

Devon Virtual School
for Children in Care

Supporting Children in Care to Achieve Well at School



Championing Children: Guidance for
Foster Parents, Carers & Social Workers

October 2015

Supporting Children in Care to Achieve Well at School

The Devon Virtual School are committed to achieving the best possible educational outcomes for its Children in Care as we are their 'Corporate Parent'.

The Devon Virtual School supports all Children in Care who are living in Devon or who are looked after by Devon but living in another part of the country.

We aim to:

Promote

High Aspirations and excellent educational outcomes

Support

Children and Young People, Carers, Schools and Settings

Challenge

Anyone who does not deliver on our aspirations

Celebrate

All our successes

Supporting Children in Care to Achieve Well at School

This guidance aims to provide headline information about the advice and help available through the Virtual School. Key people and their contact information are noted at the end of this guidance.

Schools are expected to demonstrate high aspirations for students who are in Local Authority Care and have systems and processes in place to secure the best possible educational outcomes.

Every school or setting will have a Designated Teacher who will monitor educational provision and actively support individual Children in Care attending their school.

Ofsted will also assess and report on how well schools support Children in Care and the impact of Pupil Premium Plus. Devon County Council undertakes termly monitoring of the academic progress of every Child in Care who is of statutory school age.

Q1: How will I know if my child is doing well at school?

Schools communicate student progress and achievement in a variety of ways. These include written reports or grading systems (termly or annually) and at parent consultation evenings.

The focus for Parents' Evenings will vary between progress discussions around your individual child to more formal 'information giving' events for curriculum choices or career fairs.

Do not rely solely on these events to provide you with the information you need. Use the school's website and also contact the class teacher/form tutor and the Designated Teacher if you have any concerns or questions.

If your child is Primary age or attends a Special School, it is appropriate to contact the Headteacher with more serious concerns.

Questions to ask the school:

- How is Pupil Premium Plus used to improve my child's academic progress and enrich their educational experience?
- How will the Designated Teacher keep in touch with me?
- How will I be informed of parent evenings and school events?
- What ways will the school communicate with me as a foster parent?
- How do I contact the Designated Teacher if I have a question or a concern?
- Who is the School Governor with responsibility for Children in Care?
- How will I know when my child is taking exams, has important tests or key assessments?

Q2: What support can I expect the School to provide for my child?

Schools will receive Pupil Premium Plus funding for every Child in Care. This funding is provided to ensure that any additional support your child needs is put in place. How Pupil Premium Plus is used will be recorded within your child's Personal Education Plan (PEP). Devon County Council does not release Pupil Premium Plus funding to schools until the PEP has passed our Quality Assurance process.

The school should also be carefully monitoring your child's attendance and letting you know straight away if attendance or punctuality becomes a concern. An Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will also be monitoring your child's attendance and will be in regular contact with the school.

The Designated Teacher has to ensure that your child's education, social and behavioural needs are addressed. It is important that wider curriculum and enrichment activities are on offer for Children in Care and that they are actively encouraged to access broader opportunities.

If your child has particular talents the school should recognise this and provide additional opportunities so that they can excel in these areas.

If your child has Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) the school will be providing extra support or catch up sessions to help their progress. Your child will be placed on the SEN Register and their progress will be reported and discussed with you on a regular basis by the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). If your child attends a mainstream school, Special School or has complex needs, Devon Information, Advice and Support (DIAS) are able to provide impartial information and advice to support your conversation with schools, further information is available via this link: www.devonias.org.uk

Your child may also receive additional support from a Teaching Assistant or specialist support staff. The school should inform you of any additional support sessions or staff allocated to your child and this will be recorded in their PEP.

Transport for children to and from school is arranged (within the Devon County Council Transport Policy) through the School Transport Team, further information is available via this link:

www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/getting_to_school/school_transport.htm.

Questions to ask the school:

- How does the school use the PEP to help my child succeed?
- How will I be informed if the school has concerns about attendance?
- What additional support or extra opportunities is my child getting?
- My child has particular talents, how are they developed at school?
- Is my child able to access additional support through Pupil Premium Plus eg. one-to-one tutoring?



