



Bedford
Nursery Schools
Federation

Children Looked After

Adopted by Governors: Jan 2015

Reviewed: December 2023

Next Review: 1 year

Named Governor: Deborah James

Bedford Nursery Schools Federation is committed to helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of 'children looked after', and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and "normality" for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

Bedford Nursery Schools Federation employs a Family Support Worker, qualified to no less than Level 4 who supports the Executive Head Teacher and Designated Teacher at each school.

Definition

The term "looked after" was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the Local Authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the Local Authority in order to protect and promote a child's welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

Furthermore, the term "looked after", which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term "in public care", which has been adopted by the DfE in their publication, "The Education of Young People in Public Care". The DfE has also published guidance on promoting the education of children looked after and previously looked-after children (2018). The [Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#) aims to ensure children in care receive high-quality care and services, which are focused on and tailored to their needs.

Legal Framework

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education to all children looked after;
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all children looked after;
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all children looked after;

- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of children looked after;
- Develop systems of communications and protocols;
- Promote and monitor the attendance of children looked after;
- School must ensure that any additional funding received is used to support children looked after to improve their outcomes through a termly PEP (Personal Education Plan).

Objectives

Bedford Nursery Schools Federation will:

- Work alongside the Virtual School and social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the EYFS, careers, extended curriculum activities, and enjoy the school experience fully.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the Designated Teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education/Department of Health and Social Care guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care and The Education of Looked-after Children and Previously Looked-after Children (2018).
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavour to support all children looked after educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

In England, schools must have a Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children. The DfE has published statutory [guidance for local authority maintained schools](#) on their roles and responsibilities (DfE, 2018b).

Many looked after children do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Executive Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and Family Support Worker, as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all children looked after have equal access to all learning opportunities

in line with their peers. The Executive Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with children looked after.

The **named Governor** should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for children looked after;
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH&SC/DfE guidelines;
- the Designated Teacher has received appropriate training;
- children looked after have equal access to all areas of the curriculum;
- the Governing body receives a termly update;

The named governor for Bedford Nursery Schools Federation is **Mrs Deborah James**.

The **Executive Head Teacher** will:

- appoint the Designated Teacher;
- appoint a Family Support Worker;
- ensure that the Designated Teacher has received appropriate training;
- oversee the development of the policy on children looked after;
- ensure all additional funding is used appropriately to support children looked after;
- be responsible for all systems to support children looked after;
- report to the governing body in conjunction with the Family Support Worker on a termly basis on the following:
 1. the number of looked after pupils in the school;
 2. an analysis of progress data as a discrete group, compared to other pupils;
 3. the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils;
 4. the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils;
 5. the number of complaints.

The Role of the Designated Teacher in conjunction with the Family Support Worker

The Designated Teacher or Family Support Worker will serve as the contact for social services and the education department. Both will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support children looked after within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all children looked after in the school.

The Designated Teacher or Family Support Worker will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding children looked after of the school by:

- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all children looked after and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children looked after and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements.
- acting as an advocate for children looked after in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.

The Designated Teacher or Family Support Worker will set up systems for record keeping and monitoring all children looked after. These include:

- The Family Support Worker will have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after.
- The Family Support Worker will maintain records regarding all children looked after, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child.
- The Family Support Worker will establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
- The Designated Teacher will monitor the educational progress of all children looked after and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or another similar concern.

The Designated Teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- being proactive and participating in setting and reviewing targets for the child's PEP;
- playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of children looked after;
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings.

The Family Support Worker will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents/carers with regular opportunities for dialogue;
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education;
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties;
- inviting the responsible social worker and Local Authority EYs representative to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The Designated Teacher or Family Support Worker will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- The Family Support Worker will ensure each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (likely to be the Key Person).

- The Designated Teacher will ensure each child has a Personal Education Plan, with SMART targets which are reviewed termly to monitor progress in learning and EYPP supports these outcomes.
- The Designated Teacher will request support from the SENDCO and/or outside agencies, including the Education of Children Looked After Service, if a child looked after requires additional academic or behavioural support.
- The Designated Teacher will work closely with the SENDCO to ensure all children looked after with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning.
- The Family Support Worker will have a strategy for new school transitions.
- Both the Designated Teacher and Family Support Worker will ensure all children looked after are made to feel included within the school environment.

The Designated Teachers at Bedford Nursery Schools Federation is Mrs Julie Smith and Ms Suzie Hoefkens. The Family Support Worker is Clare Oliver.

Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The **PEP** will consider the child's:

- strengths and areas for support;
- attendance;
- interests, both in and out of school;
- developmental and educational and pastoral needs;
- future plans, and how these can be supported;
- issues arising for the child;
- attainment;
- well being and involvement;
- It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children looked after are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child and-carers/parents will meet with the Designated Teacher, the Family Support Worker and their named key person. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our

school. Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer/parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances).

Attendance

Attendance of children looked after will be monitored closely by the Family Support Worker and the Virtual School. In the case of an absence the child's named social worker will be informed. The Family Support Worker will make contact with the carers if they have not notified the nursery school with regards to the child looked after's reason for absence.

Educational Visits and Special Activities

Given the delays that children looked after experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that children looked after enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on visits and/or activities.

Complaints

If a young person, carer/parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the Designated Teacher, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer/parent or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Executive Head Teacher. The Executive Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Executive Head Teacher's response.

Appendix

Links to BNSF Safeguarding Policy 2023

Children Looked After and previously looked after children

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Governing bodies should ensure that staff including supply staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe. In particular, they should ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and the child's contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.

They should also have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her. The designated safeguarding lead should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child.

A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

The Governing Body should appoint a 'Designated Teacher' who should work with the Local Authority to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after or previously looked after. The Designated Teacher must have the appropriate training, relevant qualifications and experience. Statutory guidance: Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children contains further information on the role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher. The Designated Teacher should work with the Virtual School Head to promote the educational outcomes for children looked after and previously looked after children, including the use of EYPP to support progress and meet the identified needs in a child looked after personal education plan. In addition to their statutory duties, the role of virtual school heads was extended in June 2021, to include a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker.

Statutory guidance on 'Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children' contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads. Non-statutory guidance on 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker' contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads.