



Plymouth Virtual School Handbook

2022

Contents	Page No.
Vision and Core Values	3
Core Functions of the Virtual School	4
Definitions	5
Introduction	6
The Role of the Virtual School Head	7
The Plymouth Virtual School Structure	8
The Educational Progress of Looked-After Children in England	9
Working together to improve attainment and progress of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children	10-18
Pupil Premium Plus	19-20
Personal Education Plans (PEPs)	20-22
School Admissions	22-24
The importance of strong attendance (this inc. ref to PT Timetables)	25-25
Exclusions	25-26
Support for Previously Looked-After Children	26-28
The Extended Role	29

Our Vision

The Plymouth Virtual School will champion the individual needs of all care-experienced children and young people, enabling them to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

We will provide exceptional support and encouragement to all our young people so that they:

- Experience stability and feel safe, cared for, valued, supported and trusted.
- Are confident, have a strong sense of identity and are empowered to be independent to enjoy learning and have fun.
- Achieve well both academically and socially and reach their full potential.

Above all we want our young people to be proud of who they are, who they are becoming and to own their story.

Our Core Values

Democratic

We believe in giving children and young people a voice and encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings.

Responsible

We take our responsibility as Corporate Parents seriously, and are accountable for our impact on the achievement and successes of our children and young people. In addition, we hold schools, Social Workers and other key stakeholders accountable for their responsibilities.

Fair

We will be honest and open in how we act with all stakeholders. We will treat everyone with respect, champion fairness and create the best opportunities for our children and young people.

Collaborative

We believe in the power of collaborative working to help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.

Our Core Functions

To champion the educational needs of Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) across the authority and those placed out-of-authority:

- We will champion the needs of Looked-After Children across the authority and beyond, and spread effective practice, particularly in relation to improving behaviour and attendance, promoting stability of placement and school stability through admissions policies.
- We will work with others in local authorities and schools to ensure measures are taken to promote positive behaviour, good attendance, and reduce exclusions, which should in turn lead to good progress and improved attainment.
- We will ensure social workers adequately consider the educational needs of Looked-After Children when a child/young person comes into care or when taking decisions about moving placements.

To ensure there is an effective approach to track, monitor and improve the attainment, progress and attendance of all LAC and PLAC:

- We will rigorously track and monitor attainment and progress data, including attendance, behaviour and exclusion on a termly basis for all Looked-After Children under the care of Plymouth and ensure appropriate provision is being made within schools both as curricular and extracurricular support, challenging schools where progress is not in line with local and national expectations.
- We will work in partnership with our schools and other organisations to improve overall outcomes, wellbeing and destinations of both individuals and cohorts of Looked-After Children, by maximising educational opportunities, targeted support, resources and funding, as well as by providing training and signposting of available services to support specific needs.

To ensure all LAC have a robust and effective Personal Education Plan and monitor the use of the Pupil Premium Plus grant:

- We will work with our Personal Education Plan (PEP) provider and other relevant professionals to provide support and training to ensure PEPs are of a high quality and to ensure professionals are held to account for the sections for which they have responsibility. We will ensure that PEPs are subject to a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process, with impacts and outcomes that are followed up.
- We will ensure that Looked-After Children are able to access the Pupil Premium Plus grant, where appropriate and monitor the use and impact of these funds on raising educational standards. We will assist schools to explore other sources of additional funding/support where possible.

Provide high quality training to other teams and individual professionals in matters relating to the education of LAC and PLAC:

- Plymouth Virtual School will provide and commission a variety of training for schools, carers and social workers, on areas such as:
 - Statutory responsibilities
 - Producing high-quality PEPs
 - Attachment and trauma
 - Inclusion, attendance and exclusions
 - Evidence-based strategies to support the education of LAC and PLAC
 - Effective use of Pupil Premium Plus

Definitions

Virtual School Head (VSH): means anyone fulfilling the duties and functions of the VSH as laid out in statutory guidance, whatever their title.

Looked-After Children (LAC): The term is disliked by many children for its acronym, and this is why many professionals prefer Children Looked-After (CLA) or Children in Care (CiC) of Children Cared For (CCF). This document uses 'Looked-After Children' because it is the term adopted by the DfE in its statutory guidance. It can, though, be read as CiC, CLA, or CCF as the reader desires. 'Children Looked-After' has a specific legal meaning based on the Children Act. A child is Looked-After by a local authority if they have been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act.

Previously Looked-After children (PLAC): are those children who are no in the care of a local authority in England and Wales because they became subject to: an adoption order; a special guardianship order (SGO); or a child arrangements order (CAO). For children adopted outside England and Wales, the child must have been Looked-After by a public authority, a religious organisation, or other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Where parents are unable to provide clear evidence of their child's status, Designated Teachers will need to use their discretion (or could discuss eligibility with the VSH).

Care Leaver: A person who has been Looked-After for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday. A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

- **Eligible Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been Looked-After by the local authority for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still Looked-After;
- **Relevant Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child;
- **Former Relevant Child:** a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

Home Local Authority: This is the local authority in whose care a child is placed.

Host Local Authority: This is the local authority where the child is educated.

Introduction

Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child Looked-After by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement. The authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children.

All professionals (including teachers) working with Looked-After children, all carers, and all elected members, constitute the corporate parents of children in care. In fulfilling that role, they should each ask themselves whether the services, support, and opportunities available to their Looked-After children would be good enough for their own children. If they cannot honestly answer in the affirmative, then it is their duty as a corporate parent to act to improve that offer.

A local authority has no specific duties, beyond those to all children, in relation to children living in its area, but Looked-After by another local authority. This does not mean that VSH, and local authorities more broadly, may not establish reciprocal and cooperative arrangements between themselves relating to these children.

Underpinning Statutory Framework

The principal legislation related to this Handbook is:

- the Children's Act 1989, as amended by the Children Act 2004 and the Children & Families Act 2014 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- the Education Act 2005;
- the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (incl. Section 20A of the 2008 Act inserted by section 5 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017).
- Section 2E of the Academies Act 2010 inserted by section 6 of the 2017 Act.
- The Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, as amended.

Statutory Guidance:

- Promoting the education of Looked-After children and Previously Looked-After children - Statutory guidance for local authorities, February 2018
- The Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After children - Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018
- Applying corporate parenting principles to Looked-After children and care leavers - Statutory guidance for local authorities, February 2018

The statutory framework applies to every local authority in England and all children legally Looked-After by them, or Previously Looked-After, irrespective of where they live.