Q3: How can I get the best from parent consultation evenings? There are often too few opportunities to talk about my child

In Primary, Special Schools or Early Years settings you will be offered an individual appointment to talk about your child, this will be with the class teacher or a key worker. It is also worth asking to meet the Headteacher or the Head of Centre to discuss broader issues around the school's approach to supporting Children in Care. You do not need to wait until formal open evenings – telephone the school and ask to make an appointment to see the Headteacher.

Class teachers are usually happy to have an informal chat with parents at the end of the day or you could ask for an informal catch up at any time in the term. If your child has school transport you might book a telephone appointment.

At Secondary phase Parents' Evenings are usually more formal. Try to make as many appointments with individual teachers as possible to get a broad view of your child's progress. If time is short, prioritise key subjects such as English and Maths and the area or subject that your child really enjoys. An appointment with their form tutor is essential as they will know your child best. Always ask to meet the Designated Teacher but it is also worth asking to meet the SENCo (if your child has SEN) on a more regular and formalised basis. Put your request in writing, via the school's website or by email to the Designated Teacher.

Questions to ask the school:

- How is my child's progress checked and the impact of the PEP measured?
- Is my child achieving as well as they should be?
- If not, what are the barriers to their learning?
- What is the school doing to overcome any barriers and how can we work together?
- When is homework set and how will I know what has been set?
- What extra support is the school providing for key areas such as English and Maths?
- How will you let me know if you have any concerns?
- What grades are you predicting for my child in the National tests?
- How is the PEP and Pupil Premium Plus being used to ensure that my child achieves the best they can?



This table show national expectations for the end of each Key Stage:

Key stage	Child's age	National Expectation	Progress Measures
Any	Any	P levels are for children with complex needs who cannot access the National Curriculum. Progress is measured in very small steps, so that a degree of progress can be identified even for those children working below National Curriculum levels.	P Levels
Foundation Stage (ie. Pre-School and Reception)	5	Good levels of development across seven areas of learning. <i>*new measures from 2016 – details to be confirmed by DfE</i>	N/A
Key Stage 1 (at end of Year 1)	6	Phonics screening is undertaken at the end of Year 1 to check that children have reached the expected level. Children who did not reach the expected level in Year 1 are reassessed at the end of Year 2.	N/A
Key Stage 1 (at the end of Year 2)	7	Level 2 Reading, Writing, Maths and Science. If appropriate Phonics screening re-check. <i>*new measures from 2016 – details to be confirmed by DfE.</i>	N/A
Key Stage 2 (at the end of Year 6)	11	Level 4 Reading, Writing and Maths. Level 5 above expectation but an appropriate expectation for more able children. <i>*new measures from 2016 – details to be confirmed by DfE.</i>	2 levels of progress from KS1
From Sept 2015: Key Stage 1 (at end of Yr 2) & Key Stage 2 (at end of Yr6)	7 11	From Sept 2015: The Government has set out a series of age-related expectations. Schools will now start to assess pupil's progress against these standards. For Children in Care schools will use a system which indicates the physical year the pupil is working in and then further identify if this level of attainment is Emerging (E), Developing (D), Secure (S) or Mastery (M). Examples: 1. If you have a Year 2 aged child and they are working securely within the age related expectation of a Year 1 pupil, you would input 1S. 2. If you have a Year 5 aged child and they are working securely within the age related expectation of a Year 5 pupil, you would input 5S.	N/A Key Stage 2: two levels of progress from KS1
Key Stage 3 (at the end of Year 9)	11-14	No National tests. May take Commercially Available Tests (CAT) on entry to Secondary School.	N/A
Key Stage 4 (at the end of Year 11)	16	5 A* - C including English and Maths. 3 Levels Progress from KS2 outcomes in both English and Maths. English Baccalaureate (EBACC): 5 core subjects. <i>*New measures from 2016 - Basics: A* - C in GCSE English and Maths and Progress 8 and Attainment 8.</i>	3 levels of progress from the end of KS2

From 2014 schools no longer need to assess progress against Nationally determined progress levels between each Key Stage. However, all schools will be judged against National benchmarks through end of Key Stage statutory tests. Schools now use many different ways of measuring progress and you should ask the school to explain the process they use. All schools should also be able to tell you if your child is progressing in line with expectations. For pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 the Department for Education has produced some guidance for schools on the topics and levels of achievement that children should be aiming for at specific ages. Further details can be found via this link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum

Q4: What can I do if my child has difficulty managing their behaviour and has been 'in trouble' at school?

