



Designated Teacher Policy

(for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children)

Reviewed by:	Henrietta Jordan, Schools Director
Date:	1 September 2026
Last review date:	1 September 2025
Next review due by:	31 st August 2028
Version control:	4
Approved by:	Tracey Storey, CEO

Statement of Intent

The school is committed to securing strong educational outcomes, stability, safety and belonging for every looked-after and previously looked-after child. We recognise that care experience, disrupted education, trauma, changes of placement and unmet special educational needs may create additional barriers to attendance, learning, relationships and wellbeing. These barriers will be identified and addressed through high expectations, accessible provision, careful planning and effective multi-agency working.

The school will appoint an appropriately trained teacher to lead this work. For consistency, this policy refers to that person as the Designated Teacher. The Designated Teacher will work closely with the learner, carers or parents, the social worker, Virtual School Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENDCo, placing authority and other relevant professionals.

Policy Status and Scope

Independent School Position

The statutory duty in section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, and the 2018 statutory Designated Teacher guidance, apply directly to maintained schools. They do not impose the same appointment duty on this non-section 41 independent special school. However, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 states that in other schools and colleges an appropriately trained teacher should take the lead. The school therefore appoints a Designated Teacher and follows the relevant principles of the 2018 guidance as good practice.

This policy applies to all learners on roll who are looked after or previously looked after. Relevant provisions also guide the school's support for care leavers, learners with a social worker and learners in kinship care, while recognising that these groups do not all have the same legal status or entitlement.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance, as applicable to an independent special school:

- Children Act 1989, including the definition and duties relating to looked-after children.
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008, including section 20 and the statutory designated-teacher framework for maintained schools.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, including the extended role of Virtual School Heads for previously looked-after children.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and relevant EHC plan duties of local authorities.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including curriculum, welfare, safeguarding, information for parents and leadership requirements.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, effective from 1 September 2026, particularly the sections on looked-after and previously looked-after children, Virtual School Heads, children with a social worker, safeguarding records and information transfer.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE, 2018), followed as relevant good practice.
- Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE statutory guidance).
- Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: Virtual School Head role extension.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance, current statutory guidance.
- Pupil Premium conditions of grant for the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

Definitions

- **Looked-after child:** a child who is looked after by a local authority within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989, including a learner who is in care or is provided with accommodation by a local authority.
- **Previously looked-after child:** a child who is no longer looked after because they became subject to an adoption order, special guardianship order or qualifying child arrangements order, or who was adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- **Personal Education Plan (PEP):** the educational element of a looked-after child's care plan. It is owned and reviewed through the local authority care-planning process and records the learner's educational needs, aspirations, support, targets and use of relevant resources.
- **Virtual School Head (VSH):** the local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after child's and providing statutory advice and information for previously looked-after child's. The VSH also has extended strategic responsibilities for children with a social worker and children in kinship care.
- **Care leaver:** a young person who has left local-authority care and may be entitled to support from a Personal Adviser and a pathway plan.
- **Kinship care:** an arrangement in which a learner is cared for by a relative, friend or connected person. A learner in kinship care is not automatically looked after or previously looked after; their legal status must be confirmed.

Core Principles

- Learners will be known as individuals. Their care status will never be used to stereotype, lower expectations or explain away difficulties without further assessment.
- The school will maintain high aspirations for attendance, progress, qualifications, independence, preparation for adulthood and sustained destinations.
- Support will be trauma-aware, relational, inclusive and adapted to the learner's communication, sensory, cognitive, physical and emotional needs.
- The learner's views will be sought and recorded in an accessible way, including through AAC, symbols, visual supports, advocacy or a trusted adult where required.
- Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis. The learner's care status will not be disclosed more widely than necessary.
- Education will be kept as stable as possible. Changes to care placement, school placement or timetable will be planned carefully and challenged where they risk avoidable disruption.
- Any concern about abuse, neglect, exploitation, self-harm, suicide risk, criminalisation, missing episodes or another safeguarding issue will be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy without delay.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Directors will:

- ensure that each school appoints an appropriately trained QTS teacher as Designated Teacher and identifies suitable cover during absence;
- ensure the Designated Teacher has sufficient authority, time, resources, training and access to senior leadership;
- receive anonymised assurance at least annually on attendance, progress, wellbeing, PEP quality, placement stability, suspensions, destinations and the impact of funded support;
- ensure school policies and contractual arrangements do not disadvantage looked-after or previously looked-after children; and
- challenge any disproportionate pattern in sanctions, attendance, part-time timetables, restrictive interventions or placement breakdown.

