Institute of Education

UCL

Promoting the achievement of looked after children and young people in Dorset

November 2022

Case studies of education provision for children and young people in care in Dorset

PALAC

PROMOTING THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF
LOOKED
AFTER
CHILDREN

Contents

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Introduction

Education of children in care

As of March 2021, there were 80,850 children and young people in care in England. The number of looked after children has continued to increase steadily over the last eight years.[1] Sixty-three per cent of these children are in care because of abuse or neglect and just under three-quarters (72%) are placed in foster care arrangements. Children and young people who are in or have experienced care remain one of the lowest performing groups in terms of educational outcomes. The average Attainment 8 score for children in care was 19.1 and 19.2 for children in need compared to 44.6 for non-looked after children. In 2019, the percentage of children in care achieving a pass in English and Mathematics (grade 5 or above at GCSE) remained similar to 2018 at 7.2% compared to 40.1% for non-looked after. Care leavers can experience poorer employment and health outcomes after leaving school compared to their peers. They are over-represented amongst the offender population and those who experience homelessness. However, research is emerging to show that children and young people in care can have very positive experiences of school if they are supported effectively to reach their potential academically and socially.[2]

In 2021, Dorset Virtual School (VS) collaborated with UCL Centre for Inclusive Education to deliver the Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) programme with seven schools. This report presents an account of the programme, including the activities undertaken by the participants and the outcomes of the programme to date for pupils in care and staff in the participating schools.

What is PALAC?

PALAC is a knowledge exchange programme that seeks to support practice in schools to improve outcomes for care experienced students. It originated as a result of the dearth of evidence available to support schools in developing practice for a group

1   Department for Education (2021) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2021 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850306/Children_looked_after_in_England_2019_Text.pdf
2   C. Carroll and C. Cameron (2017). Taking Action for Looked After Children in School. London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

of children and young people who continue to underachieve both academically and subsequently in adult life. At its core is the collaborative relationship that exists between practitioners in school and university researchers to seek to improve our collective understanding of how students in care can thrive in school. As a knowledge exchange programme, PALAC places considerable emphasis on the generation of evidence from practice. The programme promotes evidence-informed practice in schools and the structure of the programme itself is based on current understandings of how to best support professional learning and development in schools.

PALAC, which began in 2014, is now in its eighth year; it engages schools and Virtual Schools in a collaborative year long programme through access to research findings, a school audit tool and regular support from facilitators with research and school practitioner backgrounds. Participants have the opportunity to share and evaluate their findings at the end of the academic year. The PALAC team links with a Local Authority to support the development of teacher practice in a more systemic way and to help ensure that learning from the programme can be sustained once the formal PALAC programme comes to an end.

The PALAC programme has identified seven evidence-informed domains around which schools focus professional development and learning:

- **Supporting emotional development and wellbeing**
- **Raising and monitoring attainment**
- **Supporting learning**
- **School environment**
- **Effective deployment of staff**
- **Supporting equality and diversity**
- **Working with carers and other professionals.**

Schools focus their PALAC projects around one or two domains that are most relevant to their settings.

Case studies

Beaminster School
Embedding Emotion Coaching into policy and practice: a Relationship Policy for everyone

Background

Research has shown that giving time and resource into improving relationships in schools promotes 'positive outcomes around inclusion, engagement, attainment and achievement in the short term and community safety and cohesion in the longer term'[3],[4]. Moreover, time given to fostering positive teacher-student relationships has shown to be of meaningful value to the wellbeing of both students and teachers[5].

Emotion Coaching is a relational approach to supporting social and emotional development, promoting relationships and supporting behaviour. Originally developed by John Gottman[6] (Gottman et al, 1997), it is based on the principle that nurturing and emotionally supportive relationships provide optimal circumstances for the promotion of children's wellbeing and resilience[7].

Emotion Coaching supports the relationship between children and adults, with the goal of developing children's ability to manage difficult feelings, and in adults understanding of all behaviour as a form of communication. It can be used as an 'in the moment' technique to manage and guide a child whose response may be challenging in the context of school, as well as an integrative tool to develop relationships and improve emotional wellbeing[8].

Enhancing the skills of teachers to support children to regulate their emotions through attuned relationships encourages empathetic engagement with the child's emotional state where it is verbally acknowledged and validated, promoting a sense of security and feeling 'felt'[9]. This activates changes in the child's neurological system and supports the child with developing feelings

3   Scottish Government, Research and Analysis (2017). Behaviour in Scottish schools: 2016 research: https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-2016/pages/15/#page-top
4   Dunnett, C. and Jones, M. (2020) Guidance for Developing Relational Practice and Policy. P.5. Babcock Learning and Development Partnership LLP 2020.
5   Dunnett, C. and Jones, M. (2020) Guidance for Developing Relational Practice and Policy. P.5. Babcock Learning and Development Partnership LLP 2020.
6   Gottman, J. Katz, L. and Hooven, C (1997) Meta-Emotion: How Families Communicate Emotionally. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
7   Gus, L., Rose, L. & Kilby, R. (2015) Emotion Coaching: A universal strategy for supporting and promoting sustainable emotional and behavioural well-being. Educational and Child Psychology
8   Gus, L., Rose, L. & Kilby, R. (2017) The introduction of emotion coaching as a whole school approach in a primary, specialist social emotional and mental health setting: positive outcomes for all. The Open Family Studies Journal, 9(1), 95-110.
9   Gus, L., Rose, L. & Kilby, R. (2017) The introduction of emotion coaching as a whole school approach in a primary, specialist social emotional and mental health setting: positive outcomes for all. The Open Family Studies Journal, 9(1), 95-110.

of emotional safety[10]; responding through a lens of understanding and empathy is of particular importance for children who have experienced trauma.

Beaminster School is a Christian designated 11–18 Co-Educational school, with Christian affiliations, accepting students of all faiths and religious inclinations. The main school stands on the edge of Beaminster in a designated area of outstanding natural beauty close to the Jurassic Coast and provides education for students drawn from a wide rural area. 21% of the school cohort of students receive free school meals. The PALAC team at Beaminster School comprised of the Headteacher, Pupil Premium Coordinator and SENCo. Having identified the PALAC domain of *Supporting emotional development and wellbeing*, the team set out to develop a Relationships policy and embed an Emotion Coaching approach throughout the school. This case study describes how they implemented their vision to develop an inclusive behaviour policy where everyone understands behaviour as communication of an emotional need.

What did the school do?
The PALAC team set out with a clear vision and aim for the project:

- **To develop a Relationship Policy which would embed Emotion Coaching and an attachment aware approach**
- **To support staff with using the new policy effectively over time**
- **To support staff with using Emotion Coaching in practice through a programme of CPD, a strategy guide and learning walks to support daily practice**

As a first step, they spent time reviewing their current Behaviour for Learning policy. This involved a working group with representation from a range of staff within the setting as well as consultation with external practitioners such as the school link Educational Psychologist. They were clear that this should also involve pupil voice and undertook a focus group with identified students to gather their feedback.

Undertaking this task led to a valuable process of whole school reflection where other aspects of the wider school system would need to be considered as part of the Relationships policy to promote an inclusive whole school approach and help to embed consistent practice across all parts of the school community.

These were as follows:

Systematically tracking the number of positive and negative incidents across the school

Identification of students with emerging needs through data: progress and attainment, behaviour points, attendance, and PASS scores[11]

Clear support pathways for students

Ensuring pupil voice is kept central

Feedback from Middle Leaders (Curriculum and Pastoral)

Establish an Additional Needs register to track and monitor students

A safe space for students linked to support pathways

Importance of embedding a cycle of learning walks to evaluate Emotion Coaching in practice

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10   Emotion Coaching UK website: https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com
11   Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) assessment tool. https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/pupil-attitudes-to-self-and-school-pass/

Using the graduated approach[12], the team mapped out existing support pathways for students through different levels of intervention (universal support, targeted support, and specialist support) so they could be understood and systemically implemented alongside the Relationships policy. This also enabled them to identify gaps in provision and construct a clearer pathway model that could be shared with everyone in school including staff and students.

As well as developing the Relationships policy, the team were successful in securing a funding bid to create a Student Services centre; this would unify all school services in one area of the school as a learning and wellbeing hub for everyone. The team spent time exploring different possibilities and evidence-based models of safe spaces, deciding it was essential to involve students in the development of the hub.

The Emotion Coaching inset was arranged for all staff and delivered by an Educational Psychologist, including developing staff understanding of their role in implementing it in their school context.

Outcomes for students and staff

The PALAC team successfully drafted a Relational Behaviour Policy which will sit alongside the existing Behaviour for Learning policy and sets out the school's commitment to providing support for their most vulnerable pupils through a relational approach and perspective of understanding.

The Emotion Coaching training was well received by staff and a subsequent whole staff session on the next inset day to support implementation of this in practice, as well as reinforcing its centrality as a key part of the relational approach. This will also involve the creation of a working group of champions within the wider staff to ensure that this continues to remain a priority for everyone.

A new Student Services model has been created; this will be a place for all students which houses medical, welfare, learning and wellbeing/pastoral support. The provision mapping exercise helped the team to audit current provision and determine how different pathways of support will link to the new Student Services model so support can be universally embedded in practice. The remodelling and naming of this space will involve pupils with the new Inclusion Hub planned for launch at the beginning of the academic year.

The Additional Needs register is securely in place and updated monthly, whilst whole staff use of ClassCharts and Pupil Passports ensures a clear dissemination of valuable information. Alongside this, the school will introduce new relational based agreements for pupils to support a person-centred approach to support[13]. This will link to existing support plans and/or Personal Education Plans so everything is joined up.

> Ethos of policy: *For all students at Beaminster, we understand that behaviour is a communication of need*

Figure 1: Ethos of Relationships policy

12   DfE Statutory Guidance (2014). SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
13   Babcock 'Guidance for developing Relational Practice', appendix 5: A Relational Support Plan .