The statutory guidance on Designated Teachers is issued under sections 20(4) and 20A(4) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. **This means that the governing bodies of maintained schools, academy proprietors and the designated staff member at maintained schools and academies must have regard to it when promoting the educational attainment of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After children.**

The Role of the Virtual School Head (VSH)

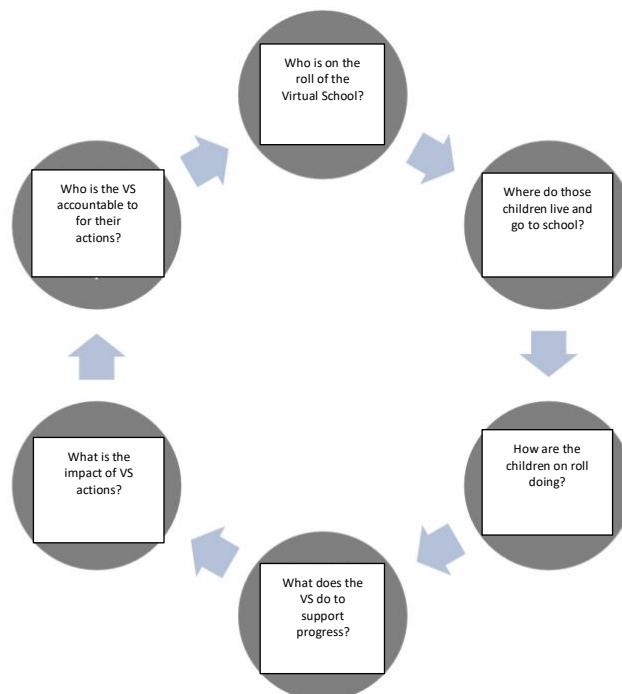
The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its Looked-After children. That person – the Virtual School Head (VSH) - must be an officer employed by the local authority or, where local authorities agree to collaborate or share the role, another local authority in England.

The VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Looked-After children, including those placed outside the home authority's boundaries.

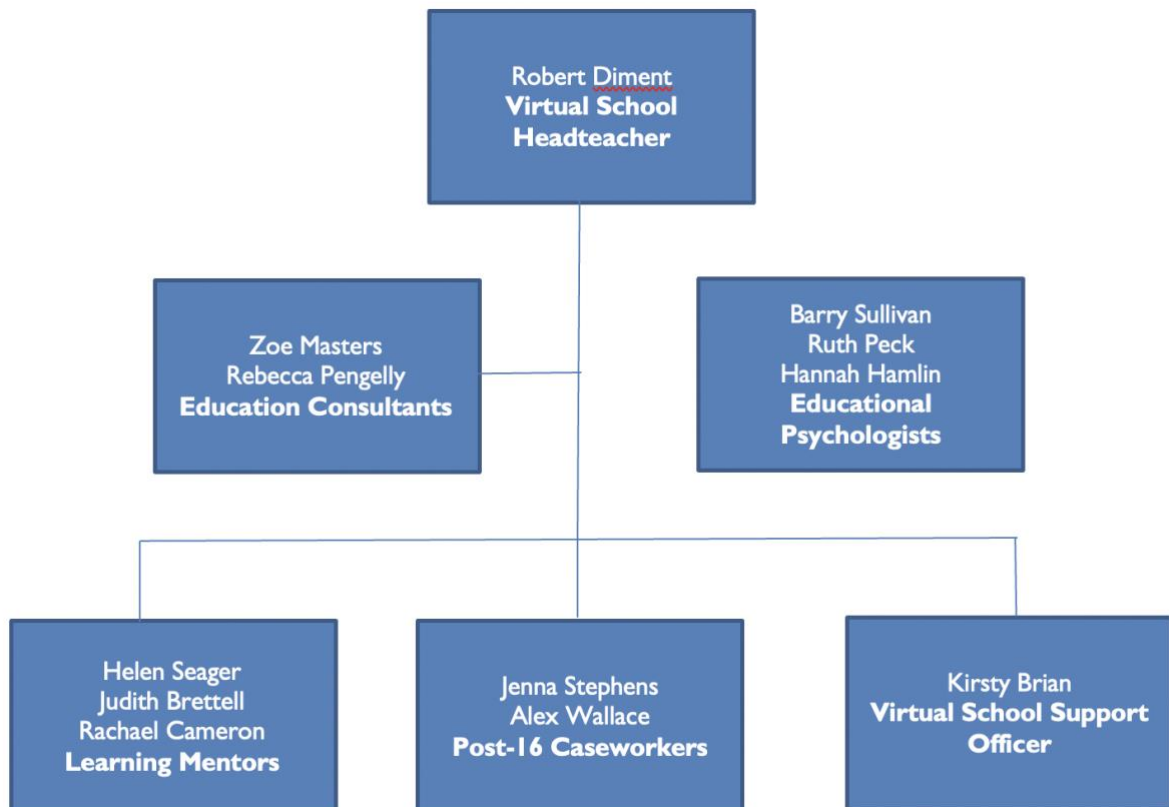
Key operational areas for Virtual School Heads

There are six key operational areas of a Virtual School Head's activity. These are:

1. Know who is on the roll of their Virtual School
2. Know where they live and where they go to school
3. Know, at any time, how they are doing and be able to say if that is good enough
4. Determine what actions to take if they are not doing well enough
5. Evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve attainment and progress
6. Understand their accountabilities and how their Virtual School will be inspected and its impact judged.



The Plymouth Virtual School Structure *(as of April 2022)*



The Educational Progress of Looked-After Children in England

The Educational Progress of Looked-After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, November 2015 – *Key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England. The analysis reveals that, controlling for all factors, the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:*

Time in care

Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (i) do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and (ii) better than those who have only been in short term care. So, it appears that care may protect them educationally.

Placement Changes

Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE.

Placement Type

Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over 6 grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.

Feeling secure and cared for

Young people can engage with learning better when they feel secure and cared for in a placement.

School Changes

Young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less than those who did not.

School Absence

For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over 2 grades less at GCSE.

School Exclusions

For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE.

School Type

Young people in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared with those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in PRUs with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.

Working together to improve attainment and progress of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children

The key responsibility of the VSH is to facilitate strong partnership working and building a team around the child. This will involve establishing effective working relationships with all the professionals and stakeholders likely to impact on the educational progress of a Looked-After child.

