

Memo

From: Sue Denholm

To: all Designated teachers for Looked After Children

Date: 11 September 2012

Dear Colleague

Welcome back to the 2012/13 academic year I hope you have had a restful summer.

This memo is to inform you of up and coming events and news from the Virtual School for the Autumn Term.

Events:

The virtual school is running a course for headteachers, senior leaders or staff that may be new to the role of designated teacher for looked after children. The events are being held on 18th October 2012 at Edwinstowe House and 18th March 2013 at Bestwood Lodge. If you would like to attend please apply to Dace Birzgalis-Liegis on 01623 434149 or dace.birzgalis-liegis@nottsc.gov.uk.

If any member of staff attended the designated teacher training in June 2010 or February 2012 this event is not applicable.

LAC Achievement Officers:

The virtual school is pleased to inform colleagues that two Looked After Children Achievement Officers have been recruited full time to the service from May 2012. Ian Stewart will be covering the South of the County, Broxtowe, Rushcliffe Gedling and Newark. Ian will also be supporting the authorities residential homes. Marice Gillespie will be covering Mansfield, Ashfield and Bassetlaw areas. You will find their contact details at the end of this memo.

Both LAC Achievement Officers are available for support and advice on all matters concerning a looked after child's education and the education of adopted children/young people where the parent wishes. These posts cover primary and secondary and if appropriate early years and post 16.

One to One Tuition:

Letters will be sent out, following the census date at the beginning of October, informing you of the looked after children and young people who are entitled to one to one tuition. Please return the confirmation as quickly as you can so that monies can be vired to schools as early as possible in the school year. Academies will be invited to invoice us to receive the monies once confirmation has been received of their children and young people. Should this cause any difficulties please contact me directly.

Pupil Premium:

The pupil premium is calculated on a return the authority completes to the Government in February of each year. To date the spreadsheet informing me of the children and young people entitled to pupil premium has not been received. It may well not be available until October 2012 according to guidance issued recently. You will be informed by letter which children will be receiving pupil premium as soon as we are able to do so.

On Fronter there are useful ideas of how colleagues both in and out of the County have used the pupil premium to support the progress of their looked after cohort in the school.

Programme of Work:

The virtual school will be proactively checking on cohorts of looked after children through the academic year. The proposed plan is as follows:

Checking GCSE results week beginning 10th September 2012

Checking Year 7s and how they have settled week beginning 1st October 2012

Checking years 12 and 13 week beginning 15th October 2012

Checking reception pupils week beginning 5th November 2012

Checking years 10 and 11 week beginning 14th January 2013

This will be done either through email, telephone or personal contact by me and the LAC Achievement Officers. We shall be ensuring that we are providing any support necessary to help schools and our looked after pupils through early identification of any possible issues. However, please contact us prior to these dates if you are concerned about any pupil in the meantime.

Fronter:

This site remains a source of information for colleagues and will be continually updated.

LAC Enrichment Fund:

This new scheme has replaced the old Personal Education Allowance (PEA). Guidance and forms have gone out to social workers who will be the main contact for you when applying for this extra funding. Social workers have been informed that this funding is to be targeted at 'closing the gaps' for looked after children and young people. Therefore, technology, one to one tuition, work schemes etc are the sorts of interventions that should be applied for. I am very happy to look at 'value added' applications for high flying pupils, however, there is far less funding available than before and with pupil premium and one to one tuition available I would hope this fund will be able to target some very vulnerable looked after pupils to help their educational achievement.

Designated Teacher Network Meetings

The summer term 2012 saw the first two of these meetings being held in the North and South of the County. They were well received, thank you to Worksop Priory C of E primary and Jesse Gray primary who hosted the events. These meetings will carry on and for the later half of the autumn term 2012/13 two more dates will be set, I will forward these dates as soon as they are available. Please feel free to send me any ideas for subject material that you feel it would be useful to cover.

Themes the Virtual School will be monitoring:

The virtual school has been asked to monitor a number of areas that were identified as issues for Nottinghamshire in both recent LA OFSTED inspections and are now included in the revised LAC Strategy which will be released in the near future. These are:

1. School moves

This is the first key area that was highlighted and I will be having discussions with social workers concerning school moves to try to prevent inappropriate moves. I would ask colleagues to alert myself or the LAC Achievement Officers to any school moves that you feel would not be in the best interests of a looked after child.

2. Use of Pupil Premium

This is the second key area identified by Ofsted. Colleagues have asked in the past for good practise around the use of pupil premium to be shared. We therefore intend to make this an area for discussion at the Designated Teacher training sessions in the autumn term. I am also required through the OFSTED framework regarding looked after children to monitor the use and the impact of the pupil premium. Once the premium has been issued to schools I will therefore write out approximately 6 months later to request data on your use of the pupil premium, its impact and the evidence base.

Personal Education Planning

New trial documentation is ready to be issued to social workers to aid better educational planning for looked after children and young people. Colleagues in schools already have quality planning documents such as IEPs and I am hoping to sharpen up the PEP documentation to reflect and support school planning. The quality of educational planning for looked after children will also be a focus for future LA Ofsted inspections. The evidence for this judgement will be gathered in schools as well as from the LA.

Music Lessons

I have been asked by colleagues in the LA to remind all schools that music lessons for LAC are free. If you would like further information please contact Elaine Atkinson at Elaine.atkinson@nottsc.gov.uk

Other news from the virtual school:

With the promotion of Marion Clay to Group Manager of the Support to Schools Service, Linda Foster, EIS Team Manager will be linked to the virtual school and will continue to support the planning and direction we shall be taking in the future. Linda will also be on the Senior Leadership Team that supports the virtual school. One special school, one secondary and two primary headteachers are also remaining on the team. These colleagues are also supported by John Slater Service Director for Education Standards and Inclusion and Elaine Hack Senior Educational Psychologist for the virtual school.

The virtual school will continue to work closely with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and to that end LAC Achievement Officers will attend EPS team meetings to highlight any children/young people who are new into care. A link EP will then be allocated. The virtual school will contact school by email or phone for up to date information on new into care children and young people to ensure the right service is allocated from the EPS. May I ask that if you are contacted by the virtual school for this information you support us by providing the information as soon as possible so that we can ensure that both you and the child/young person are given the correct level of service as soon as possible.

Achievement Event.

We had a wonderful day on the 14th July 2012 with over 100 children and young people attending Rufford Park to receive certificates. The virtual school is always keen to acknowledge any achievement made by our looked after children/young people (and any adopted children/young people the virtual school may be supporting) and will send out book tokens in recognition. Please feel free to highlight any achievement by sending me an email or informing a member of the virtual school.

New Designated Teachers

If anyone is new to the Designated teacher post since the beginning of this autumn term or names and email addresses have changed, please email Dace.

I hope that you have found this memorandum useful in setting out the coming year. I will continue to update you regularly as the school year progresses.

I look forward working with you all this academic year.

Kind regards
Sue Denholm
Co-ordinator of the Virtual School

For more information please contact:

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LAC Achievement Officers:

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Ian Stewart, 07836671491, ian.stewart@nottscc.gov.uk
Elaine Hack, 07753630070, elaine.hack@nottscc.gov.uk

LAC Achievement Officers and Co-ordinator based at Lawn View House supported by Dace Birzgalis-Liegis, 01623 434149, dace.birzgalis-liegis@nottscc.gov.uk