

The logo for the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) features the letters 'A', 'C', and 'E' in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. A red horizontal bar with a white arrow pointing to the right is positioned across the middle of the letters.

ADVISORY CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

Advice for parents, a voice for parents

www.ace-ed.org.uk

A close-up photograph of a group of diverse children in a school setting. In the foreground, a young boy with dark hair and a blue sweater smiles warmly at the camera. Behind him, other children are visible, including a girl with blonde hair and a boy with a blue cap, all appearing happy and engaged.

Taking care of your looked after learners

A brief introduction for
designated teachers,
school governors and
heads to supporting
children in public care

Looked after children's lives are characterised by disruption. Moving in and out of care often means moving in and out of their family home, foster care and children's homes. Sometimes school is the only stable place in their lives.

That is why the role of the designated teacher is so vital. And the Government is planning to put the role on a statutory footing to reflect its importance.

Your school may have no children in the care system today, but tomorrow an existing pupil may move into care or a new pupil who is looked after may move into the school. Your school needs to be ready to meet their needs.

The Government's Green Paper, Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care, recognises the gaps that are left when a child has no parent to put their case, help with homework, buy in extra lessons or pay for out of school activities. It suggests a special budget to help compensate for the deficit that comes when a parent cannot be there for their child.

Designated teachers and their colleagues can have a major say in how extra support should be targeted for a particular child, personalising their education in a way which takes account of their own special circumstances. Designated teachers should also take a lead in raising awareness among colleagues and school managers.

As well as working with colleagues and offering training and support, the designated teacher needs to raise awareness among governors of the key ways they can ensure looked after children are remembered in their role as school managers.

Every Child Matters

Schools are inspected on the outcomes required for all children under the Every Child Matters agenda:

- to be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution to society and
- achieve economic wellbeing.

Inspectors will expect individual monitoring of the progress of looked after children with evidence of an effective Personal Education Plan. Governors' monitoring will feed into the self evaluation of the school and identification of issues for school improvement.

Governors and designated teachers should be provided with training by their local authority under the Section 52 Children Act 2004 duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

Governors should remember looked after children when:

- drawing up the school development plan and identifying issues for school improvement.
- allocating resources eg those available to the designated teacher and for supporting personalised provision and catch-up help where needed.
- setting targets for achievement, attendance and reducing exclusions.
- reviewing policies eg behaviour policy, curriculum policy and homework policy.
- in foundation and voluntary aided schools reviewing admission criteria to ensure looked after children are top of oversubscription criteria.
- agreeing local protocols on hard to place children bearing in mind that new legislation means local authorities can direct schools which deal with their own admissions to take looked after children even if they are full and that looked after children are ‘excepted pupils’ in respect of class size legislation.
- reviewing exclusions: the school’s behaviour policy and governors’ consideration of exclusions should take into account personal circumstances of children in the care system.
- preparing for inspection: inspectors will pay particular attention to the well being of looked after children.
- working with other partners such as health and social care services to meet children’s needs.

Designated teacher’s checklist

- ✓ check that a Personal Education Plan – which is part of the overall Care Plan – has been set up by the child’s social worker
- ✓ contribute to the Personal Education Plan and use it to meet the personalised needs of the child in partnership with the social worker and foster carer
- ✓ ensure that information about the child’s education is transferred between appropriate agencies and individuals
- ✓ attend, where necessary, the statutory review, discuss feedback with social workers and carers and ensure decisions about education are acted on
- ✓ make sure the school shares contact details with carers and residential care workers and encourages them to attend parents’ evenings
- ✓ provide training for colleagues
- ✓ liaise with carers about wider school issues such as homework and out of school activities and learning
- ✓ liaise with the SENCO, head of year, class teacher and teachers with pastoral support responsibilities.

Making a difference to the lives of looked after children

Designated teachers should:

- ✓ make sure the child's voice is heard
- ✓ take a lead with investigating any attendance problems
- ✓ check out alternative provision at key stage 4 and discuss the options with the child and carers
- ✓ make sure representations are made to the governors if a child is excluded
- ✓ offer support when a child is unhappy because of bullying or other school problems
- ✓ liaise with the SENCO about any learning difficulties the child may have
- ✓ liaise with the headteacher and other senior staff to make sure those with parental responsibility are notified about important decisions made about the child

Where to go for help and get further guidance

Government support: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/lookedafterchildren/

The looked after children team at your local authority

Please add your local contact details here



Advice for parents, a voice for parents

www.ace-ed.org.uk

Advice for parents and carers on education issues affecting children in maintained schools.

Freephone advice line: 0808 8005793

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