The school are committed to 'live out' the relational policy through embedding emotion coaching in practice and through their wider 'Student Services' provision. Time will be given to evaluate the impact of emotion coaching; this will also include an evaluation of the new Student Services model with Heads of Year and support staff along with student questionnaires and interviews to review and refine policy and practice.

and practice so it has meaningful impact. It also demonstrates the value in developing a cascading plan that gives regular focus and protected time for ongoing CPD and reflection thereby ensuring that the approach is embedded as a thread within the fabric of the school through policy, school improvement plan, student plans and daily practice in the classroom.

Implications for practice and research

Emotion Coaching is a universal, sustainable provision that needs to be considered as an approach that develops over time rather than as a discrete programme which works separately to existing school systems[14]. Clear direction from the senior leadership team is key in implementing and embedding emotion coaching in schools from the practicalities of arranging initial and on-going training and support, to ensuring it is prioritised as part of the whole school agenda and in taking a lead in demonstrating its use in practice[15].

Initial research into the use of Emotion Coaching in educational settings has shown promising results[16]. However, it is clear that implementation is crucial in embedding this as a whole school approach. This case study highlights the importance in developing an integrated approach to Emotion Coaching which involves staff at an equal level and provides a thoughtful, responsive, and evidence-based framework to embed policy

14   Gus, L., Rose, L. & Kilby, R. (2017) The introduction of emotion coaching as a whole school approach in a primary, specialist social emotional and mental health setting: positive outcomes for all. The Open Family Studies Journal, 9(1), 95-110.

15   Gus, L. and Meldrum-Carter, L. (2016). Student wellbeing: Emotion coaching in schools. https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/student-wellbeing-emotion-coaching-in-schools/

16   April Romney, Matthew P Somerville & Ed Baines (2022) The facilitators and barriers to implementing Emotion Coaching following whole-school training in mainstream primary schools, Educational Psychology in Practice, 38:4, 392-409, DOI: 10.1080/02667363.2022.2125933

The Dorchester Learning Centre (DLC)
The Reading Project: raising attainment and motivation to read through paired reading

Background

Research link

To become a skilled reader evidence suggests that along with the structured, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics at the early stages of learning to read, (NRP, 2000[17]; DFE 2022[18]), all children will need to build background knowledge and vocabulary to continue to develop as fluent readers and 'comprehenders'. The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing is also well documented (Graham, 2020[19]). The attainment gap between Children in Care (CIC) and their peers remains significant (O'Higgins et al. 2015[20]) and attainment for CIC was recorded as lower in all subjects (DFE, 2019[21]), with reading levels likely to be lower than those of peers (Sebba et al, 2015[22]). Robust, theoretically driven studies evaluating specific interventions that support reading attainment for CIC remain scarce

(Evans et al, 2017[23]); making it difficult to plan and provide effective 'evidence informed' support (Graham et al, 2019[24]). Research also demonstrates that children in care themselves must be involved in the development of interventions (Evans et al, 2016[25]) which will increase motivation to read for pleasure. Research corroborates that learner motivation is an important factor in successful reading (Shiefele at al, 2012[26]; Barber et al, 2020[27]), hence providing quality texts and establishing a culture where books are celebrated is crucial.

For CIC, reading encouragement, Paired Reading (Osborne et al, 2010[28]; Topping, 2014[29]) and book gifting (e.g., Letterbox Club) were highlighted as strategies that produced positive outcomes (Forsam & Vinnerljung, 2012[30]; Liabo et al., 2013[31]); though a later study into book gifting revealed schemes were more effective when carers were actively involved in shared

17 National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, & Human Development (US). (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.

18 DfE. (2022). The reading framework: Teaching the foundations of literacy.Clark, C and De Zoysa, S. (2011). Mapping the interrelationships of reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment: An exploratory investigation. London: National Literacy Trust.

19 Graham, S. (2020). The Sciences of Reading and Writing Must Become More Fully Integrated. Reading Research Quarterly, 55(S1), S35– S44. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.332

20 O'Higgins, A. A., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2015). What is the relationship of being in care on the educational outcomes of children? An international systematic review. The Rees Centre.

21 DFE 2019 xxx

22 Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., ... & O'Higgins, A. (2015). The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data. University of Oxford Department of Education/University of Bristol.

23 Evans, R., Brown, R., Rees, G., & Smith, P. (2017). Systematic review of educational interventions for looked-after children and young people: Recommendations for intervention development and evaluation. British educational research journal, 43(1), 68-94.

24 Graham, B., White, C., Edwards, A., Potter, S., Street, C., & Hinds, D. (2019). Timpson review of school exclusion: consultation outcome: May 2019.

25 Evans, R., Brown, R., Rees, G., & Smith, P. (2017). Systematic review of educational interventions for looked-after children and young people: Recommendations for intervention development and evaluation. British educational research journal, 43(1), 68-94

26 Schiefele U., Schaffner E., Moller J., Wigfield A. (2012). Dimensions of reading motivation and their relation to reading behavior and competence. Reading Research Quarterly, 47, 427–463. https://doi.org/10.1002/RRQ.030

27 Barber, A. T., & Klauda, S. L. (2020). How Reading Motivation and Engagement Enable Reading Achievement: Policy Implications. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 7(1), 27–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219893385

28 Osborne, C., Alfano, J. & Winn, T. (2010). Paired reading as a literacy intervention for foster children. Adoption & Fostering, 34(4), 17–26.

29 Topping, K. J. (2014). Paired reading and related methods for improving fluency. International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 7(1), 57-70.

30 Forsman, H., & Vinnerljung, B. (2012). Interventions aiming to improve school achievements of children in out-of-home care: A scoping review. Children and Youth Services Review, 34(6), 1084-1091.

31 Liabo, K., Gray, K., & Mulcahy, D. (2013). A systematic review of interventions to support looked-after children in school. Child & family social work, 18(3), 341-353.

literacy activities (Mooney et al, 2016[32]). The Education Endowment Fund's (EEF[33]) Teaching and Learning toolkit identified that peer tutoring (used in paired reading) provided a positive impact on learning, for low cost, based on extensive evidence and there is a wealth of evidence to support the approach. A more recent EEF randomized control trial (2017[34]) showed minimal and indeed some negative effects on literacy attainment where secondary pupils supported each other through a peer paired reading programme; however, these trials did not consider CIC specifically or measure non cognitive skills, such as impact on relationships and confidence building, which we know are crucial factors for raising attainment of CIC.

Context of setting

The Dorchester Learning Centre (DLC) is a maintained mixed gender Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in the heart of Dorset. Pupil admissions come through different referral routes and there are a mix of pupils on single and dual registration placements. The school manages Kingfisher Learning Centre at Dorchester Hospital. The school has recently extended the intake to include primary aged pupils, as well as secondary, significantly increasing pupil numbers. In 2021-22 DLC had 56 secondary students and 16 primary students on roll. Many learners who attend DLC may have experienced trauma in their lives and may have struggled to remain in a mainstream school setting. There are a mix of students who may have Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) and/or medical needs and many who have Permanent Exclusion from School, (PEX). A significant amount of CIC attend DLC, mirroring the findings that children who have

had interaction with social care are more likely to be excluded (Timpson Review of School Exclusion, 2019[35]).

This case study describes how the DLC primary leader, with the support of the literacy coordinator planned and implemented a reading project. Using the PALAC audit tool DLC chose to focus primarily on 2 domains; 'raising and monitoring attainment'; as well as 'supporting emotional wellbeing and development'. This project had the dual aim of raising reading attainment through fostering motivation/love for reading for CIC and learners across the school; whilst actively promoting secure attachments and emotional connections between pupils and staff through reading.

32 Mooney, J., Winter, K., & Connolly, P. (2016). Effects of a book gifting programme on literacy outcomes for foster children. A randomised controlled trial evaluation of the Letterbox Club in Northern Ireland. Children and Youth Services Review, 65, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.03.009 33 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/
34 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/peer-tutoring-in-secondary-schools
35 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf

What did the school do?

DLC were aware that many of their pupils had experienced difficult, often negative experiences whilst learning to read, which had left them unable to access much of the curriculum, resulting in issues with self-esteem and little motivation to read. This was particularly true for CIC at DLC. DLC hoped to re-engage these learners with reading through using quality texts in a fun, 'non-threatening' way and hoped if pupils had access to personalised learning with emotionally available adults or peers, this would encourage better engagement in reading activities.

DLC set up 'The Reading Project' and paired CIC from the secondary department with carefully chosen primary children, with the aim of building peer attachments and developing reading confidence in both older and younger learners. New accessible and inclusive texts representing the diversity of the school population including positive images of CIC were acquired. The 'Rapid Read' programme (Pearson) was purchased for secondary learners, as well as primary. DLC were aware that for positive impact, Teaching Assistants needed to be properly trained and supported (Webster et al, 2015[36]) and decided to audit the prior literacy intervention training all staff had accessed. This was followed by a training session for all staff to enable quality support for implementing the project. The project was launched on 'World Book Day' and pupils invited to a tea party where they could get to know their reading buddy. DLC had purchased large floor books and picture books for the pupils to share during the event. Once a week the secondary pupils came and heard their buddies read and buddies then listened to secondary students' modelling reading.

Outcomes for staff and pupils

DLC described positive outcomes resulting from the project: Primary students were willing to sit and read to their secondary buddy weekly and enjoyed sharing books. All learners now read to teachers more willingly and developed an increased love of reading, choosing to read for pleasure more often. Feedback from secondary CIC revealed they felt happy they were helping the primary pupils, which in turn gave them a sense of self-worth. The reading attainment of Year 11 students who accessed the reading interventions improved and this supported them to attain higher GCSE grades. Staff also felt empowered by the training provided and the school literacy training audit identified strengths and areas of need to develop future capacity in the school.

