



# Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools

Guidance for Schools





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## Foreword

For many children in care, school life can be challenging. They may find it harder to trust adults; their educational experience may have been disrupted; and their capacity to build and maintain friendships may be impaired. They need good schools, with good staff who understand how to support and challenge them.

Good schools can be the key to their success. School can provide the stability they need, a safe place in a turbulent world, an opportunity to excel, a route map out of their difficulties into a more positive future.

This guide captures the experience of good schools who have worked well to support children in care. Spreading their good practice could benefit many more children across the country.

There is nothing magic about how to support children in care. A good school, which gets to know its pupils and aims to meet their individual needs, will take on the task naturally. With this guide, they should feel more confident in facing any challenges these children present, and fulfilling the potential each child has.

### **Sir Paul Ennals**

Chief Executive  
National Children's Bureau



# Introduction

*'Education is the lynch pin'. (Headteacher)*

*'She is not always ready to learn – her head is somewhere else'. (Foster Carer)*

This guidance is based on the evidence obtained from visits to a small sample of 14 primary schools. The schools were recommended by their local authorities as having very effective practice in supporting looked after children and ensuring that they make good progress and achieve appropriate levels of attainment.

The schools exhibited a number of qualities in their work with looked after children and nine **key qualities** were identified which characterise and summarise the schools' effective practice.

## Effective schools support looked after children by:

1. Doing the things they do for all children but more so
2. Balancing high levels of support with real challenge
3. Skilfully linking each child to a key person they relate well to
4. Making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships
5. Developing strong partnerships with carers<sup>1</sup>, local authorities and specialist agencies
6. Making things happen and seeing things through
7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility
8. Actively extending the horizons of each child
9. Planning for future transitions

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1. In this document the term 'carer' embraces foster carers, residential key workers and kinship carers.

In the subsequent sections each key quality is considered in turn. Each section has the following structure:

### Why is this important?

This describes some of the experiences and characteristics of looked after children which schools need to support and overcome to help the child to learn.

### What these schools do

This summarises the specific actions and approaches adopted by the schools to support their looked after children.

Quotations and brief case studies are included to capture the essence of the schools' practice.

### Things to consider

These are some aspects of a school's practice that may be worth reviewing.

**Annex 1** includes a simple self-evaluation grid which a school could use to review its own practice in supporting looked after children. The schools visited as part of the study are listed in **Annex 2**. Background information on the methodology of the study and the performance of looked after children are included in **Annex 3** and **Annex 4** respectively.



## Key qualities exhibited by schools which provide high quality support for looked after children



# 1. Doing the things they do for all children but more so

## Why is this important?

Many looked after children have suffered from a disrupted school experience – they may have attended a number of schools or been absent from school for extended periods of time. The subsequent gaps in their learning are very likely to have become barriers to progress, perhaps developed over a long period of time. This makes it very difficult for them to do well in school. The complexity of what can often be a fragmented educational experience needs close analysis and careful planning by key teachers to increase rates of progress and build the child's confidence and self-esteem. So even in schools where personalised learning and tracking are well established, these children need particular attention. Young children often also need help to develop social and learning skills. However, this extra attention or vigilance needs to be subtle because the children often don't want to be seen to be treated differently from their peers.

## What these schools do

- **Promote personalised learning and a culture where every child does matter**

Headteachers expect every adult to prioritise the personal, emotional and academic needs of the vulnerable children. Induction is provided for all new staff to ensure teachers and others prioritise the needs of looked after children.

- **Ensure that specific needs and barriers to learning are identified, recorded in each child's personal education plan and progress is reviewed on a regular basis**

On entry to the school teachers work closely with the looked after child to assess their strengths and weaknesses and develop a personal education plan (PEP) that will help them to catch up and keep up with their peers. The PEP also often includes advice to staff on behaviour 'triggers' and how these can be avoided. The designated teacher supported by other staff monitors the impact of the actions closely and is rigorous in evaluating, with the child, whether the targeted support has worked. If necessary, the school is always willing to try other approaches.

- **Track the children's progress as a special group**

The progress of each looked after child is rigorously tracked. Special attention is given to make sure they are on track to achieve their targets and, if not, the best strategy to secure progress is worked out with the child.

