress symptoms emanating from children who have been traumatised.	
4. Policies needed to support dignity of pupils – how pupils are to be spoken to etc.	
5. Keep it simple! Involve as few adults as possible.	