Inevitably there were challenges faced along the way. Time constraints in a busy school with challenging days meant planned sessions did not always go ahead; for instance, the GCSE timetable for the year 11 reading meant some paired reading sessions had to be cancelled during exam time. There were also issues with pupil absences and some CIC not being willing to engage with the project; often due to the fear of feeling self-conscious in front of peers.

One of the key aims of PALAC is to kickstart sustainable change which links to the final two steps of Kotter's 8 step change model: 'building on' and 'embedding' change (Kotter, 1996[37]). Post PALAC, DLC plan to continue work on their long-term action plan for children in care and build upon initial successes in the new academic year.

36   Webster, R., Russell, A., & Blatchford, P. (2015). Maximising the impact of teaching assistants: Guidance for school leaders and teachers. Routledge.
37   Kotter, J. P. Leading Change. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

Plans include:
- **Reading interventions will be offered to more year groups – eventually all children will have access to them.**
- **Secondary reading buddy scheme will expand to give all children the opportunity to participate and will support future CIC who join the school.**
- **A whole school phonics programme will be sourced, and phonics training will be given to all staff –supporting raising attainment for CIC.**
- **CIC will be offered regular visits to the local library.**
- **Books will be provided to CIC as rewards.**

Implications for practice and research

Through involvement with the PALAC project DLC identified what worked well in practice and shared some key learning for future practice supporting CIC who do not attend mainstream settings.

The school's top five suggestions:
- **Plenty of encouragement with small rewards e.g., tea party, book tokens.**
- **Giving children the chance to nurture others helps them with their self-worth.**
- **Raise awareness in the school of the needs of CIC to improve their outcomes.**
- **Give children time to process what is being suggested.**
- **Listen to what the children are asking for, whether it is through their actions, words or behaviours.**

There is an urgent need to develop theoretically driven, rigorous, well designed studies evaluating literacy interventions/approaches in order to identify what works for CIC. Positive links exist between learner motivation to read for pleasure and improved attainment (McBreen & Savage, 2021[38]; DFE, 2012[39]) and the school's role is key in ensuring CIC are provided with similar opportunities, experiences and resources to their peers, which harness this motivation. Future research should involve larger sample sizes and longitudinal studies should be conducted to identify what works, in what circumstances for this group, and if long term gains are sustainable (Evans et al, 2017[40]). The 6th edition of 'What Works for Literacy Difficulties' (Lavan & Talcott, 2020[41]) evaluated literacy interventions, including specific appraisal of interventions used for CIC; though some of the recommendations for future studies included the need for studies to be more robust. Whilst studies into peer reading have shown mixed outcomes; there is scope for research on peer reading projects specifically with CIC, evaluating impact on emotional wellbeing, as well as attainment. CIC often experience multiple school and home placements, leading to a disrupted attachment process, which can make it harder for them to form and sustain relationships. Future research could consider what specific benefits a paired reading approach can offer children in care to support the development and maintenance of secure attachments, whilst simultaneously supporting impact on literacy attainment.

38   McBreen, M., & Savage, R. (2021). The impact of motivational reading instruction on the reading achievement and motivation of students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Educational psychology review, 33(3), 1125-1163.
39   DfE Standards Research Team. (2012). Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure Education.https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf
40   Evans, R., Brown, R., Rees, G., & Smith, P. (2017). Systematic review of educational interventions for looked-after children and young people: Recommendations for intervention development and evaluation. British educational research journal, 43(1), 68-94.
41   Lavan, G. & Talcott, J. B. (2020). Brooks's What Works for Literacy Difficulties? The Effectiveness of Intervention Schemes. 6th edition.

Rushcombe First School
A school pledge for all children in care: supporting positive identity through pedagogy

Background

'An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching, learning, achievements, attitudes and wellbeing of every young person matter. Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools' (Ofsted, 2000[42]). Since the Warnock Report of 1978[43], there have been efforts to move towards a more inclusive education system in England to ensure all children have equitable learning opportunities[44,45] and schools embrace an ethos and culture where all pupils matter regardless of circumstance[46].

Inclusive pedagogy involves a shift away from focusing on individual needs to that of all children within the community[47] so that inclusive practice becomes part of what the school does on a day-to-day basis and is embedded in their values. School ethos and professional practice needs to foster this through both informal and formal practices which give opportunity and time for reflective practice, collaboration and possibilities to problem-solve together in order to develop a whole school approach[48].

Quantifiable outcomes, such as education achievement and attainment, are often the key indicators of success and are rooted in educational practice and principle. However, other developmental outcomes, such as identity, are equally important when considering the achievements of the whole child. Recent research[49] suggests that practice which also relates to the psychosocial aspects of human growth and development can be contributing factors to positive outcomes, particularly for children in care. Children and young people with better wellbeing are more likely to achieve academically and make progress[50]. Understanding identity as both a process and an outcome[51] is essential to supporting children in care, as is recognising that children's identities are shaped by the relationships around them. Healthy relationships can act as a protective mechanism[52] helping children to move beyond an identity dominated by being in care[53].

42   Ofsted. 2000. Evaluating Educational Inclusion: Guidance for Inspectors and Schools. London: Ofsted.

43   The Warnock Report 1978. http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/warnock/warnock1978.html

44   Sikes, P., H. Lawson, and M. Parker. 2007. Voices on: Teachers and Teaching Assistants Talk About Inclusion. International Journal of Inclusive Education 11 (3): 355–370.

45   Trussler, S., and D. Robinson. 2015. Inclusive Practice in the Primary School, A Guide for Teachers. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

46   Jessica Losberg & Paula Zwozdiak-Myers (2021). Inclusive pedagogy through the lens of primary teachers and teaching assistants in England, International Journal of Inclusive Education. Routledge. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2021.1946722

47   Florian, L., and K. Black-Hawkins. 2011. "Exploring Inclusive Pedagogy." British Educational Research Journal 37 (5): 813–828.

48   Brighton & Hove City Council (2018) Developing an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy: Guidance for Brighton & Hove Schools - A Relationship-Based Approach to Inclusion.

49   McMurray, I., Connolly, H., Preston-Shoot, M. and Wigley, V. (2010) Shards of the old looking glass: restoring the significance of identity in promoting positive outcomes for looked-after children. Child and Family Social Work. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00733.x

50   Adoption UK (2018) Bridging the Gap: Giving Adopted Children an Equal Chance in School. https://www.adoptionuk.org/campaigns-policy-education

51   McMurray, I., Connolly, H., Preston-Shoot, M. and Wigley, V. (2010) Shards of the old looking glass: restoring the significance of identity in promoting positive outcomes for looked-after children. Child and Family Social Work. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00733.x

52   McMurray, I., Connolly, H., Preston-Shoot, M. and Wigley, V. (2010) Shards of the old looking glass: restoring the significance of identity in promoting positive outcomes for looked-after children. Child and Family Social Work. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00733.x

53   Arnau Sabates, L. and Gilligan, R. (2015) What helps young care leavers to enter the world of work? Possible lessons learned from an exploratory study In Ireland and Catalonia. Children and Youth Services Review. DOI:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.03.027

Rushcombe First School is a large first school for children aged four to nine years old. Within the local area, the school serves as an example of excellent practice, particularly for the innovative nature of its curriculum[54]. Implementing a more systemic approach to connected school experiences and the fostering of positive self-identity for all children in care was the PALAC research focus for the Deputy Headteacher at Rushcombe First School. Through identifying *Supporting emotional development and wellbeing* and *Supporting equality and diversity* as priorities through the PALAC audit tool, the school set out with an ambitious project underpinned by the wish to develop an agreed, whole school approach to provision and support for their looked after children.

What did the school do?
The school were committed to developing a project with the potential for sustained and meaningful impact and recognised the importance of taking all staff on the journey with them with the aim of embedding this within whole school ethos and policy.

The Deputy Headteacher arranged to deliver a series of training sessions with staff to promote awareness of the needs of their looked after children, to enhance practice and to support the development of a whole school pledge[55] for children in care, a series of additional commitments the school promised to undertake for every child in care.

In the first session, a presentation about the PALAC project was shared highlighting the vulnerabilities of children in care, and this led to staff reflections on the experience of

children when they join the school and the ways in which the school can better promote the idea of identity and belonging in their community based on exploring the following questions:

1. **What are the key aspects of school practice that can help foster looked after children's positive self-identity and belonging?**

2. **How can we be more consistent in the way we welcome them into our community?**

This fed into the second staff session where everyone took part in a mapping exercise, setting out the provision every child would receive when joining their school community to ensure they felt welcomed, built positive early connections and a real sense of belonging from the moment they joined (see figure 1).

Rushcombe First School's ethos and approaches are influenced by the world-renowned Reggio Emilia schools in northern Italy, which base their philosophy of education upon the belief in an empowered, competent child. Within the Reggio schools, childhood is respected and nurtured, children's rights are central to the ethos that is developed, and children are valued as contributors to society. One of the key beliefs of the Reggio Approach is the view of the child as a co-creator of the learning that takes place. As a result, there is an emphasis upon the child as a curious individual who constructs their knowledge and understanding of the world, alongside the skillful support and facilitation of the teacher[56].

54   Ofsted Inspection Report (2007) Rushcombe First School https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/889905
55   Brighton & Hove City Council (2018) Developing an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy: Guidance for Brighton & Hove Schools - A Relationship-Based Approach to Inclusion. Appendix 8.
56   Rushcombe First School website: https://rushcombe.co.uk/curriculum/reggio-approaches/

Phase One Project launch through staff meeting: develop a School Pledge for all children in care

- Together staff explored LAC through shared understanding of definitions, barriers, needs, school context.