- **Provide proactive support through the designated teacher**

The designated teacher co-ordinates arrangements relating to the Personal Education Plan (PEP) review to ensure education features strongly in the statutory review procedure of the child's wider care plan. S/he works with the teacher and key staff to regularly review progress to targets and evaluate the impact of intervention strategies. Teachers are aware that prior attainment and predictive models for target setting may not provide a good guide for these children, as the targets generated will often be undemanding if previous progress and attainment have been low.

- **Implement a range of intervention strategies to address both social and academic needs**

The approach encompasses quality first teaching, classroom support and additional provision, including one-to-one tuition. The priority is to support the child to 'keep up' as well as 'catch up' as some of these children have significant gaps in their learning and have fallen behind. But teachers recognise that they cannot just drive through the plan; they need to be sensitive to the child's circumstances. Often with young children particular attention is given to supporting the child to develop appropriate social and learning skills, such as listening to others and working effectively in a group. Dedicated group work and circle time are often used to support the development of these skills. One-to-one tuition is considered for each looked after child and if it is deemed appropriate the child is given a high priority because this support can be highly personalised.

*'The tuition was good. It helped me with work I was doing at school so I felt I was ahead of the others. It also helped me with some of the things I found hard'. (Pupil)*

*'She is more confident with her maths homework since having the tuition. She is more willing to have a go. She has a notebook of different methods that she worked on with the tutor which she still finds useful'. (Foster carer)*

*'The tuition has been very good. He now has a routine at home for reading. I help him as much as I can to keep to the routine'. (Foster carer)*

## Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the nature of the induction provided for all new staff;
- the extent to which the PEP identifies barriers to learning and strategies for overcoming these; and
- the current range of interventions used to support looked after children, including the appropriateness of one-to-one tuition.

### Kentish Town Primary School, Camden

Pupil assessment and tracking is rigorous and curricular targets are identified for all children who begin to fall behind. A range of intervention strategies are used to secure pupil progress. The approach of assessment, tracking and intervention is universal for all pupils. In addition, half-termly reports are completed for the looked after children and sent to the local authority virtual academy.

## 2. Balancing high levels of support with real challenge

### Why is this important?

The attainment of looked after children is often lower than that of their peers. They will often have low self-esteem and lack confidence. Whilst they need care and understanding of their circumstances and how these can influence their learning, they also thrive if provided with appropriate challenge. They are often very vulnerable in a school environment and can be easily 'knocked down' by their peers and by teachers, making some 'tread carefully'. Their progress can be fragile; a successful day at school being eclipsed by a traumatic event at home. So, getting the right balance between support and challenge is crucial. There is a risk that teachers expect too little of the child, not recognising the importance of challenge in building self-esteem and improving their educational achievement.

### What these schools do

- **Secure high expectations of involvement in learning, progress and behaviour**

Looked after children are expected to make good progress – their circumstances are not seen as a reason for not doing so, but rather an imperative to make a difference. Teachers regularly articulate what they want and expect them to achieve. Two levels of progress during Key Stage 2 is seen as a realistic expectation. Staff are aware that the children may sometimes exhibit inappropriate behaviour but awareness is not confused with acceptance and expectations remain high as teachers are not diverted from the focus on teaching and learning.

*'The fact the child is looked after can sometimes be a barrier to learning but teachers' expectations for these children should still be high'. (Headteacher)*

- **Support the children in working productively with others**

Teachers provide opportunities in all lessons for paired and group discussion and collaborative work. They support and engender productive learning partnerships by carefully grouping pupils.

*'Circle time can really help the children to learn to get on with others. Until they can do this you have to be really careful who you ask them to work with'. (Teacher)*

*'I like to work with a partner. If I don't understand, my partner helps me and I can explain to them'. (Year 5 girl)*

- **Regularly review targets**

The PEP is regularly reviewed to check whether current targets continue to be sufficiently challenging. Teachers have high expectations of what every child can achieve and communicate these clearly to the children. They understand how fragile each child's progress can be and the impact of events and changing circumstances in their home life, but they do not give up.

*'Targets are good. It means my teacher keeps me on track'. (Pupil)*

• **Facilitate the mentoring/ support role**

Support and challenge is provided for academic progress as well as emotional and behavioural development. Support is also focused on encouraging the child towards increasing independence.

*'I have supported him for 2 years now. I am there to help him but I give him the space he needs so that he doesn't depend on me too much'. (Teaching assistant)*

**Things to consider**

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the current expectations for progress across a year and key stage;
- best practice in dealing with inappropriate behaviours;
- opportunities (with support when necessary) for the children to take part in appropriate group work to facilitate learning; and
- the extent to which the review of progress ensures that targets remain challenging.