The school should be working very closely with foster parents, carers and social workers as a matter of course, particularly if there are any concerns around behaviour or social and emotional issues. Any incidents of bullying should be reported to the Designated Teacher and Virtual School and must be acted upon by the school.

Your child should be able to access additional support from within the school (counsellors and pastoral workers for example, or support through the Thrive approach) but also from external specialists working for Devon County Council, Babcock LDP or CAMHS.

The Behaviour Support Team offer classroom based support and the Educational Psychology Team will also provide guidance, support and training on positive processes to behaviour management, such as Thrive. They also undertake Statutory Assessments if required, when children have high levels of need. From September 2015 a new Early Help Mental Health Service will be available through schools which is commissioned by Public Health.

If your child has behaviour/emotional difficulties, the transition to the next phase of education can be particularly challenging (such as moving from Primary school to Secondary school). The school will be aware of the need to provide additional transition opportunities for vulnerable children.

If your child has been excluded or is threatened with exclusion, a Devon County Council Inclusion Officer will assist you with any contact with the school and will ensure that your child maintains stability in their education. Further information and contact details can be found via this link: www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/attendance/inclusion.htm

Questions to ask the school:

- What is your school's Behaviour Policy and how do the sanction/reward systems work?
- What support can you offer to help my child with their emotional and social needs?
- How is Pupil Premium Plus being used to provide any additional support for their personal development?



Q5: My child is keen to go on to Further or Higher Education: what is on offer and how do we get good advice?

From Year 9 your child will start to consider their Post 16 Pathway. Throughout Years 10 and 11 Schools and Colleges will organise meetings and events to outline new opportunities and choices through 'taster days' and careers evenings. These are very important meetings where Foster Carers will play a significant role in supporting their child's choices for their future.

Careers South West is commissioned to provide individual support to Children in Care and provide advice and guidance for a broad range of education and training opportunities on offer, within and beyond Devon, from the age of 16.

Schools and Colleges provide a range of information on the University application process. It is important that schools have high aspirations for Children in Care and are willing to provide additional support to enable Children in Care to overcome any barriers to accessing Higher Education.

Devon's Education Advisory Service, Babcock LDP, in partnership with the University of Exeter, organises 'taster day' visits to the University. Many Schools and Colleges also arrange residential and day visits so students can experience University life first hand.

New and more diverse education provision is emerging across Devon and includes Studio Schools, a University Technology College in Newton Abbot and work based apprenticeships. Further Education Colleges offer a diverse range of courses linked to vocational and practical opportunities. For more information about these options see the Virtual School website:

www.new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/post-16-education

Post 16 placements for children with more complex needs are arranged through the 0-25 SEN Team. Contact Beatrice Beer, Lead for Post-16 Learners with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities on tel: [01392 383000](tel:01392383000) or beatrice.beer@devon.gov.uk

Questions to ask the school or college:

- What are the entry requirements for particular courses?
- How long will the course run and will financial support be available? How do we apply?
- What qualifications will my child get if successful?
- Who is my child's learning mentor?
- When can we visit and find out more about this course or new School/College?
- What additional support can my child expect whilst at University, either from Devon County Council as the Corporate Parent or from the University itself?