- Introduced PALAC project and shared the school action plan.

- Introduce the idea of positive self-identity and its relevance to LAC.

- Team discussion about factors in school that can impact on positive self-identity.

- Development of a school pledge.

Phase Two Second staff meeting to develop agreement for welcoming new children to the school

In the second session, staff mapped out an agreement for welcoming new children to the school: before joining / on their first day / and during their first weeks in school. These included some of the following:

Before joining
The child attends a tour of the school with the headteacher, meeting their new teacher and seeing their new classroom. A space in the cloakroom is allocated, individual trays are labelled, reward charts created, and exercise books prepared to promote a sense of belonging for the child as soon as they arrive.

First day
The teacher hears the child read and uses this as a time to catch up with the child about how their first day is going. The teacher touches base with parents/ carers at the end of the day to convey positive messages about how the child has done.

First week
Other adults who will work regularly with the child take the time to introduce themselves and welcome the child. The teacher continues to touch base with the child during the first week and to monitor playtimes, checking how everything is going.

Phase Three Observations of looked after children's experiences of Reggio Studio Based approaches

- Using the summer term Reggio studio-based project, consider how this helps children in care explore the world around them, their identity and voice.

- Identify two children in care to track and note observations of their engagement and participation in the project. This could be photos of the work at different stages of their learning journey.

- Encourage opportunities for the children to share their views as they progress through the project.

Figure 1: Phases of the project

The final part of the project explored the potential role of the Reggio studio-based approach in promoting a space for listening and nurturing positive self-identity for looked after children. It was decided that two children, one from foundation and the other from key stage 2, would be observed during the summer term studio project with documented observations of their participation and experiences of the project. Children were given the opportunity to plan their own piece of work based on themselves or what was important to them, and encouraged to experiment with materials/ approaches, engaging in on-going evaluation with the teacher playing a facilitatory role. This would give valuable insight into how the project could support children in care to explore the world around them and help them to shape their identity and voice.

Outcomes for students and staff

Support and involvement from the senior leadership team, as well as a highly supportive staff team, has enabled the school to develop their whole school approaches and raised the profile of looked after children. Furthermore, taking staff on the journey through involving them in a series of whole staff sessions has enabled the school to ensure provision for looked after children is integral to school ethos, policy and practice.

Staff sessions were greatly valued and led to important discussions about the needs of their looked after children. See figure 2 below.

The school now have a whole school pledge in place for all looked after children as well as an agreement for the provision given to every looked after child joining the school. This has positively impacted staff giving them a clear framework to support the needs of looked after children.

The Reggio studio-based project enabled staff to undertake qualitative research based upon observations and discussions with the two identified children. Through this, they were able to ascertain that the approach is valuable in providing looked after children a space to formulate and develop a positive self-image. Furthermore, it provided evidence of the significance of being able to express themselves safely in a highly supportive environment where they had agency over their choices. One child drew themselves as a superhero champion

'The session provided a really good introduction to the needs of LAC, including their possible experiences and emotions. It has helped me to think about how I can meet the needs of the children in my class.'
Year 1 teacher

'It was useful to see how the needs of LAC can be seen as the needs of all children – in this way, we can all create an ethos and approach which will help LAC to join our school and have their needs met, whilst also working towards the benefit of all children.'
Year 2 teacher

Figure 2: Feedback from staff

and commented that their experience of creating the piece of work had made them 'feel happy' thus illustrating how it had both empowered and promoted a positive sense of identity (see figure 2).

Challenges have been carving out time for staff meetings and the pressures of the curriculum. The school will now focus on ways to develop the 'family' and 'homely' ethos of all classrooms including the creation of safe spaces in each classroom alongside a coherent strand of the PSHE curriculum which fosters positive self-identify in their children.

Implications for practice and research

Realising effective change in school settings works best when it is clearly linked to children's outcomes, carefully planned and has time give over to its implementation[57]. Furthermore, adopting a whole school approach to achieve consistency and sustainability connects staff to the journey which helps to build momentum that excites people to pursue a compelling and clear vision of the future together[58].

The school's pedagogical approach is centred on the child and the learning ethos is based upon a firm belief that learning happens best when it happens with the child; this builds upon extensive research into the theories of educational theorists and psychologists such as Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky; all of whose theories are commonly viewed as belonging to a 'constructivist' school of thought which

Figure 2 – Reggio Studio Project – child self-portrait as a superhero champion

share the common thread that learning should be 'constructed with the learner'[59].

Through providing opportunities to explore, discover, value, and build upon the ideas, interests and questions of the child, they are placed at the centre of the learning process and become active protagonists in their growing processes[60]. This case study points to the importance of creating child-centred pedagogy that fosters voice and agency, creates spaces to notice and listen and helps to connect the inner and outer worlds of the child beyond an identity of being in care[61].

57 Guskey, T.R. and Yoon, K.S. (2009) What works in professional development? Phi delta kappa 90(7), 495-500.

58 Kotter, J.P. (2014) The 8-Step Process for Leading Change. https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/

59 Rushcombe First School website: https://rushcombe.co.uk/curriculum/research-basis/

60 Reggio Emilia Approach website: https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/

61 Coram Voice, 2015, Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies.

The Purbeck School
A collaborative approach to supporting shared reading experiences for children in care in a residential setting

Background
Research link

Recent government statistics and years of research clearly indicate that children with SEND are likely to be overrepresented in the care system and poor educational outcomes continue to be commonplace (O'Higgins et al, 2015[62]; O'Higgins et al, 2021[63]). Autistic children in care (CIC) are a group even more susceptible to poor educational outcomes in comparison to other SEND types and compared to autistic children not in care (Sebba et al, 2015[64]; Lenehan, 2017[65]). Research also suggests that issues persist with the under identification of children with autism who are in care (Parsons et al, 2019)[66].

Shared reading experiences provide an opportunity for developing knowledge of the world and of language, communication and vocabulary as well as literacy. This is particularly important for autistic children who may struggle with developing the comprehension aspects of reading.

Strategies for supporting reading that may have a positive impact, include teaching with visual supports, direct instruction and prompting (Finnegan and Mazin, 2016[67]). More research is needed with regards to how multi-sensory interventions can impact on attainment of autistic learners (Bond et al, 2016[68]). Research indicates moderate gains for use of 'Social Stories' which can support with behaviour in difficult situations and support successful social interactions (Ozuna et al, 2015[69]). Literacy is closely linked to oral language, which may present an additional challenge for autistic children who are minimally verbal; however, there are still many opportunities for participation in book sharing which can involve the child e.g., interacting with story props from story sacks and using assistive communication tools (Mucchetti, 2013[70]). Story sharing can also provide opportunities for nurturing and building relationships and secure attachments, which may be even more crucial for autistic children in care. According to the Booktrust report, 90% of foster carers

62   O'Higgins, A. A., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2015). What is the relationship of being in care on the educational outcomes of children? An international systematic review. The Rees Centre.
63   O'Higgins, A., Luke, N., & Strand, S. (2021). Children in care in education: Who is entered for exams and who reaches critical thresholds of success at age 16?. British Educational Research Journal, 47(6), 1522-1539.
64   Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., ... & O'Higgins, A. (2015). The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data. University of Oxford Department of Education/University of Bristol.
65   Lenehan, C. (2017) These are our children. Council for Disabled Children/Department of Health. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585376/Lenehan_Review_Report.pdf
66   Parsons, S., McCullen, A., Emery, T., & Kovshoff, H. (2019). Awareness within local authorities in England of autism spectrum diagnoses of looked-after children. British Educational Research Journal, 45(1), 99-116.
67   Finnegan, E., and Mazin, A L. 2016, Strategies for increasing reading comprehension skills in students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A review of the literature, Education & Treatment of Children 39 (2):187-220
68   Bond, C., Symes, W., Hebron, J., Humphrey, N., and Morewood, G. 2016, Educating persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorder – A systematic literature review, Ireland: NCSE Research Reports NO: 20.
69   Ozuna, J., Mavridis, A., and Hott, B L. 2015, Interventions to Support Social Interaction in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Systematic Review of Single Case Studies, Exceptionality Education International 25 (2):107-125.
70   Mucchetti, C. A. (2013). Adapted shared reading at school for minimally verbal students with autism. Autism, 17(3), 358–372. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361312470495.

> **In the children's homes the written word was rare. Letters were rare. There were no books and consequently no encouragement to read. The staff were rarely see with a book. they were too busy adjusting rotas and shifts.**
> **Quote from Lemn Sissay who grew up in care**

who read with their child reported this had a positive impact on the relationship. Book sharing initiatives such as 'Letterbox Club' have had a positive impact in improving carer involvement in supporting reading and enhancing engagement (Winter et al, 2011[71]; Forsman et al, 2019[72]).

Context of setting

Purbeck View is a residential school for students with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and associated complex needs, although there are some day students in attendance. The school meets the needs of up to 57 students from across the country, from 7-19 years of age. Some pupils have severe learning difficulties alongside their autism and the school reports that most have some behavioural difficulties. All students have a personalised care programme and education is provided in an inclusive, specialist setting tailored to meet their complex needs. Students are cared for by a 'school team', (including professionals from education and health), as

well as a residential 'care team', domestic and administrative staff and a 'therapy team' (support services). Transitions are supported to enable continuity of care from home to Purbeck view as a residential setting, and students are provided with a 'waking curriculum' where "every activity and interaction is a learning experience". Purbeck View wanted to start a project that would enable the different teams to work together successfully alongside parents/carers to provide the best outcomes for children in care.