### 3. Skilfully linking each child to a key person they relate well to

#### Why is this important?

These children often have a history of special people leaving them and of losing contact with close family members. When in care, many children have several changes of foster carers and social workers in a relatively short period of time. A school can be the first opportunity to provide a consistent, long term relationship with an adult who will focus on their personal, emotional and academic needs.

#### What these schools do

- **Hand pick an adult to act as a confidant and advocate for the child**

Often this adult will be the designated teacher but this is not always the case. It could be a teaching assistant, a learning mentor or another member of the support staff. Many have worked in the school for a long time. In some schools this could be an LA member of staff who visits the school on a regular basis. The designated teacher often 'engineers' this contact in such a way that the child feels they made their own choice.

*'Jane is better than a teacher – she can talk just to me – my teacher has the whole class to look after'.  
(Pupil)*

- **Provide opportunities for the child to have regular and easy contact with their key person**

This is seen as a priority and is facilitated by a flexible approach that will, for example, provide access to the key person through a 'drop in' arrangement. A 'haven' or 'listening post' is often made available to the children to allow them to take time out, reflect and on some occasions to calm down. The key person is usually the adult who accompanies the child on visits out of school, whether on a curriculum trip or on transfer visits to the secondary school.

*'I talk to the children a lot. They like having this time and seek me out, for example asking me to be their partner when we go on a school trip. That's good because it gives us some time to chat about the things they want to share with me'.  
(Teacher)*

## Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the extent to which each looked after child has ready access to the support of a 'key person';
- the opportunities and facilities available for looked after children to take 'time out' or to access a 'listening post' or 'haven'; and
- the effectiveness of current communication between the designated teacher and key person and their roles and involvement in the process of the statutory review of the PEP section of the child's care plan.

### Lydney Church of England Primary School, Gloucestershire

The school provides a 'listening post' where children can access a trained counsellor when they are upset or need to calm down. The focus is on giving children strategies to cope so they can concentrate on school work. The personal education allowance (PEA) has been used to provide extra time in the 'listening post' for looked after children.



## 4. Making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships

### Why is this important?

Many looked after children have significant periods of time when they have a great deal of uncertainty in their lives. Difficulties with relationships can trigger emotional trauma that might reveal itself through extreme behaviours or withdrawal. Awareness of potentially difficult situations and possible changes to circumstances helps schools to provide the support needed and lessen the negative impact on learning.

### What these schools do

- **Put the designated teacher at the centre of communication**

Designated teachers find ways, without breaching confidentiality, of ensuring that the teachers of looked after children are aware of their needs and times when they should be particularly watchful and supportive. They plan for regular, low profile, informal contact with each child.

*'You can't just throw support at these children. You have to be sensitive to where they are, the approaches that are most likely to work and when they will work'. (Assistant Headteacher)*

*'I know J really well and I know the triggers for certain types of behaviour'. (Teacher)*

- **When possible allocate the child to an experienced teacher and a class that already has support from a teaching assistant**

Experience is a valuable commodity and so when options exist experienced teachers are chosen. In addition, when existing teaching assistant support can be extended to include the looked after child this is done to ensure that the child doesn't feel that they are being treated differently to the others in the class.

- **Provide an induction period for the child so that they can become accustomed to their new surroundings**

A new child is often introduced to the class over a period of a few days and is often supported in this induction period by the designated teacher as well as staff from the local authority. Typically another child is asked to act as a buddy in the classroom and possibly another to provide help and support at play times and lunchtime.

- **Show an interest in all aspects of the child's involvement in the school**

The mentor or key person shows a genuine interest in all aspects of the child's involvement in school, for example attending events and performances that the looked after child participates in.

- **Look for the signs and intervene early**

All incidents involving a looked after child are recorded, however trivial they might appear. If a pattern starts to emerge this is then shared with the designated teacher and discussed with the child. In addition, designated teachers and mentors use their local knowledge and networks and are perceptive in identifying the early signs of vulnerability so they can start developing supportive relationships, sometimes before the child is taken into care.

