



Helping Youth & Community from Start to Finish

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

**Approved by:** Adrian Woods **Date:** 1/09/2023

**Next review due by:** 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

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## 1. Aims

OnTrak aims to ensure that:

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

## 2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy, while now classed as non-statutory, is based on the Department for Education's previous [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#) to ensure good practise and ensure that all looked after and previously looked after children and young people are supported in setting; including staff undertaking the DT role.

It also takes into account, but is not bound by, [section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010. It also takes into account the legislation as compiled in the Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

This policy complies with our articles of association.

## 3. Definitions

**Looked-after children** are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

**Previously looked-after children** are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
  - A special guardianship order
  - An adoption order

› They appear to the governing board to have:

- Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
- Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

**Personal education plan (PEP)** is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with OnTrak. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

**Virtual School Head (VSH)** is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single OnTrak. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to OnTrak, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

## 4. Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Natalie D Kershaw

You can contact them by email [Natalie.kershaw@ontrakcommunity.org.uk](mailto:Natalie.kershaw@ontrakcommunity.org.uk) or 01274 678272

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at OnTrak. They are your initial point (SPOC) of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

## 5. Role of the designated teacher

### 5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will:

- › Act as a central point of initial contact within OnTrak for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- › Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
  - Working with VSHs
  - Promoting a whole OnTrak culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- › Take lead responsibility for ensuring OnTrak staff understand:
  - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
  - How the whole of OnTrak supports the educational achievement of these pupils
- › Contribute to the development and review of the whole of OnTrak policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- › Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other OnTrak activities
- › Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- › Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-OnTrak links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- › Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs

- › Work closely with OnTrak's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- › Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

## 5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- › Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- › Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs
- › Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- › If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- › Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place
- › During the development and review of PEPs, help the OnTrak and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils
- › Ensure that:
  - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
  - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
  - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
- › Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next OnTrak or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

## 5.3 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- › Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the OnTrak uses pupil premium funding
- › Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment
- › Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children
- › Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- › Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- › Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- › Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this
- › Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- › Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have

- › Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- › Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the OnTrak can draw on specialist services
- › Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- › Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

## 5.4 Relationships beyond OnTrak

The designated teacher will:

- › Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable OnTrak to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- › Discuss with social workers how OnTrak should engage with birth parents, and ensure that OnTrak is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- › Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- › Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- › Consider how OnTrak works with others outside of the OnTrak to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
  - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
  - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
  - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
  - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves OnTrak, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- › Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
- › Make sure that for each looked-after child:
  - There's an agreed process for how the OnTrak works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
  - OnTrak policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
  - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- › Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
  - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the OnTrak decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
  - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour

- › Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion

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## **6. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by Adrian Woods. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

## **7. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- › Behaviour and Statement of Behaviour Principles Policy
- › Safeguarding, Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- › Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cohesion Policy