Provision and opportunities from the age of 14:

Type of Provision	Description	Age Range	Available in Devon
Maintained Secondary School	Serves a local area and is part of the Local Authority family of schools.	11-16/18	See School Information via this link: www.new.devon.gov.uk/schools/school (not all Secondary Schools have Sixth Forms)
Academy	State funded independent school. School with Trustees accountable to the DfE and the Regional Commissioner.	11-16/18	See School Information via this link: www.new.devon.gov.uk/schools/school
Further Education College	Post 16 with a diverse range of courses will take some 14 year olds for vocational courses.	14-19	Bicton College www.bicton.ac.uk Exeter College www.exe-coll.ac.uk Petroc College www.petroc.ac.uk South Devon College, Paignton www.southdevon.ac.uk
University Technology College (UTC)	Specialist academy offer vocational courses and links with local businesses, colleges, and universities.	14-19	South Devon UTC, Newton Abbot (opening September 2015) www.utcolleges.org/utcs/south-devon-utc-in-engineering-water-and-the-environment
Studio Schools	Small specialist academies offering vocational courses linked to local employment.	13 -19 or 14-19	Devon Studio School, Torquay (Health & Social Care) www.devonstudioschool.co.uk Atrium Studio School, Ashburton (opening September 2015) www.atrrium-studio.co.uk

Type of Provision	Description	Age Range	Available in Devon
Free Schools	State funded independent schools which determine their own curriculum.	All	Route 39 (North Devon & Cornwall - up to Year 11) www.route39.org.uk Steiner Academy, Exeter (ages 3-16 years) www.steineracademyexeter.org.uk Exeter Mathematics School (ages 16-18 years) www.exetermathematicsschool.ac.uk
Apprenticeship and Work Place Training	Broad offer arranged for 16-25 year olds through colleges and employment based routes.	16-25	Becoming an Apprentice see links below: www.new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/post-16-education www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice Post-16 Education & Training see links below: www.new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/post-16-education
Independent Specialist College	Residential Schools and Colleges for students with complex needs or disabilities.	2-25	Information via the Local Offer website: www.new.devon.gov.uk/send

Key Contacts:

Title	Name	Tel No.	Email
Devon Virtual School			
Virtual School Headteacher	Dawn Stabb	01392 383000	educationofchildrenincare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
Virtual School Manager	Alison Withnell	01392 383000	alison.withnell@devon.gov.uk
Virtual School Administrator	Kate Clarke	01392 384786	kate.clarke@devon.gov.uk
Children in Care Data Coordinator	Sarah Short	01392 385353	sarah.short@devon.gov.uk
Area Learning Advocates:			
East Devon	Deborah Booth	01392 384566	deborah.j.booth@devon.gov.uk
North Devon	Kim Piper	01392 383000	kim.piper@devon.gov.uk
South & West Devon	Ian Hemelik	01392 383000	ian.hemelik@devon.gov.uk
Mid Devon	Danny Mead	01392 383000	danny.mead@devon.gov.uk
Inclusion Officers: (for children at risk of Exclusion)			
Torridge, Mid & North Devon	David Archer	01271 388559	david.archer@devon.gov.uk
Exeter & East Devon	Marc Kastner	01392 383000	marc.kastner@devon.gov.uk
South & West Devon	Keith Crawford	01392 383000	keith.crawford@devon.gov.uk
School Admissions:			
Schools Planning & Admissions Manager	Simon Niles	01392 383000	Simon.niles@devon.gov.uk schooladmissions-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
School Admissions Manager	Karen Howes	01392 383000	karen.howes@devon.gov.uk
School Transport			
Access Manager	Steve Roberts	01392 383000	schooltransportservicequeries-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
Special Educational Needs & Disability:			
0-25 SEN Team Manager	Velda Woodruff	01392 383000	specialeducation0-25-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
Early Years & Childcare Service:			
Senior Manager	Claire Rockliffe	01392 385520	claire.rockliffe@devon.gov.uk