The key CORE professional and stakeholder responsibilities are:

Senior School Leaders and School Governors

The responsibilities of Headteachers and school governing bodies are the same whether their school is maintained, is an academy or a free school. Where a child is placed in a school that is *not* state funded then local authorities should expect similar levels of practice as they will be funding the child's place.

Headteachers who prioritise the education and welfare of Looked-After children ensure that the governing body is able to fulfil its obligation to appoint a sufficiently senior and experienced Designated Teacher with sufficient time to undertake their duties and influence school policy and practice. They also facilitate regular (preferably termly, but as a minimum, annually) reports from the Designated Teacher to the governing body and a positive and direct working relationship between the Designated Teacher and governors.

In pursuit of this close working relationship governing bodies that prioritise the education and welfare of Looked-After children identify a governor to take particular interest in the work of the school in relation to Looked-After children, and to meet regularly with the Designated Teacher. The chair supports this 'Designated Governor for Looked-After Children' by ensuring they have access to training to fulfil their function and advise the governing body as a whole. They also scrutinise, within the limits of appropriate confidentiality, the attainment, progress, attendance and engagement with learning of Looked-After children on the school role and act as a critical friend to the Headteacher and Designated Teacher in developing high quality responses to the needs of Looked-After children.

The Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children

The DfE statutory guidance 'The **Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After children, February 2018**' details the role of the Designated Teacher. All Headteachers, governing bodies and Designated Teachers must be familiar with and fulfil this guidance. A link to this guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>

The Designated Teacher is responsible for championing the educational needs of Looked-After children in their school, and ensuring they have good quality Personal Education Plans (PEP). They should be the main author and champion of the PEP within the school context.

The most important demand the VSH should make of Designated Teachers is that they have high expectations of Looked-After children and the time to understand their needs.

The Designated Teacher works with the child, other teachers, the Virtual School, social worker, independent reviewing officer, and the carer to focus on that child's needs and regularly reviews progress, especially when there are disruptions in the child's personal life. In particular, they identify specific, measurable actions and targets that will encourage and stretch the child, rewarding achievement appropriately. These actions and targets should focus on academic progress but also encompass extracurricular activities such as sport or the arts where they stimulate engagement and progress.

The Designated Teacher should take the lead in monitoring the achievement of the child's targets in the PEP, and implementing any actions by the school. They should call an early Personal education Plan Review when there are significant educational issues, liaising closely with the Virtual School and the social worker, who is responsible for managing the overall care plan.

The Designated Teacher should provide a regular report to the school governing body to highlight the progress that Looked-After children in their school are making, and to outline the strategies employed when underachievement has been identified.

Designated Teachers that work closely with a Looked-After child's carer will find that this makes a big difference to how they are able to provide effective support for the child. How this is achieved will depend on the school's existing arrangements for engaging with those who have parental responsibility for a child. For children in residential settings this may mean liaising with a nominated key worker to ensure consistency of approach.

Carers should always be involved in personal education planning and schools should consider what they can do to encourage and support carers to promote the education of the children they look after, outside normal school hours.

The VSH will make sure the Designated Teacher knows whether the child is on a care order or is voluntarily accommodated and what responsibilities (such as going on school field trips) the local authority looking after the child has delegated to the carer.

When children cease to be Looked-After (for example, because they are adopted or are subject to a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order) their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. Indeed, the change from potentially long-established foster cares to new parents or long-term carers, along with a likely change of school, can lead to additional emotional trauma. Although they will no longer be required to have a PEP, Designated Teachers are now required by statute to continue to take a lead role in their education. As such the Virtual School will advise Designated Teachers to maintain, and even intensify, their direct monitoring of a child at the point they become Previously-Looked-After. Designated Teachers should be aware that some of the attachment issues resulting from early trauma and loss may re-surface and that a child who was Previously settled to learning may need extra support when they cease to be legally Looked-After.

A summary of Designated Teacher responsibilities include:

- The role of the Designated Teacher (DT) in promoting the education of Looked-After Children in their school is key to successful educational outcomes for them. The role is **statutory**, and every governing body has a duty to ensure they have a DT who is a qualified teacher and has 'appropriate seniority, professional experience and status' to lead in this vital task. If this person is not a member of the Senior Leadership

Team, a member of the SLT is expected to champion Looked-After Children at senior leadership level and work closely with the DT.

- Where schools have many LAC, the DT may delegate some of their responsibilities whilst remaining in overall control.
- The DT is expected to work with the governor for Looked-After Children; reporting to them on a regular basis on the progress in all areas of school life for their LAC and support them in undertaking an annual review of policy and practice in this respect.
- As well as ensuring there is a DT in place, the governing body must also ensure that the DT has sufficient support, training and resources to be able to carry out their role. Designated Teachers will need to be given time to attend training provided by the Virtual School, professional organisations and private enterprises to learn about possible solutions to some of the barriers to learning that LAC are subject to. They will need to attend local authority Designated Teacher forums and training to keep themselves informed.
- In turn, DTs will need to train others in the school, so they are enabled to respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of their LAC. They have lead responsibility for ensuring staff dealing with LAC are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and broken attachment and how that is likely to impact on the child. They should be allocated INSET time and resources for this purpose.
- The DT will also have a role in promoting a whole school policy for LAC. Such a policy would:
 - Reflect the school's ethos and set out clearly its commitment to LAC
 - Be linked to the statutory framework
 - Be linked to other school policies such as admissions, safeguarding, equality and diversity (in which LAC should be specifically mentioned)
 - Be specific and detailed in the ways a school is going to carry out its duty to support LAC
 - Include what the school will do to support staff who are working with LAC
 - Spell out the roles and reporting duties of key personnel in school, including governors, SLT, the DT and classroom teachers
 - Specify how school will link with external agencies, such as social care, VS, foster carers, CAMHs etc
 - Show how progress of LAC in all aspects of school life (academic, pastoral and extracurricular) will be tracked and monitored
 - Show what interventions and supports will be used when LAC are not progressing in line with their peers, academically and personally
- In promoting the educational achievement of the school's LAC, it is essential the DT (or someone to whom they have delegated this task) knows each child individually and builds a relationship with each one.
- Many Looked-After Children find trust in adults difficult so it is important a trusting, affirmative relationship is modelled to them, both at home and in school. In doing so, the DT should listen to the child and their views concerning their education, achievements and progress, guide them where necessary, and represent those views in meetings when required.
- DTs are required to track and monitor the achievement and progress of each individual LAC putting in interventions and strategies for improvement where needed.
- When a LAC is new to the school, the DT should liaise with the previous educational setting to request that their school file and any previous PEPs are transferred without delay. This ensures they have all the prior information and data needed to form a view of the child's educational needs. They should also ensure that

assessments are made by the child's new teachers to identify the young person's strengths and weaknesses and any barriers to learning, so that any support needed may be put in place as soon as possible.