This case study describes how a multidisciplinary school team (involving 'school', 'care' and 'therapy' teams) was created to promote reading across the school community as a shared experience and to engage educational staff, residential teams and parents to work together to promote reading. The project had its origins in the pandemic and the school wanted to demonstrate that learning can happen 'everywhere and anywhere'. Employing the PALAC audit tool, the school chose to focus

71 Winter, K., Connolly, P., Bell, I. & Ferguson, J. (2011). Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Letterbox Club in Improving Educational Outcomes among Children aged 7–11 Years in Foster Care in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Centre for Effective Education, Queen's University. https://www.booktrust.org.uk/.../our-programmes/ letterbox-club.

72 Forsman, H. (2019). Exploring the Letterbox Club programme's impact on foster children's literacy: potent intervention or general support?. Oxford Review of Education, 45(4), 502-518.

Story Sack created to accompany 'We're going on a bear hunt'

on 4 of the PALAC domains: 'raising and monitoring attainment', 'supporting learning', 'supporting emotional development and wellbeing' and 'supporting equality and diversity'. The aim was to maximise opportunities for reading and to instigate a culture shift from reading being restricted to classrooms, to reading being a multi-sensory, inclusive activity that happened in all environments in and outside classroom confines. Purbeck View has many learners who are 'minimally verbal' and have complex needs; so, books would need to be supplemented with multi-sensory resources and props to support pupil engagement. Story sacks provide a great opportunity for shared reading and the school hoped that through book sharing continued development of secure attachments for children in care could be nurtured.

What did the school do? Educational staff, alongside a speech and language therapist, worked together to develop a bank of sensory stories and story sacks to support development of early reading skills. Staff used photos of the children and adapted narratives with the aim of developing background knowledge and vocabulary and engaging learners' interest in stories and books. The school planned to regularly send a letterbox parcel home to a child's carers.

This parcel would contain: a book, sensory resources and some ideas on how to use the book to engage the child. These story sacks would support home to engage in the reading process and nurture development of secure attachments, which is vital for children who are care-experienced. The school aimed to extend this to the residential part of the school. The school also bought 20 new texts for the school library that reflected the diversity of the school population; books were purchased that contained positive images of autistic children, unaccompanied refugees, children in care, as well as LGBTQ+ children.

It was crucial to train all staff, (including residential care as well school staff) to read with children in their care and a training session was provided for everyone, across all departments, to support development of skills and confidence to support 1:1 reading sessions. The aim was for each child to share a book 1:1, four times a week. The project team developed a reading proforma for each child which detailed the child's preferences for reading and 'reading logs' with reminders of how to support the development of early reading strategies and to record and monitor pupil progress in the 1:1 sessions.

Outcomes for staff and pupils

The impact of the project was commented upon favourably in the subsequent Ofsted report, which also noted impact on pupil attainment. Whilst the school faced multiple challenges during the time of the project (continued challenges from the pandemic and additional challenges placed on staff during an inspection), the accomplishments were notable. To measure the impact of the project on attainment the school analysed the Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP) data and learning descriptors which revealed positive outcomes for children in care involved in the project. Questionnaires showed staff confidence had increased post training. Outcomes were also discussed in Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and shared with home. Reading logs were analysed to inform future support and pupils consulted to ensure their voice was at the centre of the project.

Implications for practice and research

One clear implication from this case study for practice was that story sharing and story sacks can offer opportunities for developing social relationships and developing secure attachments, while at the same time offering children a chance to engage with positive and motivating reading experiences. With regards to book sharing schemes, studies suggest (e.g., Dymoke & Griffiths)[73] that these can have a positive impact, particularly when used alongside evidence informed interventions which have a clear theoretical grounding. When schools support and strengthen carer involvement in shared literacy activities at home and provide training, this can provide a potentially promising influence on attainment (Forsman, 2019[74]; Mooney et al, 2016[75]). The BookTrust[76] has some useful recommendations for how this support could be provided and include the recommendation that carers should be informed about the positive benefits of shared reading. Continued investment in high quality resources that are shared through these schemes such as story sacks and personalised resources support engagement. Purbeck View school invested in new books, which focused on promoting equality and diversity, and developed quality

Ofsted

All pupils, including students in the sixth form, require phonics support. For the earliest readers, pupils follow an appropriate phonics programme to help them learn and recognise more sounds. Teachers use assessment information to find out which sounds pupils struggle with. Pupils are beginning to use these sounds in words and sentences, but this work is still in its early days. Pupils read, or listen to someone reading, daily. Leaders have chosen reading books carefully and invested well in the school library. Pupils visit the school and community libraries to help further their appreciation of books.

73   Dymoke, S., & Griffiths, R. (2010). The Letterbox Club: the impact on looked-after children and their carers of a national project aimed at raising achievements in literacy for children aged 7 to 11 in foster care. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 10(1), 52-60.
74   Forsman, H. (2019). Exploring the Letterbox Club programme's impact on foster children's literacy: potent intervention or general support?. Oxford Review of Education, 45(4), 502-518.
75   Mooney, J., Winter, K., & Connolly, P. (2016). Effects of a book gifting programme on literacy outcomes for foster children: A randomised controlled trial evaluation of the Letterbox Club in Northern Ireland. Children and Youth Services Review, 65, 1-8.
76   BookTrust: https://www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/research/reading-in-foster-families-full-report.pdf

resources for supporting reading, reading to children, and encouraging reading for pleasure. For children in care the nurturing relationship between the child and the adult reading with them cannot be underestimated especially when reading is something they struggle with (Greig et al, 2006[77]).

Local authorities need to carefully recognise and plan appropriate systems for identification and support for autistic children in their care (Selwyn et al, 2014[78]),

77 Greig, A., Minnis, H., Millward, R., Sinclair, C., Kennedy, E., Towlson, K., Reid, W. & Hill, J. (2008) Relationships and learning: a review and investigation of narrative coherence in looked after children in primary school. Educational Psychology in Practice, vol.24, no.1 (Mar). pp13-27.
78 Selwyn, J., Wijedasa, D. N., & Meakings, S. J. (2014). Beyond the Adoption Order: challenges, interventions and disruptions.

The Blandford School
Mentoring Pathways in school: a network of key adults for all children in care

Background

Evaluations of mentoring schemes show that the most successful are those where 'mentoring relationships were sustained over time, where they were structured to provide appropriately regular and frequent contact to offer practical and meaningful help, and where there was an emotional closeness between the pair'[79] (Carroll et al, 2015).

Research has shown that many young people in care experience positive benefits from drawing on natural mentors (i.e., non-parental adults)[80],[81] particularly those who can provide practical support and guidance. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that the role of mentoring programmes in replicating natural mentoring relationships with a trusted caring adult can support positive outcomes[82], connect young people with their wider community and enhance emotional wellbeing.

According to the EEF Toolkit[83], mentoring interventions that are delivered over an extended period of time (often at least the duration of the school year) allow mentors and mentees to develop more enduring and trusting relationships whilst programmes that involve regular meetings of once a week or more tend to be more promising[84]. Ultimately, flexible mentoring approaches that promote the development of strong relationships and work with the 'whole young person in his or her environment'[85] can build on individual strengths and enrich aspirations.

The Blandford School is a co-educational 11-18 secondary school and sixth form based in Dorset with approximately 1,000 students on roll. They currently have 12 looked after children on roll and estimated 10 looked after children will join in the new academic year. This case study describes how the Deputy Head of Year 7 and Student Achievement Champion wanted to create a mentoring stream so that their children in care and care experienced children had a more consistent network of key adults in school. This was underpinned by the PALAC domain 'supporting emotional development and wellbeing' with the hope of creating a mentoring programme to promote stability, connectedness to the school community and increased attainment and aspirations for all children in care.

79 Cameron, C., Connelly, G. and Jackson, S. (2015) Educating Children and Young People in Care : Learning Placements and Caring Schools. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. ISBN 978 1 84905 365 5

80 Munson, M. R., Smalling, S. E., Spencer, R., Scott, L. D. Jr., & Tracy, E. M. (2010). A steady presence in the midst of change: Non-kin natural mentors in the lives of older youth exiting foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 32(4), 527–535.

81 Singer, E. R., Berzin, S. C., & Hokanson, K. (2013). Voices of former foster youth: Supportive relationships in the transition to adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 35(12), 2110–2117.

82 Brady, B., Dolan, P. and McGregor, C. (2020) Mentoring for Young People in Care and Leaving Care: Theory, Policy and Practice. Routledge.

83 EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit

84 EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Mentoring https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring

85 Brady, B., Dolan, P. and McGregor, C. (2020) Mentoring for Young People in Care and Leaving Care: Theory, Policy and Practice. Routledge.
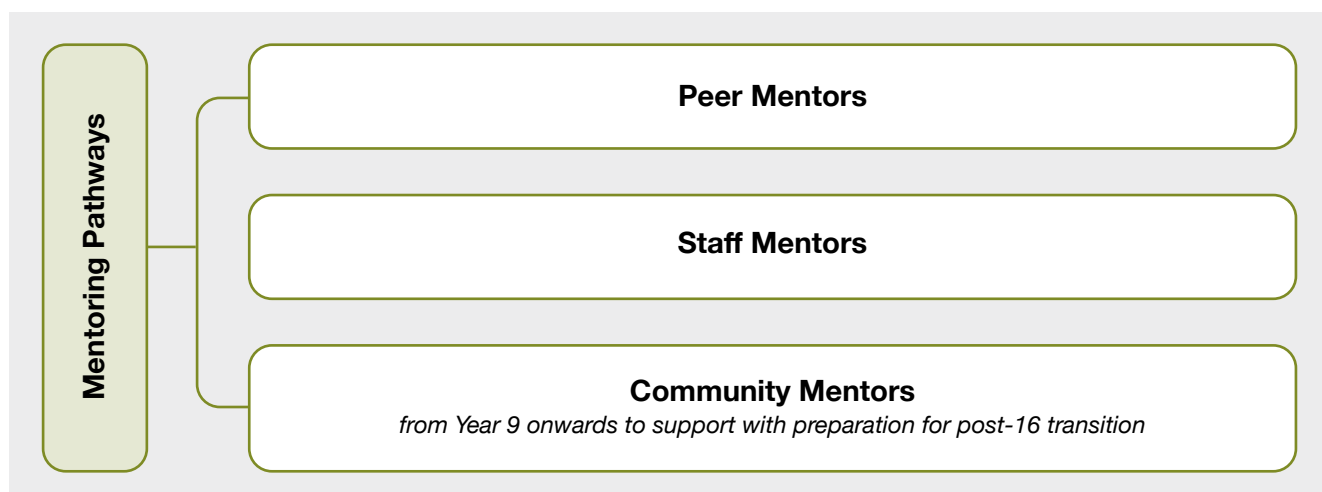
Figure 4: A Model of Mentoring Pathways in school

What did the school do?