The Principal will:

- name the Designated Teacher and deputy or cover arrangement in the school-specific appendix;
- ensure relevant staff understand their responsibilities and have access to appropriate training;
- ensure the Designated Teacher is involved in admissions, transitions, PEPs, urgent reviews, suspension or exclusion decisions and concerns about placement stability;
- ensure the school provides the information, support and evidence required by the placing authority, social worker and VSH; and
- ensure concerns about implementation are addressed promptly and may be escalated through the school's complaints procedure.

The Designated Teacher will:

- act as the school's central educational contact for looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- promote a whole-school culture of high expectations, belonging, stability and sensitive practice;
- coordinate the school's contribution to each looked-after child's PEP and ensure agreed actions are implemented and reviewed;
- maintain an up-to-date overview of attendance, punctuality, attainment, progress, wellbeing, behaviour, suspensions, restrictive interventions, EHC plan provision, interventions and destinations;
- ensure the learner is involved in planning and review through communication that is accessible to them;
- work closely with carers, parents, social workers, the VSH, Personal Adviser, SENDCo, DSPL and relevant professionals;
- support staff to understand the impact of trauma, loss, disrupted attachment, care experience and SEND without lowering expectations;
- advise on adaptive teaching, curriculum access, study support, qualifications, careers and transition planning;
- monitor how any Pupil Premium Plus funding or locally commissioned support is used and evaluate its impact;
- ensure previously looked-after status is recorded and handled sensitively where parents or guardians have chosen to disclose it;
- seek advice from the VSH for previously looked-after children with the agreement of the person with parental responsibility, unless safeguarding requires otherwise;
- work with the DSPL to ensure safeguarding information is understood and acted upon; and
- provide termly reports to the Principal and contribute to annual directors assurance.

The Designated Safeguarding and Prevent Lead will:

- hold or have prompt access to the learner's social worker details, VSH details, legal care status, delegated authority, contact arrangements and relevant care information;
- ensure the Designated Teacher receives relevant safeguarding information on a need-to-know basis;
- coordinate immediate safeguarding action and multi-agency referrals where concerns arise;
- hold the Personal Adviser's details for care leavers aged 16 or 17 and liaise about safeguarding, education, training or pathway-plan concerns;
- ensure the child protection file is stored securely and transferred separately from the main learner record within KCSIE timescales; and
- ensure a clear, structured safeguarding summary accompanies a transfer where appropriate.

The SENDCo will:

- ensure SEND, disability, communication, sensory needs and EHC plan outcomes are accurately reflected in educational planning;
- co-ordinate reasonable adjustments and specialist advice;
- ensure the PEP and EHC plan are aligned where the learner has an EHC plan;
- seek an urgent EHC plan review where changing need or placement instability indicates that provision may no longer be sufficient; and
- work with the Designated Teacher to prevent disability-related disadvantage and inappropriate sanctions.

All staff will:

- maintain high expectations and avoid public or unnecessary reference to a learner's care status;
- implement the PEP, EHC plan, risk assessments, individual support plans and reasonable adjustments relevant to their role;
- report safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing, progress or placement concerns promptly;
- avoid assumptions that behaviour, distress, injury or absence is explained solely by SEND or care experience; and
- contribute accurate and timely information to PEPs and other professional reviews.

Admissions, Induction and Educational Stability

- The Designated Teacher and DSPL will be involved promptly when the school is considering or receiving a placement for a looked-after child.
- The school will obtain sufficient information before or immediately on admission, including care status, parental responsibility, delegated authority, social worker, VSH, PEP, EHC plan, safeguarding information, health needs, attendance history and current support.
- An accessible induction and transition plan will be agreed with the learner, carer, social worker and placing authority. It will identify trusted adults, communication needs, transport, routines, curriculum, risk management and contact arrangements.
- The school will challenge avoidable disruption caused by a proposed change of care placement, education placement, transport or timetable and will provide clear educational advice to the local authority.
- Transitions to a new class, phase, provider, college, apprenticeship or employment will be planned early and supported through visits, accessible information and information sharing.

Personal Education Plans

Every looked-after child must have a PEP as part of the local authority's care plan. The social worker and local authority retain responsibility for the care-planning process. The Designated Teacher will co-ordinate the school's contribution and may chair the PEP meeting where this is agreed locally.

