



Ofsted's inspection framework and Previously looked after children – November 2025:

The framework does **not** appear to treat “previously looked-after children” (PLAC) as a separate, stand-alone category with bespoke requirements – rather, they are subsumed under broader inclusion and safeguarding provisions.

What the 2025 Ofsted/Education–Early Years frameworks *do* include

- In the updated “education inspection framework” that came into effect November 2025, the remit covers maintained schools, academies, independent schools (including very small independent schools some of which “provide exclusively for vulnerable looked-after young people”).
- In the “school inspection toolkit/operating guide (Nov 2025)” – for inspections of maintained schools and academies – the sampling for “case sampling” explicitly asks inspectors to include “pupils who ... are known (or previously known) to children’s social care.”
- Similarly under early years settings, in the “Early Years Inspection Operating Guide (for use from Nov 2025)”, the inclusion principle explicitly requires that case-sampling should consider children who “are known, or were previously known, to children’s social care.”
- The focus on “inclusion” under the early years toolkit emphasises support for children with “individual needs,” including those “known (or previously known) to children’s social care,” or who “face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.”

What this means in practice:

during inspections, inspectors should, where relevant, pay attention to the education, care, safeguarding, inclusion and well-being of children with social care history (including “previously looked-after children”). Inspectors will review how well the setting identifies such children’s needs, supports them, and monitors their progress.

What the framework does *not* guarantee / what it misses (or might not treat specially)

- The framework does **not** create a specific, separate inspection category or standards dedicated solely to “previously looked-after children.” There is no mention of “PLAC” as a distinct group in the publicly available high-level framework docs.
- The reference to “those known or previously known to children’s social care” is fairly general – it doesn’t require, for example, a bespoke inspection of “care history support” for PLAC the way there are for, say, “pupils with SEND.”
- Because PLAC are subsumed under a broader “inclusion / social care history” category, the degree to which their circumstances are considered may vary depending on the inspector’s sampling, the school’s contextual self-evaluation, and which children the school identifies as “known or previously known.”

What this means in terms of protections for previously looked-after children

- The fact that inspection toolkits require inclusion of children “known (or previously known) to social care” suggests that their experiences **can** be scrutinised under the 2025 regime. That gives at least a structural pathway for previously looked-after children to have their needs, and schools’ responses to those needs, reviewed.



- However, because there's no explicit "PLAC" standard, the effectiveness will depend heavily on whether schools and inspectors recognise and treat PLAC as a distinct group needing focus. Some may, others may not.
- If you are working or advocating for previously looked-after children in a setting, this means there is opportunity under the current framework to call attention to their needs – but not a guaranteed special "slot."

Relevant clauses for School inspections (Nov 2025)

School inspection operating guide for inspectors:

- In the "understanding the school's context and leaders' priorities" stage, inspectors are required to consider the school's context, including its pupil demographics and "needs." That includes disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, "pupils known (or previously known) to children's social care," and those with other barriers to learning or well-being.
- Under "Leaders' approach to inclusion," inspectors must examine how school leaders identify pupils who are disadvantaged, have SEND, or are known (or previously known) to social care – and how the school supports these pupils, monitors support, works with external professionals (when relevant), ensures reasonable adjustments, and manages alternative or resourced provision if applicable.
- On **case sampling**, inspectors are told to select a sample of ~6 pupils for deeper review; that sample should, where relevant, include a pupil "known, or previously known, to social care," along with pupils with SEND / EHC plans, those receiving pupil premium, and/or other groups identified by the school's context.
- During the inspection the evidence gathered for each sampled pupil must cover teaching, welfare/safeguarding, well-being, behaviour, inclusion, and personal development – including support for those with social care history. This might involve talking to staff who know the pupil well, reviewing documentation, and checking work / progress, as well as how the school works with external agencies if relevant.