At The Blandford School, children in care currently have key staff attached to them; this is usually the Head of Year and Designated Teacher for Looked After Children. However, often these members of staff are attached to multiple students and sometimes cannot give the time needed for individual students due to the demands of their role.

The PALAC team wished to strengthen connections to other key adults within the school by creating a model of practice that would support the nurturing of positive relationships between children in care with additional key adults so the school could establish a network of support for every child in care within the school community. This led to the creation of a Mentoring Pathways model with distinct strands. See figure 4.

The team felt it was crucial to set out a clear aim for each mentoring pathway. Using a provision map, they mapped out each mentoring pathway: type of mentoring, target group, aims, frequency, duration and expected impact. This helped them to build a mentoring model which could be sustained and one with permanence and stability.

As a next step, the PALAC team devoted time gathering feedback from their students in care to find out what type of support they would like from a mentor; this helped to shape the aims and determine the frequency and aspirations for each of the pathways. Handbooks were created for each mentoring stream as a guide for mentors and to establish a sustainable programme.

Staff in school were invited to volunteer as Staff Mentors, and the recruitment of Community Mentors was publicised through an advert in the school newsletter and via the school social media platform. Once recruited, a training programme was devised and planned for all mentors.

Termly meeting records were created to ensure that mentoring targets could be formally documented with feedback from the mentee captured from each session. Keen to also track impact, the PALAC team explored different ways of capturing both qualitative and quantitative impact measures. This led to the devising of a specific set of questions with an impact measure to support tracking of progress but also to ensure that student voice was kept central to the aims of the programme.

Finally, the team discussed ways they could support the tracking and monitoring of the mentoring programme using the existing school information management system, Sims. They decided that it would be recorded as an intervention on the system, helping to embed this within the school system and draw this together with the Personal Education Plans so it was joined up.

Outcomes for students and staff

As a result of the time undertaken to research, listen and gather feedback, The Blandford School have created a strong mentoring model that offers holistic support through a network of key adults. This has taken into consideration the voices of children in care in terms of the nature of mentoring support that is helpful to them as they journey through school.

Specific challenges have been the recruitment of mentors, particularly Community Mentors. Using the school social media platform to promote the advert helped to widen the search. After undergoing a recruitment process, ten Community Mentors have successfully been recruited for the programme, and forty peer mentors are now in place.

It has also taken significant time to create and edit training handbooks for each pathway in readiness for the mentoring programme launch; however, this has been a valuable piece of work as these resources underpin the ambitions of the school in creating a mentoring model with longevity.

Outcomes and impact from the new Mentoring model will be tracked and monitored through the existing cycle of school progress checks and, crucially, pupil voice will be gathered from students during mentoring sessions so they can share their individual experiences of the programme; this will be assimilated through surveys and using quantitative information recorded on the Mentor recording form. Furthermore, the tracking and monitoring of Mentor Sessions will work in synch with the PEP cycle so PEP outcomes are fully integrated into the mentoring support.

Next steps will be training Community Mentors and upskilling Peer Mentors, as well as carefully matching mentors specifically to identified students to meet their needs. The programme will launch with a small pilot cohort with plans to expand in the next academic year.

Implications for practice and research

A recent research report[86] showed that children who were looked-after had far lower levels of participation in education, employment and training after leaving school in comparison to their peers. However, evidence is emerging that children and young people in care can experience positive outcomes in school and at post 16 if they are supported effectively to reach their potential academically and socially[87].

There is often a strong focus on supporting young people to become independent; however, students in care do not always experience the same levels of social and

86   DfE Research Report. Ahmed, N. Bush, G. Kathryn Lewis, K and Tummon, W. (2022) Post-16 educational and employment outcomes of children in need. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1076705/Post-16_educational_and_employment_outcomes_of_children_in_need.pdf

87   Carroll, C. and Cameron C. (2017) Taking Action for Looked After Children in School. A Knowledge Exchange Programme. London: UCL Institute of Education Press

cultural capital as their peers and there are often 'holes' in their support network[88]. The Blandford School case study is a valuable example of a programme that is grounded in theory, evidence informed and includes characteristics of mentoring programmes associated with longevity. The Mentoring Programme highlights the importance of supporting children in care in building trusted and supportive networks, a 'caravan of connections'[89], that provide a safe base to explore the world around them and which enables them to shape their identity within it.

Research findings on the impact of mentoring remains mixed; however, both community-based and school-based approaches can be successful. What is evident is that programmes which have a clear vision and structure, provide effective training and support for mentors, and recruit mentors who are volunteers, are associated with more beneficial outcomes[90]. Ultimately, young people value high quality mentoring relationships that they experience as authentic, trustworthy, and meaningful[91]. Further evidence, both practice and research based is needed, with pupil voice at the centre, to help shape future mentoring models.

88   Singer, E. R., Berzin, S. C., & Hokanson, K. (2013). Voices of former foster youth: Supportive relationships in the transition to adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 35(12), 2110–2117.
89   Singer (2013). Voices of former foster youth: Supportive relationships in the transition to adulthood
90   EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Mentoring https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring
91   Dolan, P., & Brady, B. (2012). A guide to youth mentoring: Providing effective social support. London and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

St Mary's Primary School Bridport
A Multi-Academy Trust networking forum for all children in care and Designated Teachers

Background

A recent literature review on 'Children and Young People's Views on being in Care'[92] sought to highlight the voices of looked after children on their journey through the care system. Within findings from the research, young people shared their experiences of education and the support given within school. Many spoke of the importance of wanting teachers to be aware of their needs without drawing attention to them: *Teachers need to watch out for young people in care in a way that encourages them and not makes them stand out*[93]. Furthermore, young people emphasised the importance of being able to talk openly to their teachers and support staff about personal issues and to be encouraged to do well in ways that were non-stigmatising.

In schools, teachers can often hold back from conversations about care arrangements as they feel unqualified and ill-equipped to manage them. This can impact relationships with children in care for fear of getting things wrong. A recent survey shows there are many disparities among teachers' experiences of teaching children in care: 'some received good quality training in this area before they qualified, but the majority did not'[94]. Teachers highlighted the wish to have a greater understanding of the experiences of children in care by deepening knowledge about the statutory requirements of Personal Education Plans, the role of the Virtual School and how they can better understand children's experiences of the care system.

Children who have experienced trauma do not have the usual opportunities for growth and development in their early years. Rather than leaving them 'stuck' in their development, schools can provide them with the possibility for 'second chance learning'[95] through empathetic relationships which facilitate opportunities to listen, restore and rebuild.

St Mary's Primary School in Bridport is part of The Minerva Learning Trust, a group of schools in West Dorset working in partnership as part of a multi-academy trust. There are a very small number of children in care both in the school and across the MAT schools. The PALAC team, led by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator/CiC Designated Teacher and supported by the ELSA Teaching Assistant, identified the PALAC domains of *Supporting emotional development and wellbeing* and *Working with carers and other professionals* as the focus for their project. They wished to develop and establish a networking forum for all children in care and Designated Teachers across the MAT schools within the trust, and also

92 Coram Voice, 2015, Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies.
93 Coram Voice, 2015, Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies. P.15
94 Become and Voices from Care Cymru. (2018) Teachers who care: How to help teachers and schools support looked after children. BASW. https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/teachers-who-care.pdf
95 Bomber, L. M. (2007). Inside I'm Hurting. Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in School. Worth Publishing.

enhance transition processes across settings through extended collaborative meetings (PEPs). This would take place alongside the delivery of whole school 'Dorset Steps' training to improve staff confidence with using a therapeutic approach to behaviour and wellbeing.

What did the school do?

Building a greater support network for all children in care lay at the heart of this PALAC project. This involved thinking about the multiple layers of the network around children in care: the network within the school itself, the network across the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and the network of individuals and schools involved in supporting transition. This steered the team to forming three key strands to the project reflected in the figure below.

The starting point was a questionnaire designed by the PALAC Lead and circulated to all members of staff in the school. This provided the team with a baseline of colleagues' experiences of teaching or supporting a pupil who is a child in care and explored how confident they feel about talking to children in care about their care situation. This opened up a valuable dialogue about the complexity and challenge of talking to children in care about their care situation with the right level of sensitivity and support; for example, *'knowing whether to be led by them in conversation'* and the *'boundaries around what a child is or is not happy to talk about'* within the protocols of information sharing.