The school will contribute to PEP reviews at least termly, or more frequently where needs, placement arrangements or local authority procedures require. A high-quality PEP will:

- record the learner's views, strengths, aspirations, identity and achievements;
- include accurate attendance, attainment, progress and assessment information;
- identify barriers to learning, including SEND, communication, health, trauma, relationships and practical barriers;
- set specific, measurable and time-bound educational targets;
- identify the provision, responsible person and review date for each action;
- align with the EHC plan, individual healthcare plan and safeguarding or risk plans where applicable;
- address curriculum access, qualifications, enrichment, careers and preparation for adulthood;

- record the purpose and intended impact of Pupil Premium Plus or other additional support;
- include transition and contingency planning where the placement may be at risk.

Previously looked after children do not normally have a statutory PEP after leaving care. The school will use an appropriate individual education, pastoral or support plan where this would benefit the learner.

Attendance and Part-Time Timetables

- Attendance and punctuality will be monitored closely and reviewed with the learner, carer, social worker and VSH where concerns emerge.
- The school will follow its Attendance Policy and all applicable notification and register requirements.
- Unexplained or concerning absence, missing episodes and changes in attendance will be considered as possible safeguarding indicators and referred to the DSPL.
- A part-time timetable will be exceptional, temporary, in the learner's best interests and used only where full-time attendance is not currently appropriate. It will not be used as a behaviour sanction.
- Any part-time timetable will have written parental or carer involvement, local-authority and VSH discussion, a clear rationale, safeguarding arrangements, review dates and a plan to return to full-time education as soon as appropriate.
- Where a learner has an EHC plan, the placing authority will be involved, and an urgent review will be considered.

Safeguarding, Mental Health and Multi-Agency Working

- The Designated Teacher and DSPL will work together while maintaining distinct educational and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Mental health difficulties may be a consequence or indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma or unmet need. Concerns involving self-harm, suicide risk or significant deterioration will be treated as safeguarding concerns.
- The school will participate fully in care reviews, child protection processes, family help planning, strategy discussions and professional meetings where requested and relevant.
- The learner's voice will be represented accurately and directly wherever possible.
- Birth parents, carers, guardians and other adults will be involved according to parental responsibility, court orders, the care plan and delegated authority. The school will not assume that every adult is entitled to all information or decisions.
- Where a learner is at risk of criminalisation or exploitation, staff will remain professionally curious and consider coercion, contextual safeguarding and the learner's wider vulnerabilities.

SEND, Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

- The school will not assume that distress, behaviour or poor progress is an unavoidable feature of a learner's disability, SEND or care experience.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered and recorded for teaching, communication, sensory access, attendance, behaviour expectations, meetings, sanctions, assessments, transport and transitions.
- The Designated Teacher and SENDCo will check that provision specified in the EHC plan is being delivered and that the PEP does not duplicate or contradict it.
- Where provision is insufficient, the school will provide evidence to the placing authority and request review or additional support promptly.
- Accessible communication, including AAC, symbols, visual supports, supported decision-making or advocacy, will be used where needed.

Suspension, Permanent Exclusion and Placement Stability

- The school will follow its Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy for independent special schools and will not use informal exclusion, cooling-off periods or an unrecorded reduction in attendance.
- The Designated Teacher, DSPL and SENDCo will be involved before a suspension or permanent exclusion decision wherever circumstances allow.
- For a looked-after child, the social worker, VSH, placing authority and carer will be contacted as soon as possible. An urgent PEP and, where applicable, EHC plan review will be considered.
- For a previously looked-after child, parents or guardians will be involved and VSH advice may be sought with their agreement.
- Repeated suspension, removal from class or restrictive intervention will trigger review of unmet SEND, mental health, safeguarding, communication, curriculum and placement needs.
- No learner will be pressured to leave, electively home educate or accept an unsuitable placement.

Pupil Premium Plus and Additional Resources

The school will not assume that Pupil Premium Plus is paid directly to an independent setting.

- For looked-after Children, Pupil Premium Plus is managed by the Virtual School Head and should support needs identified through the PEP.
- For eligible learners educated in an independent setting where the local authority pays full tuition fees, the local authority may allocate Pupil Premium funding to the school or use the funding itself to provide additional educational support. The local authority must consult the setting.
- Any funding, provision or support received will be recorded clearly, linked to identified need and evaluated for impact.
- Pupil Premium Plus is not a personal budget and may be pooled where this is lawful and supports eligible learners effectively.
- The school will ensure that additional funding does not replace support that should already be provided through the placement fee, EHC plan or other statutory arrangements.