What this wording means in relation to "previously looked-after children (PLAC)"

- The phrase "known (or previously known) to children's social care" is used intentionally – it includes **children who are no longer currently under social care but have a history** (i.e. previously looked-after) as well as those currently looked-after. This means the inspection framework explicitly allows for inclusion of PLAC in inspectors' evidential and evaluative work.
- Inspectors are required not only to sample such children (if on roll), but also to examine how the school / early years setting identifies and meets their needs, supports their welfare, learning and development, works with external professionals, and monitors their progress.
- The guidance makes clear that even if a setting claims **not** to have any such children on roll, inspectors must examine whether staff are equipped to identify and support such children – effectively a "readiness and capacity check."
- Support and inclusion for children with a social-care background is therefore built into the inspection design – under "inclusion," "safeguarding", "personal development / well-being" and "contextual evaluation."



Based on the above information from the Ofsted Framework 2025, the PLAC Area 5 network group arrived at the following targets, designed to aid schools and settings to adapt to the framework changes and to benefit our previously looked after children:

Target 1 – Identification, Tracking & Inclusion of PLAC

Ensure that all schools accurately identify, track and monitor PLAC as a distinct vulnerable group within their inclusion systems, with clear processes for recognising pupils “known (or previously known) to children’s social care.”

Why this aligns to the 2025 framework

The School Operating Guide (Nov 2025) expects leaders to know their context and demonstrate how they identify and support pupils who are “known (or previously known) to children’s social care.” Inspectors also consider PLAC within case-sampling criteria.

What the Virtual School would provide:

- A model **PLAC identification protocol** for schools (including guidance on maintaining discretion/safeguarding).
- A **progress-tracking template** that integrates attendance, behaviour, attainment and well-being indicators.
- Termly data-sharing conversations with designated PLAC leads in each school.

Success indicators

- 100% of schools have accurate PLAC registers updated each term.
- PLAC are included in inclusion reviews alongside SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
- Inspectors can clearly see how PLAC needs are known and monitored.

Target 2 – Consistent, High-Quality Pastoral & Academic Support for PLAC

Ensure that all schools implement robust, evidence-based support plans for PLAC that improve well-being, readiness to learn, and educational progress – and that these plans are clearly understood by staff and visible in inspection evidence.

Framework link

Inspection guidance requires inspectors to evaluate how well the school meets the individual needs of children with vulnerabilities, including those with social-care histories. Inspectors look at well-being, behaviour, curriculum access and multi-agency working during case sampling.

Virtual School support

- A universal **PLAC Support Plan (PSP)** template for schools (parallel to a PEP, but adapted for previously looked-after children).
- Training for staff on the impact of trauma, attachment, transitions and identity for PLAC.
- Guidance for schools on accessing post-adoption support, therapeutic services, and agencies.

Success indicators

- All PLAC in school have a PSP reviewed at least termly.



- Schools provide evidence of quality First Teaching and interventions adjusted for PLAC needs.
- Staff can articulate PLAC needs and support strategies to inspectors.

Target 3 — Strengthen School Leadership & Professional Development on PLAC

Develop strong leadership practice so that headteachers, SENCOs and designated teachers can demonstrate strategic planning, staff development and safeguarding approaches that explicitly include PLAC.

Framework link

The 2025 framework emphasises leaders' responsibilities for inclusion, safeguarding, multi-agency working, staff training and capacity to meet the needs of children "known (or previously known) to children's social care." It also requires evidence that leaders create an inclusive culture.

Virtual School support

- Annual **leadership briefing pack** explaining inspection expectations for PLAC under the 2025 framework.
- A termly **PLAC Leadership Network** with training, peer review and case-study analysis.
- A self-evaluation audit tool aligned to Ofsted inclusion/safeguarding criteria.

Success indicators

- Leaders can explain their approach to PLAC in line with inspection lines of enquiry.
- Staff training logs include PLAC-focused CPD.
- Safeguarding audits demonstrate that staff recognise risks specific to PLAC (identity, contact, emotional regulation, transitions).