School Network	All staff follow a therapeutic approach, knowing that behaviour is communication
	All staff recognise that relationships and conections are key in supporting a child who has experienced trauma
	Children talking more freely about their care situation with key adults and peers in school
Multi Academy	Build positive relationships with peers who have relatable experiences through establishing a CiC peer network across the MAT
	Develop a Designated Teachers Forum for all Designated Teachers across the MAT and to meet on a termly basis
Transition Network	Children transition to new settings confidently
	Professionals in both settings work together before and after the transitio
	Children feel well-supported and kept in mind by their previous setting
	Children use their successful familiar strategies and provision across settings

Figure 1: Network Model for all children in care

1 Do you have experience of teaching or supporting a pupil who is a Child in Care? (0 point)
- Yes
- No

2 What is your role in school? (0 point)
- Teacher
- Teaching assistant
- ELSA or wellbeing support
- SLT
- Other

3 How often have you/do you talk to children in care about their care situation)eg foster carers, moving placement, their contact with parents)?
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

4 How confident or comfortable do you feel talking to children in care about their care situation? (0 point)
- Very confident/comfortable
- Somewhat confident comfortable
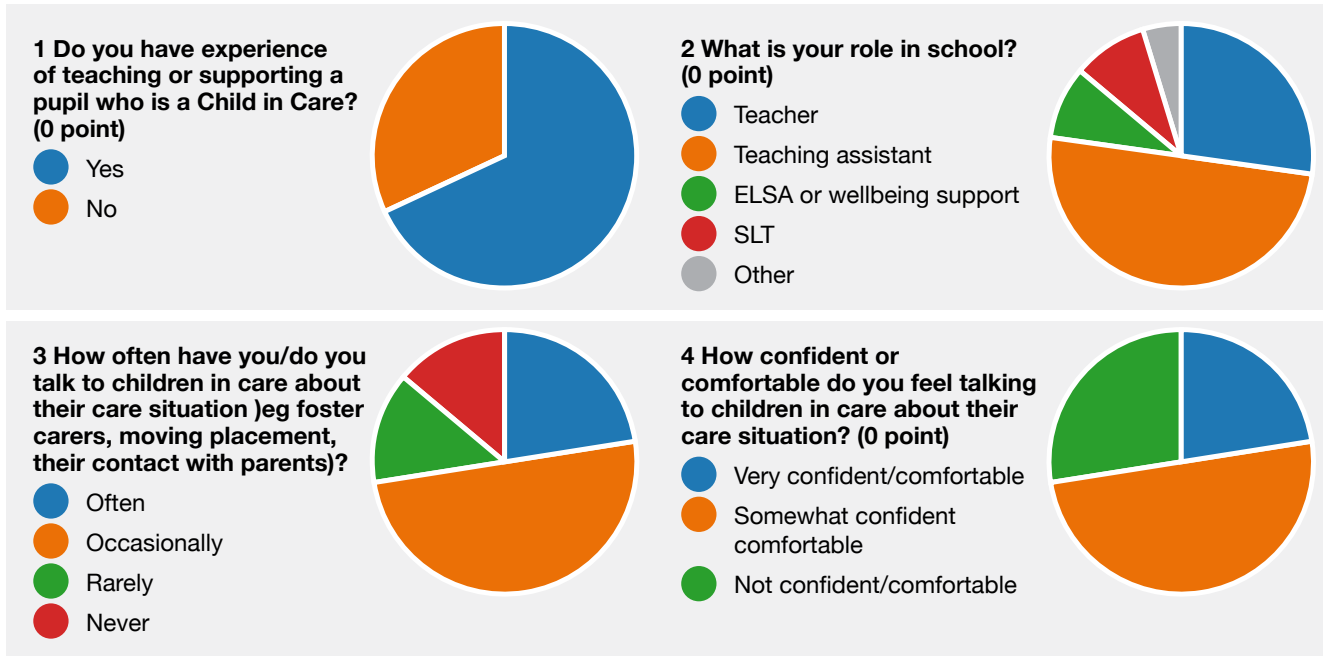- Not confident/comfortable

Figure 2: Staff questionnaire

Staff were open and honest about their experiences and expressed the wish to have further support and training to support their understanding of the needs of children in care, and to develop their skills and confidence in this area.

Alongside this, the PALAC Lead met with a child in care carrying out a semi-structured interview to gather pupil voice (see figure 3). This gave significant insight into the experiences of children in care within the school setting and helped to provoke thinking around what staff could do to support.

1. When you were in KS1, did you feel comfortable talking to adults in school about living with foster carers?
2. In KS1 did you feel comfortable talking to classmates and friends about living with foster carers?
3. In KS2 do you feel comfortable talking to adults in school about living with foster carers?
4. In KS2 do you feel comfortable talking to friends at school about living with foster carers?
5. Have you ever felt uncomfortable with talking to adults or friends about living with foster carers? Is there anything in particular that made this hard for you?
6. How has school helped you with your changes at home? Which adults have helped you?
7. Do your class teacher and TAs talk to you about foster carers?
8. Which children in school do you talk to about your foster carers and why?

Figure 3: Pupil Semi-structured interview questions

The PALAC Lead met with the CEO of the Multi-Academy Trust to share the aims of the PALAC project and the proposal for establishing a Designated Teachers network across the MAT. With the support of the CEO, the PALAC Lead was able to contact all Headteachers in the Trust to establish who the Designated Teachers were in each setting. This was a crucial first step in creating a coalition[96] and galvanising the network.

The school recognised that transitions can be difficult to support, particularly when pupils move into secondary settings outside of the trust. Not knowing how their children in care have settled into their new secondary setting can cause staff unease and apprehension. With this in mind, the team felt it would be helpful to maintain strong links with the new secondary setting during the first term by attending the autumn term PEP meeting; this would also ensure that the child felt 'held in mind' and support an extended transition process.

Outcomes for students and staff

There was a high response rate to the staff questionnaire with 22 responses in total. As a result of the questionnaire, staff were given the opportunity to share their experiences, and have their voices heard. This has helped to raise awareness of children in care, given insight into the training needs of staff and how practice can be further developed. Moreover, pupil voice has enabled the school to understand the particular needs, views and wishes of children in their setting. Whole staff training on Dorset Steps[97], which offers a positive therapeutic approach to supporting relationships and behaviour, has been completed by all staff to support a

therapeutic approach in the setting.

The PALAC Lead has successfully established a wider Designated Teachers network across the MAT. This will be an important forum for Designated Teachers to meet on a regular basis to share good practice and also strengthen systemic practice. Challenges have been limited Designated Teacher time and building capacity across the MAT schools to fully establish the network. Nonetheless, all Designated Teachers have been identified in each of the MAT schools and this has led to the first network meeting taking place with improved knowledge of the number of children in care across the MAT. Furthermore, it has also been an opportunity to share the PALAC project work and valuable resources such as the staff questionnaire. Next steps will involve firmly embedding a cycle of meetings for the Designated Teachers Network.

There has been challenge in navigating the complexities of sharing information between schools/ pupils about children in care and their care arrangements, and this has held back plans for the Peer Network. The team have worked closely with Dorset Virtual School to develop an enhanced understanding of social care practices and the boundaries related to information sharing and consent. Further work will take place gathering pupils' views about networking with other children in care across the MAT and an information sheet about the Peer Network forum will be finalised for social workers and carers so there is a clear agreement around what can be shared.

The school has effectively implemented a child-centred approach to transition through

96   Kotter, J.P. (2014) The 8-Step Process for Leading Change. https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/
97   TADSS - Dorset Steps website: https://tadss.co.uk/school-support/dorset-steps/

enhancing the transition package for transfer to secondary. The SENCO/ Designated Teacher for CiC will attend Autumn Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for all children in care who transition from their school and use the new developed format to aid PEP target setting to support optimal transition outcomes.

Implications for practice and research

We know that day to day interactions in school have the potential to considerably improve outcomes for children in care[98]. Research shows that care experienced children and young people want to have greater emphasis placed on their strengths and achievements, and also value opportunities and relationships that shine a light on their positive attributes thus challenging the negative labelling and stigma experienced by being looked after[99].

The positive rewards of working in schools with children in care is only just emerging in the research literature[100]. The outcomes from this case study present a compelling case for listening to the voices of staff and in understanding the potential barriers, such as lack of confidence and knowledge of practices about information sharing, that may impact staff interactions with children in care.

Lundy's Model of Participation[101] provides a conceptual framework for understanding and bringing to life children and young people's views and right to participation. It is designed around the four dimensions of space, voice, audience and influence; each interconnected with the other. It highlights the importance of providing a safe inclusive space for children and young people to express their views, providing information and support for children and young people to express their views, making sure their views are communicated to the right people and ensuring their views are taken seriously and acted upon where possible. This case study illustrates the importance of valuing individual voice and in ensuring that views are acted upon at every level of the network: in school at practitioner level, across the multi-academy trust at the organisational level and as children move into their new setting at secondary transition. Further research into this area would help support an emerging evidence base.

98 Bomber, L. M. & Hughes, D. A. (2013) Settling to learn: Settling Troubled Pupils to Learn: Why Relationships Matter in School. London: Worth.
99 Coram Voice, 2015, Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies. p.15
100 Edwards, L. N. (2016). Looking after the teachers: Exploring the emotional labour experienced by teachers of looked after children. Educational Psychology in Practice, 32(1), 54–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2015.1112256
101 Lundy, Laura (2013) 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033

Wey Valley Academy
A key adult for every child in care: a pilot mentoring programme

Background

There is growing evidence that children and young people in care value having a trusted and caring adult in school[102],[103]; someone who can provide a supportive social bond[104] and advocate for them. Recent research[105] provides an up-to-date synthesis of research findings in relation to the different types of mentoring experienced by children in care and offers insight into the benefits of mentoring as a source of valuable social support. Children and young people in care often experience multiple disruptions in their lives, and in the absence of a wider social network to support them, mentors can provide an authentic form of support and represent a positive resource in their lives [106]

Mentoring in schools predominantly focuses on pairing a student with an adult who can nurture their self-confidence and raise aspirations rather than develop specific academic skills or knowledge[107]. A literature review[108] exploring the views and experiences of children and young people in care highlights the importance of being able to develop and sustain trusting relationships in school; in addition, positive outcomes were associated with children and young people who could identify a dependable and supportive adult presence in their lives.