Previously Looked-After Children

- Status will be recorded securely and shared only where necessary to support the learner.
- The Designated Teacher will offer advice, monitor progress and coordinate support, while recognising that previously looked-after children do not normally have a continuing statutory PEP.
- The school may seek advice from the VSH with parental or guardian agreement, unless safeguarding considerations require information to be shared without consent.
- Support will take account of adoption, special guardianship and child arrangements while avoiding assumptions that all experiences or needs are the same.

Children in Kinship Care and Children With a Social Worker

The VSH has an extended non-statutory strategic role for children with a social worker and, since September 2024, for children in kinship care. This does not make every learner in kinship care looked after or previously looked after.

- The school will confirm the learner's legal status rather than infer it from their living arrangements.
- The Designated Teacher and DSPL will seek advice from the VSH, social care or kinship support services where this will improve attendance, attainment, progress or wellbeing.
- Kinship carers with special guardianship orders or child arrangements orders may request advice and information from the VSH, including where the learner was not previously looked after.
- Support will be recorded under the policy and plan most appropriate to the learner's legal status and needs.

Care Leavers

- Where a learner aged 16 or 17 is a care leaver, the DSPL and Designated Teacher will hold the Personal Adviser's contact details and understand the relevant pathway plan.
- The school will liaise with the Personal Adviser, social worker or leaving-care service about safeguarding, attendance, education, training, housing or transition concerns.
- Careers and preparation-for-adulthood planning will start early and include sustained education, employment or training, travel, finance, health, relationships and independent-living skills where relevant.

Records, Confidentiality and Information Transfer

- Records will be accurate, factual, secure and accessible only to staff who need them for their role.
- The school will distinguish current risk and need from historic information and will avoid language that stigmatises the learner or presents past concerns without context.
- The main learner record, PEP information, SEND records and child protection file will be managed according to their distinct legal and safeguarding requirements.
- When a learner transfers, the DSPL will transfer the child protection file separately from the main learner record as soon as possible, and within five days for an in-year transfer or within the first five days of a new term. Secure transit and confirmation of receipt are required.
- A clear, structured safeguarding summary identifying current concerns, relevant context and ongoing support needs will accompany the child protection file where appropriate.
- The Designated Teacher will ensure the receiving setting has the educational, PEP, transition and professional-contact information needed to provide continuity, subject to lawful information-sharing requirements.
- The school will follow its Data Protection and Records Management policies when responding to access, correction or complaint requests.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Inspection Evidence

The Designated Teacher will review provision at least termly. The Principal will ensure that the school can evidence both implementation and impact. Monitoring will include:

- attendance, punctuality and any part-time timetable;
- attainment, progress, qualifications and destination planning;
- PEP quality, timeliness and completion of agreed actions;
- learner voice, wellbeing, relationships and belonging;
- suspensions, permanent exclusion risk, restrictive interventions and placement stability;
- SEND provision, EHC plan outcomes and reasonable adjustments;
- use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus or other funded support;
- transition, careers and preparation for adulthood;
- staff training and confidence; and
- any patterns of disproportionate outcomes or unmet need.

The directors will receive anonymised annual assurance and will ensure actions are followed through. Inspection evidence may include the school-specific contact appendix, training records, PEP quality checks, learner work, attendance and progress records, meeting minutes, funding impact evidence and case studies demonstrating improved outcomes.

Concerns and Complaints

A learner, carer, parent, guardian, social worker, VSH or other professional may raise a concern with the Designated Teacher or Principal. Safeguarding concerns will be referred immediately to the DSPL. Concerns that are not resolved informally may be raised through the school's Complaints Policy. This does not prevent a person from using the placing authority's, local authority's or social care complaints arrangements where relevant.

Training

- The Designated Teacher and named cover will complete role-specific induction and regular updates relevant to looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Training will include PEP quality, trauma and attachment, safeguarding, SEND, reasonable adjustments, attendance, Pupil Premium Plus, suspension prevention, information sharing and transitions, via the National college.
- Relevant staff will receive appropriate awareness training, and completion will be recorded.
- Training will be refreshed when legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures or the school's cohort changes.

Links with Other Documentation

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy and Accessibility Plan
- Attendance Policy and Part-Time Timetable Procedure
- Behaviour Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Restrictive Interventions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Careers and Information, Advice and Guidance Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- GDPR and Records Management Policies
- Complaints Policy
- Alternative Provision Policy
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy