

## Luton's Virtual School for Looked After Children Policy for Placing Children in Schools, In and Out of Borough

September 2019

### Introduction

As stated in Page 4 of the Department for Education's statutory guidance for local authorities 'Promoting the education of looked after children' (July 2014).

*Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children.*

### The Principles

The principles which underpin this statutory guidance are (as stated on Page 11 of the statutory guidance):

- *Educational provision should mean a full-time place (25 hours of education a week)*
- *Schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for LAC requiring a new school. Unless there are exceptional evidence-based reasons looked after children should never be placed in an Ofsted graded 'inadequate' school*
- *The choice of the education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child. It should be based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make the maximum progress.*
- *The child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child.*
- *Looked after children are 'excepted pupils' in relation to infant class size*

- *The local authority will use powers of direction in a timely way to prevent drift and delay*

### **Luton's Practice relating to the Policy**

Luton's Virtual School for Looked After Children strives to ensure that each child and young person in our care attends the educational setting that best meets their needs in order for the child/young person to reach their potential. The Virtual School's Education Coordinator works closely with the Social Worker to assist with this process.

- **Social Workers should involve the Virtual School's Education Coordinator with any school move** so that the move can be planned to enable a smooth transition for the child/young person. The Education Coordinator will work with and advise Social Workers, Admissions, and Foster Carers to identify and pursue new school placements, both in Luton and out of borough.
- **School moves in Key Stage 4 are avoided** wherever possible and if there is a need for a young person to move school during this time, the Virtual Head should be consulted prior to any decision being made
- **'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools are always prioritised** and 'Inadequate' schools are not considered. 'Requires Improvement' schools are considered when there are strong reasons to do so i.e. the foster carer has good links with the school, the distance is too far for a child to benefit from a good or outstanding school, there is knowledge that the provision for looked after children is robust. The Virtual School takes into consideration the track record of the school in supporting the needs of looked after children as we know from experience that the Ofsted judgement is not the only criteria that we should use to define a good school. The Education Coordinator will source this information.
- The Education Coordinator will make contact with the new school and share pertinent information relating to the child/young person in advance. An informal visit to the school is arranged wherever possible involving the child/young person, foster carer and social worker.
- The Education Coordinator will liaise with the previous school regarding the move to the new school to ensure that any school files are passed on in a timely manner.

- **Every effort is made for the new school place to be available within 20 working days.**
- **Children/young people who are already on roll in educational placements which have been Ofsted graded ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’ are not removed in an effort to minimise disruption of their education.** The educational placement will be closely monitored by the Virtual School through direct communication with the Designated Teacher, through the Personal Education Plan and looked after children meetings and Designated Teacher meetings and also by School Improvement Advisors (if the educational placements are within Luton this information is sourced from their Aspire meetings)

### **Specific Scenarios and Luton’s practice**

- **When a child/young person comes into care** every effort is maintained in order for the child/young person to remain on roll at their school to secure stability for that child/young person. The Virtual School will closely monitor the progress of that child/young person and ensure that education planning links in with the care planning.
- **When the child/young person is permanently matched in a foster placement,** the Education Coordinator will work with the Social Worker and Foster Carer to find a school closer to the placement if they do not already attend a school within the locality of the placement and if this is deemed in the best interest of the child/young person.
- **Where there is a planned change of care placement within the borough or out of borough,** the Virtual School’s Education Coordinator should be consulted by the Social Worker to pursue the best educational placement that will meet the needs for the child/young person.
- **If there is an emergency change of care placement to an out of borough placement** the Social Worker should immediately inform the Virtual School’s Education Coordinator so that the best educational placement is pursued that will meet the needs for the child/young person.
- **When a child/young person is permanently matched via adoption, prior to adoption becoming official,** the Social Worker should advise the Virtual School’s Education Coordinator of this so that the best educational placement for the child/young person is found in liaison with the adoptive parents.
- **Where the child/young person has a statement/EHCP,** the Education Coordinator will liaise with the relevant authority’s Special Educational Needs

department to ensure that the process of identifying the educational placement to best meet their needs is actioned in a timely manner.

- **Where the child/young person is not ready to access mainstream education**, the Education Coordinator will liaise with the Alternative Learning and Progression Service (ALPS) if in Luton, and will liaise with the relevant authority to identify suitable alternative education provision.
- **Where the child/young person has been permanently excluded from education**, the Education Coordinator will liaise with the relevant local authority to secure appropriate full time education.
- **Where a school refuses to admit a child**, the Education Coordinator will alert the Senior Education Officer who will advise on the next steps and if required, the Senior Education Officer will use the Direction Process in a timely way rather than delay issuing a direction as a result of protracted negotiation.

Any queries relating to looked after children admission to education or regarding this policy should be directed to the Virtual School for LAC 01582 548137 or 07834 617 857.

Appendices

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>