#### **Torriano Junior School, Camden**

Learning mentors are a key part of the academic and emotional support offered to the looked after children. They provide one-to-one support on a daily basis if necessary and then carefully manage the transition to less regular support. Role play is used extensively to model building relationships, for example, and the mentors use activities such as art to work together and talk to the child.

## **Things to consider**

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the frequency and quality of communication between the designated teacher and other staff;
- the effectiveness of the induction procedures used for a child joining the school; and
- the procedures in place for monitoring and reporting behavioural incidents involving looked after children.



## 5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies

### Why is this important?

Many looked after children face considerable challenges in achieving high standards in school, and yet education is fundamentally their pathway to future success. A large number of different agencies have a key role in caring for each looked after child. Coherence and consistency of approach of each of these teams is crucial to ensure that everyone is working collaboratively to secure the best educational outcomes for each child. Essentially this is wrapping a team around the child to ensure holistic support. The link between the school and the carer is particularly pivotal. Regular contact between the school and the carer is often vital in building a joint understanding of the child's needs and the approaches that are likely to meet with success. It is especially important for teachers and carers to understand how to jointly tackle the particular traits and obstacles which limit the child's capacity to learn when in school.

### What these schools do

- **Work in genuine partnership with foster carers**

Typically carers are able to talk to class teachers at the beginning and end of the day and so establish a system of daily, shared progress checks. The designated teacher and/or class teacher works closely with the foster carer, particularly during challenging periods, for example if the child is experiencing emotional

and behavioural difficulties. Foster carers often talk about the gains from being able to have close and frequent contact with a key person in the school, via telephone, text message or email, communicating the positives as well as any areas of concern. This contact is often focused on finding solutions to problems and agreeing actions to ensure consistent messages for the child.

- **Help carers to support their child's learning at home**

Carers are given resources which they can use at home with their child, together with on-going support and guidance on how to use them most effectively.

- **Ensure purposeful and focused contact with support agencies**

Headteachers and designated teachers ensure effective and timely collaborative work between key professionals. They have regular dialogue with social workers and LA staff which is not limited to the six monthly care plan review meeting carried out by the LA that looks after the child. The key person who knows the child well is fully involved in significant meetings. In LAs with a virtual school head and dedicated support staff their expertise and advice is sought as and when necessary.

*'We start with early morning work when parents and carers work with their child for the first 10 minutes so they can help to settle them into the day. This also means that parents and carers have time for informal discussion with the teacher. That can nip problems in the bud'. (Headteacher)*

*'It's easy to talk to his teacher. It's easy to talk to everyone. I know I can get help and advice at any time'. (Foster carer)*

*'I am kept well informed and receive feedback from the teacher every week – the support for home learning is also very good'. (Foster carer)*

### **St. Andrew's Primary School, Cambridgeshire**

The Educational Support for Looked after Children (ESLAC) teacher from the local authority visits the school every week and maintains an overview on all the looked after children. She liaises with the social workers and the virtual headteacher and makes sure that all the support for the children is carefully co-ordinated.

### **Wilberforce Primary School, Westminster**

Homework was an issue for one of the looked after children in the school. The carer decided to make homework a fun family event. The family sit down together and a real learning atmosphere has developed. The children have been exposed to the idea that learning is for everyone and 'helps to achieve your dreams'.

## **Things to consider**

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the opportunities for carers to have easy contact and to work productively with school staff;
- additional strategies for helping carers to support their child's learning; and
- the effectiveness of communication between the school and the full range of agencies that can support the child.



## 6. Making things happen and seeing things through

### Why is this important?

Many looked after children feel they have little control over their lives and, for some, their experiences from the past tell them not to trust adults. They may show impatience and frustration if their difficulties and issues are not dealt with quickly. Listening, being responsive and seeing things through are important for gaining the trust of looked after children and, very importantly, ensuring they achieve the best educational outcomes possible.

### What these schools do

- **Work at building trust**

Designated teachers and the looked after child's key person are proactive, but subtle in their support and the child knows they will always do what they say. They show a genuine interest in the child and support them during difficult periods.

- **Act as an intermediary to secure support for emotional difficulties**

The designated teacher utilises every available source of support from outside agencies and knows who to contact to meet a child's specific needs. They work closely with LA teams to provide appropriate and timely access to therapy.