Title	Name	Tel No.	Email
Babcock LDP			
Penalty Notice Education Welfare Officer	Ria Pleass	01392 880713	ria.pleass@devon.gov.uk
Education Welfare (attendance)	Colin Mitchell Linda Page	01392 287223	colin.mitchell2@babcockinternational.com linda.page@babcockinternational.com www.devonldp.org/edwelfare
Educational Psychology	Catherine Dunnett Angie Mudge	01392 287319	catherine.dunnett@babcockinternational.com angie.mudge@babcockinternational.com
School Improvement: Primary Adviser	Gill Winston	01392 287376	gillian.winston@babcockinternational.com
SEND & Inclusion Strategic Lead	Alison Hurley	01392 287239	alison.hurley@babcockinternational.com
Joint Professional Leads for Behaviour Support Team	Anthony Boulton Will Pritchard	01392 287239	anthony.boulton@babcockinternational.com will.pritchard@babcockinternational.com
Others:			
EFA: Regional Schools Commissioner SW	Sir David Carter	-	rsc.sw@education.gsi.gov.uk
Devon Information, Advice & Support (DIAS) DIAS Liaison Officer	Sue Brealey	01392 383080 01392 383957	www.devonias.org.uk/ sue.brealey@devon.gov.uk
Careers South West	-	0800 975 5111	exeter@careerssw.org www.cswgroup.co.uk/

If you are not sure who to contact please email:
educationofchildrenincare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

Making a Complaint

Schools and Colleges will work closely with you to ensure that your child has the best possible educational experience and are able to meet their potential. Sometimes Schools and Colleges do not get things right and can create further barriers for Children in Care.

We would advise Social Workers and Foster Parents to raise concerns as early as possible so that problems can be addressed. The Virtual School Headteacher is also there to help your child get the most out of their education and can be contacted if there is a problem.

There may be occasions where the School, Academy or College has let down the Child in Care and we will therefore pursue a formal complaint, initially using their own complaints processes, then through the other formal bodies responsible for that provision including: Trustees, Governors, the Department for Education, Regional Commissioner and Local Government Ombudsmen or Schools Commissioner.

Complaints regarding Academies or Free Schools are handled by the Education Funding Agency via this form: www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form

Glossary

Attainment and Progress 8	New KS4 performance measures – to be introduced from 2016
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CATs	Cognitive Assessment Tests
DCC	Devon County Council
DfE	Department for Education
DT	Designated Teacher
EBACC	English Baccalaureate
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
IO	Inclusion Officer
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PEPCo	Personal Education Plan Coordinator
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs & Disability
THRIVE	A special programme to build self esteem
KS	Key Stage

Questions to ask the School:

Informing Parents:

- What other ways will the school communicate with me as a foster parent?
- How do I contact the Designated Teacher if I have a question or a concern?
- How will the Designated Teacher keep in touch with me?
- How will I be informed of Parents' Evenings or school events?
- How will I know when my child is taking exams or has important tests or key assessments?
- How will you inform me if you have concerns about attendance?
- How will you let me know if you have any concerns?

Supporting Learners:

- How is the Pupil Premium Plus used to improve my child's academic progress and enrich their educational experience?
- What additional support or extra opportunities is my child getting?
- When is homework set and how will I know what has been set?
- What extra support is the school providing for key areas such as English and Maths?
- What is your school's behaviour policy and how does the sanctions/rewards system work?
- How is Pupil Premium Plus being used to provide any additional support for their personal development?
- Who is my child's learning mentor?
- If my child has behaviour/emotional issues, are they addressed in the PEP?

Maximising Opportunities:

- My child is very talented, what additional opportunities are available at school?
- What are the entry requirements for particular courses?
- How long will the course run and what financial support will be available? How do we apply?
- What qualifications will my child get if successful?
- When can we visit and find out more about this course or new school/college?
- What additional support can my child expect whilst at university, either from DCC as Corporate Parent or from the university itself?

Who's Checking?:

- Who is the School Governor with responsibility for Children in Care?
- Is my child achieving as well as they should be?
- If not, what are the barriers to their learning?
- What is the school doing to overcome any barriers and how can we work together?
- What grades are you predicting for my child in the national tests?
- How is the PEP and Pupil Premium Plus being used to ensure that my child achieves the best they can?

Extra Help:

- How is my child's progress checked and the impact of the PEP measured?
- What support can you offer to help my child with their emotional and social needs?
- What additional opportunities are provided for vulnerable children as they prepare to move on to the next phase of education?