- All children are tracked and monitored routinely in schools. At such times, the DT should analyse the achievements and progress of their LAC as a group, comparing their outcomes to those of the year group as a whole and to other similar cohorts, which could be Children in Need.
- Plymouth Virtual School also requests up to date and accurate attainment and progress data in each subject to be presented at each PEP meeting.
- In Plymouth, the Social Worker with the DT is responsible for initiating the PEP. This will include:
 - Arranging dates and times for PEPs – liaising with all relevant stakeholders, including Social Workers.
 - Meeting with the child before the meeting to ascertain their views and ensure they understand the PEP process if they are to attend
 - Gaining feedback forms to all teachers. It is also important that the DT is familiar with this feedback before the PEP.
 - Ensuring an appropriate location for the PEP meeting has been booked if the meeting is to take place in school
 - Ensuring any additional school staff who need to attend the meeting are made aware and cover provided as appropriate
 - Compiling all relevant data, which will include attendance and academic data, behaviour data, reports from 1-1 tutors/mentors, financial information regarding PPP spend etc...
 - Preparing to feedback on progress towards PEP targets and considering any new targets which are needed.

The child's Social Worker

All children in care have an allocated social worker. When a child is taken into care, their social worker exercises the local authority's parental responsibility. This includes making sure that the child's needs are met, that their welfare is safeguarded and that they are encouraged to develop to their full potential.

The most important demand the VSH should make of a social worker is that they prioritise the child's education alongside their care. They should ensure all social workers, from front-line to senior leadership, understand that a child will be safer and emotionally more secure if they have a consistent school placement.

Social workers have a legal duty to make sure that the child is being properly cared for emotionally and physically. This includes:

- Ensuring that the welfare of the child or young person is safeguarded ensuring that they are receiving care that meets their day-to-day needs
- Making sure they are having regular medical checks
- Ensuring that contact is maintained with the child's family and friends
- Making decisions regarding the child's care plan and future
- Checking that they are receiving appropriate education

The child's social worker will visit the child and their carers regularly to carry out these responsibilities. Legally, the social worker must visit the child within one week of the start of a new care placement, and then at intervals of not more than 6 weeks for the first year.

After this, social work visits should not be longer than 3 months apart. Foster carers can also request additional visits.

The social worker ensures that a care plan is in place. This care plan must include information about any educational needs that the child has, and the actions needed to meet those needs. This usually takes the form of a Personal Education Plan, which remains active throughout the time the child is Looked-After.

In order to support high outcomes and aspirations for all Looked-After Children under the care of Plymouth, **we expect social workers to fully commit to partnership working and hence they should do the following:**

- Attend the termly PEP meeting and any other meetings deemed appropriate to support the education of all children on their caseload or make arrangements with duty in the case of an emergency.
- Ensure education is part of their regular dialogue when speaking with or visiting the children and young people on their caseload. This helps the young person to understand that education is a priority for everyone.
- Ensure they have access to the ePEP system for the young people on their caseload and advise the Virtual School admin team where this is not the case.
- Log into the ePEP system for each young person on their caseload at least twice a term. Firstly, prior to the PEP meeting to update Section A (care information) and after the PEP has been signed off to ensure they are clear about the targets set and the actions agreed, particularly those that require their attention to address.
- Ensure a signed off copy of the PEP has been uploaded to the child's record on Care Management System (Care First) on a termly basis. This ensures the PEP sits alongside the young person's care plan.
- Ensure the child's LAC status is correct on Care Management System to ensure the Virtual School are alerted to those becoming LAC and those ceasing to be LAC through the weekly performance lists. Failure to do this will result in data held by the Virtual School being incorrect and PEP timescales not being met.
- Advise the Virtual School Consultant (VSC) and SEN caseworker (where the LAC has an EHCP) of any possible placement breakdowns/changes, particularly where this may result in a school change.
- Advise the VSC of any changes in the young person's health, behaviour, engagement or any other aspect of their care which may impact on their education.
- Advise the VSC of any relevant meetings which may require their attendance.
- Share relevant documents with the VSC such as care plans/pathway plans/risk assessments.
- Share any communications received from school or relating to education with the VSC. Do not assume this has been shared directly.
- Advise the VSC of any transfer of cases to new teams/social workers and ensure that new workers are aware of any meeting commitments relating to education.

The child's Foster Carer

The responsibilities of a foster carer can vary according to the length of time the child is placed with them, the age of the child, the depth of experience of the Foster Carer, and the involvement of the child's parent is in their life. However, in general, the Foster Carer is responsible for:

- The day-to-day care of the child
- Ensuring that the child's physical, health and emotional needs are met

- Ensuring that they attend their education provision

With particular reference to education, foster carers should ensure that the child has appropriate access to learning and is encouraged to make best use of it to fulfil their potential. Though not always explicitly stated in the placement agreement this should include:

- Working closely with the child's school or other educational placement
- Taking an active interest in the child's homework
- Encouraging a child to value learning
- Supporting a child's attendance at school
- Advocating for the child's individual needs

The most important demand the VSH should make of a foster carer is that they have high expectations of Looked-After children and they engage meaningfully with the child's learning. This can be by explicitly raising the child's aspiration and developing an effective working relationship with their school. The VSH should also insist that the carer provides appropriate access at home to equipment and space to support learning.

Independent Fostering Agencies

Where a child is placed with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) a VSH may have more difficulty establishing a working relationship with carers, as it may be more difficult to involve them in local training or fostering support networks. The scale and complexity of IFA organisation is varied, but most have some 'education support' capacity. The Virtual School will liaise with IFA education workers to determine the scope and scale of their work, and to ensure there is synergy, rather than duplication or confusion, with the work of the VSH. Those workers can also act as effective intermediaries with IFA carers that may be geographically distant from the Virtual School.

The VSH should also consider clear information sharing protocols with IFA to facilitate an effective working relationship. Some IFA report that it is difficult to obtain copies of PEPs or attendance records, particularly where the involvement of the carer in personal education planning is varied. An information sharing agreement between VSH and IFA can formalise some of these exchanges of documentation and improve the coordination of support.

