

The irtual School

**Escalation Policy regarding the educational
progress of Gloucestershire's Children in Care**



Policy cover sheet:

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1.0	September 2017	Jane Featherstone	New document - written in line with current legislation
1.1	September 2021	Jane Featherstone	New Postholders
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Escalation Policy for the Educational Progress of Gloucestershire's Children in Care

What is an escalation policy for education?

An escalation policy is a set of procedures put in place to deal with potential problems in a variety of contexts. In this policy, for example, we need to ensure that all agencies that support Children in Care are able to escalate their concerns and that there are actions that must be implemented when an unexpected issue or an increased level of stress has been placed upon a child in care which impacts on their potential to achieve. This stress can be in the form of emotional crisis, deterioration in attendance, placement or social worker change or change to the care plan. The escalation plan is put into effect once a certain threshold is hit, such as when difficulty becomes a barrier and therefore reaches an unacceptable level.

Why do we need a policy?

Children in Care in Gloucestershire as a vulnerable learner group need everyone in all agencies to be clear about how to support their education. In the same way that a school will have a complaints procedure it is important that all parties who support children in care know how to implement the appropriate action.

This escalation policy is in line with the Virtual Headteacher handbook

“Effective challenge and support within Children’s Services is often associated with a VSH who has high level of access to both Assistant Director (Learning), Assistant Director (Social Care) and, when necessary, to the DCS. All three must both appreciate, and support, the virtual school’s development so it can influence the strategic direction of all the arms of children’s services, and the council in general. The VSH should have at least ‘visiting membership’ of both Learning and Social Care senior teams, as well as more informal access to both Assistant Directors and, were cross-service issues to present a barrier, the Director of Children’s Services.” (Virtual School Handbook, P43)

Alun Rees & the National Virtual School Network - version 2015.06 June 2015

Source: National association of Virtual School Website – direct link
(<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2015-06-08-Virtual-School-Handbook.pdf>)

Escalation

Escalation when Schools are failing to secure children's progress.

The carer/parent/social worker should be in regular contact with the school, so if communication through normal means such as phone calls, meetings, e-mails has not led to resolution then this needs to be escalated.

If a parent /carer /social worker of a child in care has a concern that the school is not supporting the child's attainment, they should notify the school's designated teacher, inform the child's social worker and the Virtual School should be involved with a meeting. This should be a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting as it is a plan to improve achievement and to discuss and remove any barriers.

If the meeting is felt to be unsuccessful in removing the barriers this should be escalated to the Virtual School Head (VSH) who will contact the designated teacher and/or Head Teacher of the school or setting as appropriate.

If this is not resolved the Virtual School Head should let the Director of Education know so that they can ensure the Director of Children's Services (DCS) is informed as appropriate.

Escalation when a social worker is failing to secure children's progress.

All attempts at communication to discuss the issue should have been pursued to try to resolve this matter before escalation.

If there is evidence that a child's social worker is not actively supporting the education of a child in care, then the VSH should be informed and the social worker's manager should be alerted. Depending on the agreed action taken, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) may need to be informed.

Examples where this may be needed:

- ✓ School placement or placement change which impacts on school attendance, without informing the Virtual School (or SEND if a child has a EHCP)
- ✓ The social worker's non-attendance at their child's PEP

If there is still a failure to address the attainment issue raised for the child in care, the VSH should raise this with the IRO and also the relevant Assistant Director (Social care)The fostering team should be informed about the carer not supporting Standard 8 and the carer's annual review should reflect this. This again should result in the DCS being informed of issues impacting on the attainment of a child in care.

Escalation when foster carer is failing to secure children's progress.

All attempts at communication to discuss the issue should have been pursued to try to resolve this matter before escalation.

If a party has evidence that a foster carer is not supporting a child in care to achieve then the fostering social worker should be involved in communication from the school and also VSH should be involved. If this is an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) foster carer, then the VSH should contact commissioning and inform the Strategic Lead for Children in Care.

If this is not resolved then the IRO must be involved and there should be a discussion at the child in care review and a new PEP written to remove the barrier to learning. Should the issue remain unsolved, the VSH will inform Commissioning. The IFA should be informed about the carer not supporting Standard 8 and the carer's annual review should reflect this. This again should result in the DCS being informed of issues impacting on the attainment of a child in care.

Escalation when a parent is failing to secure children's progress.

When a child is placed at home and there is an issue with the child's education, the school, Virtual School and social worker should hold a 'team around the child' meeting to try to resolve any of the issues raised.

If there is no resolution then the matter should be raised by the VSH to the social care manager and if this does not remove the barrier, then to the IRO. If this is not resolved then the IRO must be involved and there should be a discussion at the Child in care's review and a new PEP written to remove the barrier to learning.

If the issue continues then the VSH must escalate this with the Director of Safeguarding & Care. This should result in the DCS being informed of issues impacting on a child in care's attainment.

Escalation when SEND casework are failing to secure children's progress.

If there is an issue with delay to a school place being found and therefore a child in care's attainment is being affected then the VSH should escalate with the Head of Children with Additional needs and also the Director of Education, if this is within Gloucestershire. If the SEND issue is under belonging regulations because a child is placed in another Local Authority (LA) then the VSH must escalate with Gloucestershire Head of SEND, Casework in the receiving LA and the VSH in the receiving LA. The IRO and the Strategic Lead for Children in Care and the Head of Education should be notified so that the DCS can be informed.

Escalation when Health professionals are failing to secure children's progress.

If a child's educational attainment is at risk of not reaching full potential then the VSH will escalate this following discussions with social worker/carer/school and other relevant parties such as IRO to establish the history. A discussion with Director of Safeguarding & Care and relevant commissioners will follow in order to remove the barrier.