



Introduction

When a child becomes 'Looked After' it is imperative that wherever possible their **school place is maintained**.

School offers stability and familiarity, which is vital at a time when other areas of the child's life are being disrupted. However there are occasions when circumstances dictate that a move of school is unavoidable.

This guidance provides support to Social Care and Education staff involved in the education of Looked After Children and should be read in conjunction with the Virtual School for Looked After Children policy and procedures (Part 3, Section 20), Fostering Service Placement Arrangements policy (Part 7, Section 6, points 7.2, 13.2 and 17 specifically) and Children's Residential Services Education policy.

1. New school place

Everything should be done to assist in securing a place in a new school as swiftly and as efficiently as possible before the child or young person moves placement. Good communication is essential between professionals to ensure information is shared quickly and accurately.

Apart from emergencies, school moves should be planned via the Personal Education Plan (PEP) at the child's current school **prior** to the move. The child's Social Worker or Carer could take the lead dependent on the needs of the child or young person and who can best advocate for them. This can be decided at the PEP.

If a child or young person needs to move school during the school year then an in year application form must be completed <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/admissions/forms/> and returned to the school in question. For Looked After Children placed outside Staffordshire contact the Admissions Team of the area where the school is located. Details can be found on council internet sites, or contact Staffordshire's Admissions Team. If the application is successful the school will notify the person who made the application. If it is not possible to offer a place then the Admissions Team will become involved.

Regulations are in place to support admissions of Looked After Children into school. These regulations require admission authorities to give Looked After Children the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria. For example, at the normal admissions round in Key Stage 1 infants class sizes are not to exceed 30. However, regulations say that class sizes could exceed 30 to accommodate the Looked After Child for that academic year. If the school being requested outside of the normal admissions round is oversubscribed, and admitting an additional pupil would cause infant class size to be exceeded, School Admissions and Transport Service (SATS) will look at other schools within a reasonable distance in the first instance.

Quality indicator – communication

Social Worker's responsibility – to initiate a PEP review if placement move will necessitate a change of school. To ensure that parents, prospective carers and children and young people are included wherever possible and appropriate

Carer's responsibility – to attend PEP for prospective placements wherever possible

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children in current school's responsibility – to inform the PEP of the type of school placement

required. To communicate with Designated Teachers in prospective schools

Quality indicator – partnership working

All staff – to try to solve any problems in securing a new school place together with other professionals involved and children, young people and their families

Quality indicator – evidence of meeting individual need

Social Worker’s responsibility – to ensure all those involved have been consulted about child or young person abilities and needs

Carer’s responsibility – to work in partnership with the Social Worker to ensure that it is possible to achieve the educational outcomes identified within the placement

Education Co-ordinator’s responsibility – to give contacts for local schools if requested

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children’s responsibility – to work in partnership with the Social Worker and carer. To complete, or support the completion of, sections 1 and 2 of the PEP (apart from current educational priorities, short term educational targets, long term plans, young person’s role in their plan) to a high standard prior to PEP meeting

2. Under Most Circumstances

Where a child has been attending a mainstream school previously, with no major problems and now they need to start at a new school (because they have moved Foster Care Placement, for example) then either the Carer or Social Worker will approach the school, complete an application form and return to the school and the child will be admitted (assuming there is a vacancy). Consideration should be given to moving a child at the start of a term.

The child, carer and parents, where appropriate, will normally be invited to talk to the Head Teacher, be shown round the school and

given a copy of the school prospectus. Information about P.E. kits, lunch routines, school times, holiday dates etc. will also be shared. Information regarding the child's Looked After status will be passed on to the school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children by the child's Social Worker. If there is an existing PEP then it should be passed on to school and carers (who should ask for it). A date should be agreed for the child's new PEP meeting. It will be a full PEP rather than a PEP Review as the child will have had a significant change i.e., a new school place. A date should have been identified at the PEP held before the move of school, although it may need to be altered.

Quality indicator – referral

Social Worker's responsibility – to contact the new school identified in the PEP as a matter of priority (for placements outside Staffordshire see local procedures). For newly Looked After Children complete the PEP within statutory timescales

Carer's responsibility – to support the Social Worker in approaching the new school, clarifying transport arrangements and ensuring that child or young person has appropriate clothes and equipment

Education Co-ordinator's responsibility – to provide contacts or advice on processes to Social Care staff if requested

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children's responsibility – to advocate for Looked After Children in the admissions process

3. More complex cases

If a Social Worker or carer of a child placed within Staffordshire experiences difficulties getting a Looked After Child into their local school their first point of contact should be the School Admissions and Transport Service. The Admissions Team can be contacted on 01785 278593. They will assist directly where possible or signpost/advise, e.g. by negotiating with schools. School can be directed to take Looked After Children, even if oversubscribed:

- An LA maintained school (either in Staffordshire or another LA) can be directed by Staffordshire
- An Academy or Free School can be directed by the Secretary of State

The Admissions team will strive to avoid direction whenever possible.

If the child has had a Permanent Exclusion, a series of Fixed Term Exclusions or a history of difficulties at school the Social Worker or carer should still approach the local school and the child should be admitted, unless infant class size is an issue. There should be open and honest information sharing, in line with relevant information sharing protocols.

If they experience difficulties then the District Inclusion Officer should be contacted. They will advise and if appropriate implement the 'Fair Access Protocol'.

Quality indicator – assessment

Social Worker's responsibility – to contact the Admissions Team, or seek advice from Education Co-ordinator if difficulties are encountered

Carer's responsibility – to support Social Worker and advocate for child or young person

Education Co-ordinator's responsibility – to inform District Inclusion Officer if aware of problems. To inform other Education Co-ordinator if child or young person will be changing district if aware of move

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children's responsibility – to signpost Social Worker or carer to District Inclusion Officer or Admissions Team if school will not be providing a place

4. Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

If the child has a Statement of SEN the Social Worker should inform the local District Education Office (ask for The Assessment Team) to inform of the child's new address **before the move** (unless the move is an emergency) and to also name a school they would like the child to attend as a parent would. The decision about the school should have been considered at the PEP and any other relevant meetings, i.e. The Child's Annual Statement Review or Looked After Children Review.

The Assessment Team will then assist further once the Social Worker has made contact.

Quality indicator – evidence of meeting individual need

Social Worker's responsibility – to inform District Education Office of prospective move

Carer's responsibility – to support Social Worker

Education Co-ordinator's responsibility – to provide contacts or advice on processes to Social Workers if requested

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children's responsibility – to liaise with new educational provision once identified



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