The Supervising Social Worker

Each foster carer has a supervising social worker either employed by the local authority or by an independent fostering agency commissioned to provide foster placements. Sometimes these are known as family placement workers or link workers or fostering officers. Senior supervising social workers are responsible for managing the fostering resources of their fostering service, including recruitment of and assessment of new foster carers.

The responsibilities of supervising social workers working directly with foster cares include:

- Liaising with child's social worker
- Helping foster carers identify training needs
- Providing support to foster carers when they have practical or emotional needs arising from fostering children and young people

Sometimes, to the external observer, the child's social worker and the supervising social worker can appear at odds. The most important demand the VSH will make of a supervising social worker is to remember that the end point is the positive development of the child, not simply a happy carer.

The child's Residential Carer

The responsibilities of residential care workers match those of a foster carer in terms of supporting the health, education, welfare etc., of a Looked-After child. Though the context is different residential care workers should ensure that the child does not feel they are living in an institution, but in a shared home.

The most significant difference is that any residential care home must have a registered manager who is responsible for meeting the minimum standards set out in law and guidance.

The best residential homes delegate appropriate responsibility to care workers so similar arrangements for parental and delegated authority are put in place.

The most important demand the VSH will make of a residential carer is that they have high expectations of Looked-After children and they engage meaningfully with the child's learning by explicitly raising the child's aspiration and developing an effective working relationship with their school. The VSH will also insist that the carer provides appropriate access at home to equipment and space to support learning.

One of the great challenges for care home workers is that their shift patterns can make it difficult to establish these consistent relationships with schools. The VSH will ensure Designated Teachers understand these challenges and that the registered manager has systems in place to ensure continuity of communication even if continuity of worker is not possible.

The Independent Reviewing Officer

The roles of VSH and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) are similar in as much as they should provide systemic challenge and support to improve outcomes. While the IROs primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and to ensure that their current wishes and feelings are given full consideration they must, to be successful, be valued by senior managers and operate within a supportive service culture and environment.

An effective IRO service should enable the local authority to achieve improved outcomes for children in its care.

It is not the responsibility of the IRO to manage the case, supervise the social worker, or devise the care plan. Although it is important for the IRO to develop a consistent relationship with the child, this should not undermine or replace the relationship between the social worker and the child.

IROs are well placed to assess the quality and effectiveness of local authority planning and support for children. The IRO has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' for all the children that it looks after. The

IRO should ensure that the child is offered stable care that is sensitive and appropriate to each individual's personal needs so that the child is able to flourish and achieve. The plan for each child must demonstrate how the services provided have fully taken account of the child's wishes and feelings.

However, the IRO is a social worker who may have a varied experience of recent education or its settings. The VSH should therefore offer IROs effective support and guidance to help them interpret the information provided on a child's educational progress and any related commentary.

The most important demand the VSH should make of an independent reviewing officer is that they invest the time and effort needed to understand the child's learning as well as they understand the child's care and safety and use what they learn to inform their challenge to all parties working to ensure the child is learning effectively.

The broader network of support includes:

Local Headteacher Groups

The relationship with school Headteachers can be enhanced by attending their local meetings and regularly reporting the outcomes of the Looked-After children cohort to them.

This can create the opportunity for collective challenge in an effort to create some sense of peer challenge among schools in support of the whole LAC cohort.

The VSH should use access to Headteachers to ensure that they (and their governors) understand:

- The local authority's duty as a corporate parent to promote a Looked-After child's educational achievement
- The main reasons why, as a group, Looked-After children underachieve
- The importance of specific professional development for school leaders and Designated Teachers in supporting the achievement of Looked-After children
- The powerful role they can play in significantly improving the quality of life and the educational experiences of Looked-After children
- Their responsibility to ensure that Designated Teachers have had the appropriate training to undertake their role as set out in the statutory guidance for governing bodies on the role of the Designated Teacher for Looked-After children
- The training and advice the VSH can offer schools in an effort to help them understand that Looked-After children, including those who remain Looked-After but have been placed for adoption, are not a homogenous group and that their individual needs will be different.

The VSH will also ensure that schools understand that statutory guidance requires the VSH to have an understanding of the policies that schools in their area have in place to support the education of Looked-After children and that it is proper for them to seek information on this from all schools.

Commissioning services

The VSH can ensure, through commissioners, that providers of fostering services and residential care have a robust evidence base that demonstrate how they promote the

educational achievement of Looked-After children and help them to achieve. They must also ensure that, when commissioning education services for a Looked-After child from independent providers, commissioning decisions are based on the quality of the educational support provided and evidence that demonstrates it.

The level of VSH involvement will vary but should provide them with the opportunity to influence the specification being commissioned against. Consideration should be given to including specific requirements on the commissioned provider that will enable the VSH to better monitor the child's progress, particularly where they are placed outside the home authority's boundary.

SEN and Educational Psychology Services

A significantly larger proportion of Looked-After children are placed on SEN registers than their peers, so the VSH will expect the assessment of, and planning for, additional education needs (up to and including an education health and care plan) to be prioritised for children in the care of the authority, or those children Looked-After by other authorities but 'belonging' to the host LA.

The VSH will also have access to specialist Educational Psychologist support and will expect strong consultation and advice relating to Looked-After children to be prioritised.

Alternative and Vocational Learning Providers

Schools are responsible for commissioning any alternative/vocational education placement for any child on their roll (including all LAC and PLAC), the quality of the education provided, and for safeguarding of their pupils whilst in the placement.

Given that Looked-After children have been demonstrated to be at greater safeguarding risk when not on school sites and in lessons, it is in the best interest of schools to obtain explicit permission from the social worker and or carer to any off-site education provision.

The VSH will monitor whether there are robust mechanisms in place to ensure that the school knows whether a child has attended the off-site provision and what action they routinely take when they find a child has not attended as expected.

Early Years and Post-16 Providers

The statutory duty of the VSH to legally Looked-After children are clear, irrespective of the child's age. The challenges of fulfilling those duties in the wide variety of potential pre and post compulsory schooling placements, as well as the limits of the duties with respect to relevant and formerly relevant care leavers, are equally clear.

Whatever local arrangements are in place to manage these challenges, the VSH will ensure that children in the EYFS are as well prepared as possible for transition to primary school as possible and have an Early Years PEP. Equally, the VSH must ensure that the progress in learning of all care leavers is effectively monitored.