*'It is about having a feel for urgency, being able to read situations so you know when to offer help and when to step back for a while'.  
(Headteacher)*

*'There are times when you can't say 'I'll get back to you in a couple of hours.' Relationships and trust are extremely important'.  
(Assistant Headteacher)*

*'If the time is right for the child you have to be able to provide the support straight away. The virtual school helps us to do this'. (Headteacher)*

*'He has been there for me for a long time. He was there when my mum needed support'.  
(Year 6 boy)*

## Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the capacity to be able to respond very quickly to urgent situations; and
- awareness of the full range of support that is available through outside agencies.

### **Hillocks Primary and Nursery School, Nottinghamshire**

The local authority virtual school head has a very active involvement in the school. She is readily available by telephone and is able to respond quickly. She offers ideas for additional interventions, co-ordinates wider LA support and provides additional amounts of money to facilitate necessary actions.



## 7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility

### Why is this important?

There is no 'typical' looked after child. They are highly individual – each with their own needs, special likes and strong dislikes. For many, sporadic emotional trauma and chaotic lifestyles can show itself through unacceptable behaviours in the school environment. Some will push boundaries, some will try to get others to reject them. These behaviours make them at greater risk of fixed-term or permanent exclusion. It is important to be aware that nationally, looked after children are more likely to be permanently excluded than other pupils. However, consistency is important and the looked after children want to be treated the same as all the children in their class. They, more than most children, require particular understanding and flexibility when their response or behaviour falls below acceptable levels.

### What these schools do

- **Signal changes in routine well in advance**

Any changes to the normal daily routine are explained in advance, at least the day before. Often carers are informed so that the information and implications can be reinforced at home. Staff will often speak to the child individually to provide reassurance if it is needed.

- **Are perceptive of situations which could prove difficult for looked after children**

The staff are aware of potentially difficult topics and take time to prepare a looked after child by talking to them on an individual basis and explaining the focus for the work and the purpose in doing it. Where appropriate the child is given the chance to opt out if they wish. So, for example, they are very careful to focus on 'special adults' day' instead of 'mothers' day' or 'fathers' day'.

*'Some topics are difficult for looked after children. When a potentially difficult topic is coming up, I'll have a quiet word with T and give him the option not to take part. So far he has always been happy to participate – but I think that's because he knows what's coming'. (Teacher)*

- **Avoid exclusion**

Teachers and other staff exercise flexibility in a discrete and subtle way. There are no overt signs that all children would see to indicate that differential treatment was being offered to a looked after child. The differentiation is often achieved in one-to-one situations with the child and not in front of the whole class. Fixed-term and permanent exclusion are not considered as viable options.

*'The key to supporting looked after children is consistency – a whole institution approach is needed'. (Headteacher)*

*'The school is very good at providing a consistent routine for my daughter'. (Foster carer)*

## Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- staff development focused on how flexibility can be achieved without the appearance of favouritism; and
- finding viable alternatives to fixed-term and permanent exclusions for looked after children.

### Woodlands Primary School, Walsall

The learning mentor works with one looked after child on how to improve his self-control. She works closely with the child's carer so they can be consistent and use the same strategies. The learning mentor phones the carer every day to review progress – this is because the child doesn't want others to see the mentor talking to his carer in the school playground.



## 8. Actively extending the horizons of each child

### Why is this important?

Many looked after children have difficulty in making and keeping friends. Some have difficulties in trusting others, and some are reluctant to develop friendships that might leave them susceptible to rejection. Looked after children are often described by their teachers and carers as having low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Opportunities to develop hobbies and interests can have a significant impact for these children. Shared interests extend social contact and provide a different purpose for interaction which helps build self-confidence and, for many, strengthen social skills. This can act as a catalyst to adopting a more positive approach to school and learning.

### What these schools do

- **Look for opportunities to involve the child in a range of activities**

Key teachers and other adults look for opportunities for the child to develop a range of interests and hobbies often through attending after school clubs and activities. Many schools offer a range of activities: sport, music, dance and special trips for ice skating and horse riding. This aspect is a particular feature of the personal education plan (PEP) and opportunities are explored both from what the school can offer and from outside providers. Where necessary, funding is sought from the local authority to facilitate the involvement.

- **Maintain an active interest in the activity and monitor the child's involvement**

The designated teacher or key person makes a point of talking to the child about how they are getting on. In some schools the staff visit the child when they are attending the activity and maintain a photographic record of the child's involvement.

- **Engage carers and children in family learning**

This approach has the multiple benefits of engaging the child in learning, developing confidence and building relationships. Again the prioritisation is discrete as other parents are often involved as well, but the carers, the children they look after and, when appropriate, their own children are given special priority.

