

DCSF: Designated Teachers for Looked After Children: draft Regulations and statutory guidance

The Response of the General Teaching Council for England (GTC)

Introduction

1. The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the independent professional body for the teaching profession. Its main duties are to regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of issues that concern teachers and teaching and learning. The Council acts in the public interest to contribute to raising the standards of teaching and learning.
2. The GTC welcomes the opportunity to respond to this DCSF consultation on the proposed draft regulations and statutory guidance.

Content on the regulations and guidance

3. The GTC supports the proposals as a means of ensuring that this important work in schools is co-ordinated by appropriately trained and accountable staff. It has a number of brief suggestions for areas that the guidance may want to touch on in more detail:

QTS status of the Designated Teachers for Looked After Children (DTLAC)

4. The GTC welcomes the recognition that the DTLAC should, within a reasonable time period after the regulations come into force, be a qualified teacher. The GTC trusts that this applies to all categories of maintained schools.
5. The GTC is clear that any DTLAC without qualified teacher status (QTS) should be enrolled on a programme leading towards the award and that this should bring all DTLACs into provisional registration with the GTC and, therefore, within the scope of its regulatory powers. The guidance could usefully set out governors' responsibilities with regard to the QTS status of the DTLAC, particularly if the designated teacher does not achieve QTS by September 2012.

The interface between the local children's services and the DTLAC

6. This will be critical to the ability of the DTLAC to identify and secure the right support for Looked After Children (LAC) under their supervision. The guidance should emphasise the importance of a key local authority (LA) contact for the DTLAC. For many this will be the virtual head teacher.

Accounting and reporting structures

7. The DTLAC may have concerns about LAC that may be beyond the scope of their school-based line manager to address. These might include concerns about the actions of a corporate parent, or a professional beyond the school. The guidance should be clear about lines of accountability and reporting for the DTLAC. Rather than specify a model in guidance, the text should refer to the importance of having appropriate structures in place and understood by all concerned.

Continuing professional development

8. The guidance makes one brief reference to governors' responsibilities for assessing training needs associated with the DTLAC role. The guidance should be clear about the head teacher's responsibility for enabling the DTLAC to receive appropriate training and development for the role. It should also be clear about how the relevant continuing professional development (CPD) is to be funded.

Transitions

9. The guidance refers to transitions at 3.3.12. This should be more explicit about liaison between DTLACs now the post will exist in each school. It might make particular reference to curriculum continuity. Research shows that LAC often experience disruption and repetition in their learning due to their mobility. The guidance could say more about DTLAC's responsibilities for managing coherence and continuity – as far as possible – for LAC.

Adoptive children

10. Annex C makes a useful reference to adoption. Consideration might be given to allowing adoptive children and/or parents to request that the DTLAC retains a relationship with former LAC beyond the point of adoption.

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