With respect to FE providers the VSH will seek to ensure that the Post-16 Bursary, payable to care leavers, is distributed in ways that support the young person's learning. The intention of the bursary is not to simply subsidise the provision of equipment or learning

materials the young person needs, but equally the child's social worker should ensure it is used to support their learning, rather than a lump sum for recreation.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) must be managed by the VSH to improve the attainment and progress of Looked-After children.

The current PP+ allocation per LAC and PLAC is £2410 per year. However, whilst it is calculated per child, the actual allocation of that funding is not on a per capita basis. A proportion of PP+ funding is top sliced to enable the Virtual School to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and support needs (Inc. Educational Psychologist and Learning Mentor provision).

The VSH, working with education settings, will implement Pupil Premium Plus arrangements for Looked-After children in accordance with the latest conditions of grant published by the DfE and any supplementary advice the DfE issues. These can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>

The current conditions of grant provide little detail on the use of PP+, saying only:

The LAC premium must be managed by the designated virtual school head (VSH) in the local authority that looks after the child and used without delay for the benefit of the Looked-After child's educational needs as described in their personal education plan.

... and,

The VSH should ensure there are arrangements in place to discuss how the child will benefit from pupil premium funding with the Designated Teacher or another member of staff in the child's education setting who best understands their needs. Processes for allocating funds to a child's education setting should be as simple as possible to avoid delay.

The most recent statutory guidance adds more detail but stresses that the VSH has considerable flexibility in the use of PP+ funding in order to maximise its impact for individual Looked-After children, as well as the whole Looked-After cohort.

It also makes it clear that every VSH should publish a clear policy on their use of PP+, including how they decide the level and use of top-sliced funding. Our Policy can be found on the PCC website and has been shared with Designated Teachers.

For Looked-After children, PP+ funding is managed by the VSH for the purpose of supporting their educational achievement. The VSH and schools, including the Designated Teacher, will work together to agree how this funding can most effectively be used to improve Looked-After children's attainment.

All PEPs should include information about how that Looked-After child is benefitting from the use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

For Previously Looked-After children, PP+ funding is managed by the child's school. The amount a school receives is based on the number of eligible children recorded in the school's annual January School Census return to the Department for Education.

For both Looked-After and Previously Looked-After children PP+ is not a personal budget for individual children. The VSH and school manage their PP+ allocation for the benefit of their cohort of Looked-After or Previously Looked-After children and according to children's need.

Effective use of the PP+ might include:

1. Specialist support services, including speech and language therapy, educational psychology and counselling and mental health services.
2. Training for stakeholders, particularly around emotional needs.
3. Additional staffing: including school staff to support Looked-After children.
4. Virtual School staffing and resources, including electronic support devices.
5. Bespoke interventions, including creating a bespoke curriculum and one-to-one tuition.
6. Equipment, including resources for Looked-After children such as computer hardware.
7. Regional events, such as Designated Teacher conferences.
8. Social support, including school or social clubs, celebration days and foster care support, events to develop cultural awareness or employability for children in care.

There is a growing research base on the strategies and interventions that are likely to have the greatest degree of success for Looked After Children, Previously Looked After Children, and those children and young people that have had Social Worker involvement. We STRONGLY recommend that schools and Designated Teachers consult these findings when setting targets and associated interventions as part of the PEP process.

A summary of this research can be found via the following links:

Research Findings Summary: https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WWCSC_what_works_education_children_SWs_Feb20_A.pdf

Research Findings Full Report: https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WWCSC_what_works_education_children_SWs_Technical_Report_Feb20-1-A.pdf

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

As a group, Looked After Children (LAC) typically lag behind their non-Looked After peers at the end of every Key Stage in school. In order to narrow this gap a personalised learning plan is essential for each LAC, which identifies their individual learning needs and puts a plan in place to meet those needs so that their own expectations, and those of others, are raised and their life chances enhanced. This is known as the Personal Education Plan (PEP).

It is a legal requirement that every LAC has a care plan of which the PEP is an integral part. An up-to-date copy of the PEP should be available for each LAC Review and Pathway Planning meeting from when the child is pre-school until they are 18.

The PEP also forms part of the child's official school record. If a child moves school, all previous PEPs should be securely forwarded along with the child's file, to the receiving school by the Designated Teacher (DT). As a document, it provides a 'collective memory' about the child's education.

In Plymouth it is the responsibility of the Designated Teacher and Social Worker to initiate the PEP, and this should be done in consultation with the child, carer and Virtual School. The PEP should be seen as a priority in the calendar of meetings for LAC. Even if the child does not have an educational placement, a PEP must still be produced within the statutory timeframe.

The first PEP is usually referred to as the 'initial' PEP. Subsequent PEPs should build upon previous ones, to become an evolving record and review document.

It is expected that a PEP will be agreed at a meeting which is usually held at a child's school. Where a child does not have an education placement, the Social Worker and Virtual School will liaise with other professionals to agree a suitable alternative location.

Some LAC do not wish for their PEP meeting to be held at school or to attend. Where this is the case, their wishes and feelings should be gathered beforehand and shared at the meeting on their behalf. While it may not always be possible, efforts should be made to not remove a child from their lessons in order for them to attend their PEP meeting.

PEPs should not be disciplinary meetings. They should identify, promote and build upon the child's strengths. PEPs should be solution focused; finding ways to support the child's educational progress.

The Plymouth Virtual School has produced a '**Guide to Developing Effective and Successful PEPs**' that should act as a 'one-stop' document for Headteachers, Designated Teachers, Social Workers and other key stakeholders, for ensuring a high-quality and effective PEP process for our most vulnerable children.

The Virtual School has a responsibility to quality assure all PEPs. The Virtual School will grade submitted PEPs on a four-grade scale. As PEPs are a statutory requirement, the quality of PEPs at an individual school level, and across the city as a whole, are shared with Service Directors in Plymouth City Council, the Virtual School Management Board and Ofsted during ILACS Inspections. If the quality of PEPs for a school causes concern, this will be discussed with the Headteacher.

The criteria used by the Virtual School for the quality assurance process is outlined below

Outstanding

- All sections are fully complete, detailed and accurate.
- Termly academic achievement, progress and attendance are clearly outlined.
- SMART targets are tightly focused and reflect all progress concerns.
- The young person's views are strongly represented.
- All stakeholders have a clear voice in the PEP.
- The PEP meeting demonstrates very high expectations and ambition for the young person.