*'We do as much as we can for the whole family, including involving them in family learning activities'. (Headteacher)*

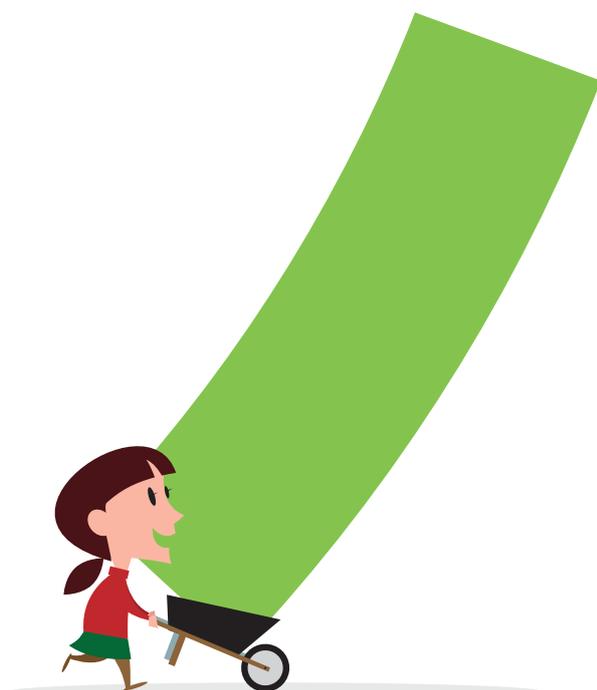
## Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- the level of involvement in out-of-hours learning; and
- opportunities for including carers and their children in family learning activities.

### Ward Jackson Primary School, Hartlepool

One looked after child was unwilling to share her homework with her carer so the headteacher invited the carer to attend the homework club with the child. Homework is now provided in an envelope for the child and separately to the carer.



## 9. Planning for future transitions

### Why is this important?

Change can be difficult for many children. For looked after children transfer from one school to the next can be particularly daunting and may mean developing new relationships with foster carers as well as with a new mentor and others in school. Schools need to prepare carefully for these transitions. Typically looked after children benefit from thorough preparation and a gradual and staged introduction to new situations and circumstances. Security is everything to them and a new situation might be viewed as destabilising and a significant threat.

### What these schools do

- **Carefully manage transition from one class to the next and transfer from one school to the next**

The induction programme for the child moving to a new class or a new school is carefully planned and more comprehensive than the usual process. Looked after children make additional visits to the new class or school and these are usually accompanied by their class teacher or teaching assistant. Typically, several visits are organised so that the looked after child is able to get to know key staff and acclimatise to the new situation and surroundings. In some secondary schools mentoring links are established with pupils from the new school and support is offered over the summer holiday. Some primary schools work with the children producing 'goodbye' (for the current school) and 'hello' (for the receiving school) scrapbooks.

*'The school supports B very well. His teaching assistant came with us on a visit to the new school and will come again on the other two visits that are planned'. (Foster carer)*

### Things to consider

This list is not exhaustive and is intended to indicate possible areas for development which will have an impact on the attainment and progress of looked after children:

- procedures to smooth the transfer between classes within the school; and
- procedures to smooth the transition for looked after children between schools.

#### **West View Primary School, Hartlepool**

A five week programme of support is provided for small groups of vulnerable children. As well as a series of visits, the personal education plans (PEPs) are sent to the secondary school and the inclusion manager from the secondary visits all the children in the primary school.

# Annex 1

## Self evaluation: Support for looked after children

Section A: Initial Review				
<b>1 = very effective</b>  <b>4 = in need of development</b>				
	1	2	3	4
<b>How effective are your current approaches in the following aspects of support for looked after children?</b>				
<b>1. Doing the things they do for all children but more so</b>				
The nature of the induction provided for all staff				
The extent to which the PEP identifies barriers to learning and strategies for overcoming these				
The current range of interventions used to support looked after children, including the appropriateness of one-to-one tuition				
<b>2. Balancing high level support with real challenge</b>				
The expectations for progress across a year and key stage				
Practice in dealing with inappropriate behaviours				
Opportunities for the children to take part in appropriate group work to facilitate learning				
The extent to which the review of progress ensures that targets remain challenging				
<b>3. Skilfully linking each child to a key person they relate well to</b>				
The extent to which each looked after child has ready access to the support of a 'key person'				
The opportunities and facilities available for looked after children to take 'time out' or to access a 'listening post' or 'haven'				