Having someone in school who can understand and recognise the complexities children and young people face as they journey through the care system is significant, as is the value of creating spaces to listen and *'get to know them'*[109] as an individual. Although there is paucity of research on the role of mentoring in schools, access to a key adult who can act as a secure and steady figure, take a specific interest in the young person and support them with making sense of the world around them, can be pivotal in impacting learning[110], nurturing emotional wellbeing and in extending the network around them.

Wey Valley Academy is a large, fully comprehensive 11 -16 secondary school which sits at the heart of its community in Weymouth, Dorset. In 2019, it became part of a multi-academy trust, Ambitions Academies Trust. This case study describes how the Vice Principal for Inclusion and the PALAC Lead saw in PALAC the opportunity to develop their whole school provision and support for all children in care by developing a mentoring programme specifically for looked after students. Using the PALAC audit tool, they identified the domain of *Supporting emotional development and wellbeing* as the area of focus for their

102 Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, S., Strand, S. & O'Higgins, A. (2015) The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Rees Centre. University of Oxford Department of Education/University of Bristol.
103 Cameron, C., Connelly, G. & Jackson, S. (2015) Educating Children and Young People in Care: Learning Placements and Caring Schools. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
104 Brady, B., Dolan. P., and McGregor, C. (2020) Mentoring for Young People in Care and Leaving Care Theory, Policy and Practice. Routledge.
105 Brady, B., Dolan. P., and McGregor, C. (2020) Mentoring for Young People in Care and Leaving Care Theory, Policy and Practice. Routledge.
106 Bomber, L M. (2007) Inside I'm Hurting. Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in School. Worth Publishing Ltd.
107 Education Endowment Foundation (2022) Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Mentoring https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/ teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring
108 Coram Voice, (2015) Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies.
109 Coram Voice, (2015) Children and Young people's views on being in Care, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies.
110 Bomber, L M. (2007) Inside I'm Hurting. Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in School. Worth Publishing Ltd.

project, with the intention for every child in care at Wey Valley Academy to establish a positive relationship with an adult who could be their 'champion' and a constant secure figure as they journeyed through the school. Similarly, it was important to the team that the mentoring programme would create spaces to listen and support through nurturing positive connections with the Mentor.

What did the school do?

The PALAC team devoted time reflecting on research and existing models of practice to inform their thinking and rationale for their school-based mentoring programme. Keen to involve the school community, they held a staff information session to share the aims of the PALAC project and invite volunteers to be involved as staff mentors in the mentoring programme.

Following this, the PALAC Lead arranged for the volunteer mentors to attend a series of meetings to support the development of the mentoring programme and shape their role within this. This was an important space for staff to come together, develop skills and knowledge and share ideas. The significance of ongoing training and support for mentors is highlighted in findings from a national pilot[111] of different mentoring models where it was found to be an essential component in helping to encourage successful mentoring relationships both before and after mentors were paired with young people.

In the initial meeting, the mentors discussed and explored the following ideas for the programme:

Potential for the programme to succeed with mentors acting as a second Form Tutor so children in care feel they have an adult they can trust and who advocates for them

Creating a Pupil Passport would help to capture the student's journey through their time at school and support pupil voice

As a longer-term goal, every child in care arriving in Year 7 would be allocated a mentor so this becomes part of the culture within the school

As a first step, they agreed that it would be helpful to run a pilot mentoring programme for two terms to get a sense of how it would work in practice, gather feedback from the students involved in the pilot, and use this to shape next steps for an increased cohort in September.

Inspired by the paper THINKSPACE[112], the school was also committed to developing space for reflective practice to enable the mentors to come together and be the 'team' around children in care. THINKSPACE is based on a reflecting team model as developed by Andersen (1987) which draws upon concepts and practices from a reflective/ systemic team framework and is seen as a collaborative process which acknowledges the expertise of all those attending[113]. In considering this, the team also wished to identify a designated physical space where the mentoring sessions would take place. These steps are reflected in the following table.

111 Rainer (2008) Mentoring for Looked After Children, Dissemination manual. https://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/assets/downloads/resources/Mentoring%20 for%20Looked%20After%20Children%20Dissemination%20Manual.pdf

112 Swann, R., & York, A. (2011) THINKSPACE – the creation of a multi-agency consultation group for Looked After Children, Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry 16(1) 65–71, DOI: 10.1177/1359104509355018 ccp.sagepub.com

113 Swann, R., & York, A. (2011) THINKSPACE – the creation of a multi-agency consultation group for Looked After Children, Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry 16(1) 65–71, DOI: 10.1177/1359104509355018 ccp.sagepub.com

Step by step project plan

Vision	To support the emotional development and wellbeing of all looked after children in the school setting	
Aims	To establish a mentoring programme in school to support all Children in Care, and provide support through a key adult who can champion the young person	
Actions	**1. Discover**	Engage with PALAC project in partnership with Dorset Virtual School
	2. Raise Awareness	To reflect on current research and evidence base, and develop a model for a school-based mentoring programme
	3. Connect	Share PALAC project with whole school staff and ask for volunteer mentors for the mentoring programme
	4. Implement	**Research and reflect**
		Research ideas and examine existing models of practice including those from previous PALAC Case Studies.
		Map out a draft structure for the mentoring programme such as frequency of sessions, timetabling, how staff will be allocated, etc. Within this model, create a timeline to identify key times for support in the school year for different year groups (e.g.: Year 7 transition, Year 9 options choices)
		Recruit mentors
		To recruit mentors within school and allocate mentors to identified Children in Care. Arrange 2/ 3 workshop sessions with mentors to support training and to share:
		- The action plan for the PALAC project
		- What their role will be and how to support their pupil
		- The structure for the Mentoring Programme
		- How ePEP targets will link to mentoring sessions
		Build a connection
		Design of standardised questions/ booklet to complete with child at each meeting to build picture/ record (e.g., this could be a reflective journal)
		Develop a 'Pupil Passport' template that can be used as a way of gathering pupil voice. This can be completed over several sessions.
		Mentors to complete their own 'Mentor Passport' to share with the student to support building positive relationship and connection.
		Share and link termly ePEP targets to mentoring sessions so mentor is aware and can support the student with working towards these.
		Create a space
		Create a designated room/ area to be allocated to the PALAC project.
		Involve students in the design of the space and invite them to create something for the room. For example, an activity they work on in the mentoring sessions (e.g., a poem or drawing that can be framed).
		Consider using students and mentors to support with naming the room to support attachment and belonging to the space.
		To provide Mentors with a reflective space to meet on a regular basis.
		Pilot the programme
		Establish a pilot mentoring programme for two terms with an identified year group/ key stage. Aim to launch whole school mentoring programme in the new academic year.
	5. Review	Gather pupil voice from the pilot scheme using a survey with pre and post measures; this will help inform next steps for the launch of finalised mentoring programme.
Impact	Raised awareness of the needs of children in care within the school	
	Established a key adult for every child in care	
	Placed pupils' voices at heart of practice	
	Strengthened links with Dorset Virtual School	

Outcomes for students and staff

The staff information session was helpful in raising staff awareness of children in care and in creating impetus for the project. Initial staff volunteers were recruited as mentors for the pilot mentoring programme with four potential students identified for support; this led to the timetabling of sessions for the first two mentoring meetings.

The mentoring meetings were a valuable space for the mentors to gather to reflect on the project. This allowed them to problem solve some of the organisational pressures and challenges within school, such as the timetabling of mentoring sessions and capacity within the mentoring team to meet all the needs of their children in care.

The first draft of the Pupil Passport was devised and discussed with the mentoring team with the intention for them to add their own ideas to guide the final version. There have been challenges with the implementation of the action plan due structural and staff changes during the delivery of the project. Whilst the team were not able to undertake some of the steps within their action plan, they have produced a clear framework which describes the activities that they intended to take and provides a valuable model of practice for other school settings.

Implications for practice and research

Research shows that mentoring provision that is effectively managed and resourced, involves the active participation and engagement of young people in the decision-making, and works in partnership with others[114] has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people in care.

Many studies have found the development of the relationship between mentor and mentee to be particularly crucial. Successful relationships that were noted by young people included *'being able to talk to their mentor, reciprocity, a relationship based on respect rather than authority, understanding, the mentor being interested in the young person and having fun'*[115]. This case study illustrates the importance of time and resource being given to develop mentoring provision in schools and in creating opportunities to cultivate strong relationships with a key adult who can act as a constant source of support and guidance. Further evidence is needed to fully understand the impact on outcomes for children in care, specifically on their experiences at different stages of the mentoring process, and the characteristics of the mentoring relationship that can have lasting influence.

113 Rainer (2008) Mentoring for Looked After Children, Dissemination manual. https://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/assets/downloads/resources/Mentoring%2

114 Rainer (2008) Mentoring for Looked After Children, Dissemination manual (p.12) https://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/assets/downloads/resources/Mentoring%20for%20Looked%20After%20Children%20Dissemination%20Manual.pdf

Conclusion

The participants in the PALAC programme implemented a variety of changes in their schools at pupil, practitioner and school levels. At the pupil level, changes included, for example, emotional wellbeing, promoting pupil voice and specific interventions related to literacy and relationships. At practitioner and school levels, participants used the PALAC programme as a springboard to raise awareness of the needs of children in care through, for example, building whole school approaches and whole school professional learning. One of the aims of PALAC is to continue to support developments in practice after the programme has ended through ongoing review of the audit and action plan. The schools in this PALAC programme have continued with their focus on the education of children and young people in care and in doing so are ensuring that they are helped to reach their potential and simultaneously contribute to an emerging evidence base for current practice.

Notes

Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) is a knowledge exchange programme that aims to support the development of practice in schools and to expand the evidence base to ultimately improve outcomes for children in care.

For further information on the programme please contact:

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