Good

- All sections are complete and accurate.
- Termly academic achievement, progress and attendance are clearly outlined.
- SMART targets are appropriate and reflect most of the progress concerns identified.
- The young person's views are represented.
- The PEP meeting represents a clear overview of where the young person is and what they need to do to make further progress.

Requires Improvement

- One section may be missing or incomplete. Some areas may lack detail.
- Attendance and attainment/progress are recorded.
- Some of the progress concerns are reflected in the SMART targets.
- The young person has been supported to include their views.

Inadequate

- Multiple sections may be missing or incomplete.
- No termly attainment/progress data is included.
- The young person's voice is not presented.
- SMART targets lack precision, detail and time frames.
- The PEP lacks high expectations and ambition for the young person.

It is the expectation of the Virtual School that all PEPs meet at least the 'Good' criteria, as this is what our young people deserve.

All PEP sections must be completed carefully. PEPs with missing sections or incomplete sections cannot be graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

Those PEPs graded 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' are likely to be returned.

School Admissions

Things to consider:

- Consult the Virtual School at the point of considering any placement changes and before approaching your local school.
- Looked-After children should be placed in schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be "Outstanding" or "Good".
- The Ofsted rating for Plymouth schools can be found on school finder at www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables

Under paragraph 1.17 of the Code all school and academies are required to give the highest priority in their admission rules to Looked-After children and Previously Looked-After children. Previously Looked-After children are children who were Looked-After but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order). This means that at the point of transfer (i.e. Reception, transfer to junior and transfer to secondary school) Looked-After children will be the highest priority for a place.

All schools are expected to make a special effort to admit a Looked-After child at any point in the school year, even if the school is full.

SEND pupils

If a Looked-After child has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) the school placement will be managed by the EHCP Coordinator. If the young person is living in another LA, please contact the Virtual School as the EHCP may be administered by Plymouth or the local authority where they are living.

In Year Admissions

Admissions to all Plymouth schools are coordinated by the School Admissions Team.

Applications for school places should usually be processed within 15 school days in accordance with DfE guidelines. To apply for a Plymouth school place at any time other than the point of transfer to a school an In-Year Admission application form must be completed. This can be done by either the social worker or carer.

Out of County Placements

Admissions to schools that are not in Plymouth will either be coordinated by the local authority area in which the school is based or will be processed by the schools themselves. The website for the relevant local authority should have information on the process but if there are any queries, please contact the Admissions Team.

Refused Applications

If an application to a Plymouth school is refused admission to school contact the Virtual School for advice. The responsible local authority for the Looked-After child can take enforcement action to require a school to admit by using the direction process. This process will differ depending on which type of school it is and advice will always need to be sought from the Admissions Team when considering taking enforcement action. The enforcement process is not a quick solution and can take several months to conclude.

Transport

Home to school transport will only be provided in line with Plymouth's Home to School Transport policy.

For further advice on admissions please contact the School Admissions team at:

Reception/Foundation Admissions (starting in Reception or Foundation of an infant or primary school)

Email: primary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

Junior Admissions (transferring at the end of Year 2 in an infant or primary school to start in year 3 of a junior school)

Email: junior.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

Secondary admissions (transferring at the end of Year 6 in a primary school to start in Year 7 of a secondary school)

Email: secondary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

Key Stage 4 admissions (KS4) (transferring at either the end of Year 8 of a secondary school to start Year 9 at a University Technical College (UTC) or Studio School or the end of Year 9 of a secondary school to start Year 10 at a UTC or Studio School.

Email: secondary.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

In-year admissions (transferring to an infant, junior, primary, secondary or KS4 school at any point other than at the normal points of transfer above)

Email: inyear.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

The importance of strong attendance

Children are required to attend school for 190 days each year. The Government's target for attendance for Primary School Pupils is at least 95%. Persistent absence is recorded at 90% attendance.

Effects of non-attendance and lateness

The table below indicates how just a few days absence and/or lateness can result in children missing a significant number of lessons. It is proved that children who miss a lot of school achieve less well.

Attendance during school year	Equates to days absent	Which is approximately	Which means the number of lessons missed
94%	10 Days	2 Weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 Days	6 Weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 Days	8 Weeks	200 lessons
75%	48 Days	10 Weeks	250 lessons
70%	57 Days	11.5 Weeks	290 lessons
65%	67 Days	13.5 Weeks	340 lessons

Minutes Late	Equates to teaching days lost in one year
5 mins	3 days
10 mins	6 days
15 mins	9 days
20 mins	12 days
25 mins	15 days
30 mins	20 days

Part-Time Timetables

The general expectation here is that LAC should not be placed on a part-time timetable. These young people have a legal right to access their full curriculum for a minimum of 25hrs per week.

However, we do recognise that in extremely rare cases, a very short-term reduced timetable may be appropriate. If this is appropriate, the following things must be actioned:

- An immediate discussion with the Virtual School – who must agree before any change is implemented.
- Discussion with the Carers and Social Worker – again, who must be in agreement.
- Measures to be put in place to safeguard the young person if they are off site for any period of time during school hours – this should include a risk assessment, daily welfare checks etc... Please remember that during school hours, the school is fully responsible for safeguarding that young person.
- Measures to ensure that the young person still receives their curriculum entitlement (this may involve tutoring at home or online). Simple setting work/tasks via a homework package is not suitable.
- Plans to address any curriculum knowledge gaps that develop as a result of a reduced timetable.
- A clear date for review – this should be within a month maximum.

A part-time timetable is a very short-term strategy and should only be used in rare, exceptional circumstances.

Study Leave

We strongly encourage all schools to ensure that LAC continue to attend school to receive the support they need until completion of their final examination. LAC should **never** be placed on 'Early Study Leave'.

Holidays should not be taken in term time

Only the school can give permission for carers to take a child out of school during term time for a holiday, but please talk to the Virtual School if you are considering a request.

Children missing from education (CME)

For support, advice or information about children missing education please contact the Plymouth Inclusion and Welfare Service.

Removal from school roll

Pupils should only be removed from a school roll when it is confirmed that a child has started on roll at their new education placement.

It is illegal to remove a pupil from roll for non-attendance. When schools exclude a pupil from school, they are required to follow the statutory guidance.

Exclusions

Schools should seek to avoid the exclusion of Looked-After or Previously-Looked-After children.

Should a LAC or PLAC be at risk of exclusion, schools must discuss with the Virtual School at the earliest opportunity. Wherever possible, before exclusion is considered, schools and social workers must work together in partnership with the local authority to consider all possible options.