Section A: Initial Review					
1 = very effective	4 = in need of development	1	2	3	4
		The communication between the designated teacher and key person and their roles and involvement in the process of the statutory review of the PEP section of the child's care plan.			
<b>4. Making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships</b>					
The frequency and quality of communication between the designated teacher and other staff					
The effectiveness of the induction procedures used for a child joining the school					
The procedures in place for monitoring and reporting incidents involving looked after children					
<b>5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and other agencies</b>					
The opportunities for carers to have easy contact with school staff to exchange information and to work productively together					
Additional strategies for helping carers to support their child's learning					
The effectiveness of communication between the school and the full range of agencies that can support the child					
<b>6. Making things happen and seeing things through</b>					
The capacity to be able to respond very quickly to urgent situations					
Awareness of the full range of support that is available through outside agencies					
<b>7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility</b>					
Staff development focused on how flexibility can be achieved without the appearance of favouritism					
Finding viable alternatives to fixed-term and permanent exclusions					

**Section A: Initial Review**

<b>1 = very effective</b>  <b>4 = in need of development</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. Actively extending the horizons of each child</b>				
The level of involvement in out-of-hours learning				
Opportunities for including carers and their children in family learning				
<b>9. Planning for future transitions</b>				
Procedures to smooth the transfer between classes within the school				
Procedures to smooth transition between schools				

**Section B: Priorities for development**

## Annex 2

The DCSF would like to thank the Local Authorities, headteachers and staff of the following 14 schools for providing such a rich insight into the way they successfully support looked after children.

**Weatheralls Primary School, Cambridgeshire**

**St Andrew's Primary School, Cambridgeshire**

**Kentish Town Primary School, Camden**

**Torriano Junior School, Camden**

**Lydney Church of England Primary School, Gloucestershire**

**Ward Jackson Primary School, Hartlepool**

**West View Primary School, Hartlepool**

**Aragon Primary School, Merton**

**Hillocks Primary and Nursery School, Nottinghamshire**

**Westdale Infant School, Nottinghamshire**

**Woodlands Primary School, Walsall**

**Phoenix Primary School (EBD), Walsall**

**Gateway Primary School, Westminster**

**Wilberforce Primary School, Westminster**

## Annex 3

### Methodology

Each school was visited by a DCSF school standards adviser for up to a day during May and June 2009. During the visit discussions were held with:

- Headteacher and senior leaders
- Designated teacher
- Key people who support and mentor looked after children
- Foster carers

#### And most importantly:

- Looked after children

The purpose of the investigation was to ascertain best practice in schools to improve the progress and attainment of looked after children. Discussions explored the strategies and actions of senior leaders, teachers and mentors that make a difference to looked after children: in the classroom, through support and mentoring and through additionality. Foster carers gave their views on how the school helps them to help their child as well as the actions that help raise the attainment of the children they care for.

The schools had between one and six looked after children on roll at the time of the visit, although numbers in all schools fluctuated. Some children preferred to meet individually with the school standards adviser, while others were happy to have discussions in small groups. Overall, discussions were held with about 30 children. In most schools, the school standards adviser also met with the foster carers of many of the children.

## Annex 4

### The performance of looked after children

Looked after young people are one of the lowest attaining groups nationally, and the gap between all pupils' attainment and the attainment of young people in care widens further as pupils get older.

In 2008 there were 43 700 children who had been looked after continuously for at least twelve months by English local authorities (LAs). 33 000 were of school age and of these 28% had SEN statements, 12% missed at least 25 days of school, and 0.5% received a permanent exclusion. In 2008:

- 46% of looked after children achieved a Level 4 or higher in English at the end of Key Stage 2, compared to 81% of all children. In 2000, the proportion for looked after children was 32%.
- 44% of looked after children achieved a Level 4 or higher in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, compared to 79% of all children. In 2000, the proportion for looked after children was 30%.
- 43% of looked after children achieved five or more GCSEs at A\* – G, compared to 92% of all children. In 2000, the proportion for looked after children was 36%.
- 14% of looked after children achieved five or more GCSEs at A\* – C, compared to 65% of all children. In 2000, the proportion for looked after children was 7%.



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