Due to the impact of trauma on LAC and PLAC, it is common that these young people may become dysregulated in their behaviour more frequently than their non-care experienced peers. We would recommend that Behaviour Policies, just as they do with SEND, recognise the challenges faced by LAC and PLAC, and apply 'reasonable adjustments'.

In the circumstances where an exclusion is unavoidable, we would ask all schools to seriously consider the length of that exclusion. A longer exclusion (e.g. 3-5 days), is likely to have a much more detrimental impact on a trauma affected young person, than a shorter exclusion (e.g. 0.5-1 day).

Please can all schools remember that exclusion is likely to compound trauma, and further increase curriculum knowledge gaps.

In Plymouth, we do not Permanently Exclude LAC.

Support for Previously Looked After Children

Plymouth City Council retains a role, through the Plymouth Virtual School, in helping to promote the educational achievement of Previously Looked-After Children by providing information and advice to:

- Any person that has parental responsibility for the child.
- Providers of funded early years education and Designated Teachers for previously looked after children in maintained schools and academies.
- Any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

Previously looked after children are those who:

- Are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order
- Were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society

Our duty relates to Previously Looked-After Children who are in education in the area served by the Plymouth Virtual School, irrespective of where the child lives. The duty requires the Plymouth Virtual School to:

1. Providing advice and information online.
2. Providing advice to individual parents/carers and schools where they have a query.
3. Advising schools on how they can support Previously Looked-After Children.
4. Advising schools on how to best use Pupil Premium to support Previously Looked-After Children.

The Virtual School has produced a guide that can be shared with colleagues, parents and guardians called '***Supporting the Education of Previously Looked After Children: Advice and Guidance for Schools, Parents and Guardians***'.

The Plymouth Virtual School is not expected to monitor the educational progress of individual children or be held to account for their educational attainment, attendance and behaviour. Any intervention in the education of a Previously Looked-After Child must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have parental responsibility for the child. They, like all parents, are responsible for overseeing their child's progress in education.

Schools and the role of the Designated Teacher

Governing bodies and Trust Boards have a duty to designate a member of staff to promote the educational achievement of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children, including those adopted from 'state care' outside England. They should have the opportunity to undertake appropriate training and work closely with parents and guardians to ensure the best outcomes for the child, socially, emotionally and educationally.

The role of the Designated Teacher in relation to Previously Looked-After Children can be found in the following statutory guidance: [*The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children: Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities*](#)

Early Years Funding

Children aged 2 years old who have been adopted from care are entitled to a free early education place. They can also benefit from the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) when they are aged 3 and 4. This contributes additional funding to early education placements to help your child's nursery or childminder to help improve the education they provide for children who need more support. Parents will need to tell the education provider that their child is adopted in order for them to claim the EYPP.

For further information click [HERE](#)

Pupil Premium Plus

This is additional funding given to schools and recognises that children who have spent time in care may need extra support in school as a result of their early experiences. The grant is currently £2,410 per eligible pupil per year and is for students from Reception class up to Year 11. In order to be eligible, students need to have been looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted.

Parents and guardians must declare their child's adoptive, SGO or CAO status directly to the school before the school completes the October census. They should provide evidence, for example, a copy of the legal order, or a confirmation letter from the local council which placed their child. Parents will not need to declare their child's status again until the child changes school. They are not obliged to declare this information.

Pupil Premium money for Previously Looked-After Children goes directly to the school (it is not held by the Plymouth Virtual School) and is not ring-fenced for the individual child. It is good practice for schools to include parents and guardians in discussions around the most effective use of Pupil Premium Plus.

Occasionally, a child may be in an adoptive placement and legally still be in the care of the Local Authority. In these circumstances the child will continue to have statutory Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings to review progress and discuss use of the Pupil

Premium. Where this applies, the Pupil Premium Plus will be administered through the Plymouth Virtual School in the same way as for looked after children.

Once the order (Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement) is granted, the statutory PEP meetings will cease. It is often helpful and supportive if there continue to be regular opportunities to share information between home and school. Parents and guardians can request and agree to more informal review meetings with school staff if they feel it is appropriate.

School Admissions

Every school has to have the admission of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children as the number one priority for entry in their admissions code. Every state-funded school in Plymouth complies with this legal requirement.

For further information you can contact the Plymouth School Admissions Team on: school.admissions@plymouth.gov.uk

Useful resources for schools

- [Welcoming Adopted Children to Nursery](#)
- [Welcoming Adopted Children to Primary School](#)
- [Welcoming Adopted Children to Secondary School](#)
- [Meeting the Needs of Adopted and Permanently Placed Children – A Guide for School Staff](#)
- [Simple Strategies to Support the Needs of Previously Looked After and Permanently Placed Children in School](#)
- [EEF: What Works in Education for Children who had had Social Workers](#)
- [Ideas for Using the Pupil Premium Plus to Support Previously Looked After Children](#)
- [Pupil Premium for Adopted Children: Case Studies](#)
- [Example Transition Plan and Strategies for Previously Looked After Children](#)
- [Booklist for Schools](#)

Useful resources for Parents and Guardians

- [Key Questions for Primary Schools](#)
- [Key Questions for Secondary Schools](#)
- [Meeting the Needs of Adopted and Permanently Placed Children – A Guide for Parents](#)
- [School Information for Adopted Parents and Special Guardians](#)
- [First4Adoption](#)
- [Adoption UK](#)
- [PAC-UK](#)
- [Adopt Southwest](#)

The Extended Role

Virtual School Heads have also been asked to become strategic leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker.

The term 'children with a social worker' covers all children who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan. This includes children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings.

This cohort has been identified as a group of children who face significant barriers to education as a result of experiences of adversity and trauma, most commonly abuse and neglect.

In practice this means that the Virtual School will help to:

- Make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- Provide advice and guidance to schools to help them 'level up' up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential.

What the Extended Role is not:

The Virtual School role for children with a social worker is a strategic leadership responsibility. For clarity, this means that Virtual School Heads are **not** being asked to:

- Work with individual children and their families.
- Tracking and monitoring the educational progress of individual children or providing/funding academic or other interventions.
- Responding to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children with a social worker.

Following the planning work currently being undertaken by a multi-agency working group during the Spring/Summer Terms 2022, from September 2022, the Plymouth Virtual School will be providing on-going advice, guidance, and training to all schools on how to best support children who have, or have had, a social worker.