

**includEd Learning**

**Independent Specialist Education Provider**



# LOOKED AFTER CHILD (LAC) POLICY

## **Policy for Looked After Children (LAC) including Private Fostering and Special Guardianship**

The school is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on:

- Equality of access, opportunity and outcomes.
- This policy includes requirements set out in “Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004” (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of LAC.

We consider the LAC policy to be important and we undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year.

This School aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care.

### **Designated Teacher for LAC is Ann Hardy, SENDCO**

We aim to contribute towards achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters:

- **Stay safe**
- **Be healthy**
- **Enjoy and achieve**
- **Make a positive contribution**
- **Achieve economic well-being.**

### **The aims of the school are to:**

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children
- ensure that all LAC have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that includes promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (including the fostering of British Values).
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual’s needs and ability
- ensure that LAC pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of progress and attainment
- ensure that LAC pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision. (*See Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities*).

## Who are looked after children?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or an interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this included children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term “in care” refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 – they may live with foster carers, in a Children’s home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision, this includes Private Fostering and Special Guardianship. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are “accommodated” by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children’s home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be “looked after children”. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

## Admissions

We believe that the admissions criteria should not discriminate against LAC pupils. Due to placement changes, LAC may enter school mid- term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupil settle.

## **Inclusion**

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our LAC policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive.

## **Allocation of Resources**

We will ensure that we allocate resources to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

## **Monitoring the progress of LAC**

The social worker for the LAC should initiate a Personal Education Plan – PEP within 20 days of joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the young person is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each LAC's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. LAC will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing officer or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP. (See Appendix 3).

## **Record Keeping**

The Designated Teacher will know all the LAC in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social workers. The Designated Teacher will also know about any LAC from other authorities. It is important that the school flags LAC status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

## **Staff Development**

We encourage staff to attend courses that help them acquire the skills needed to support LAC. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to develop awareness of issues associated with LAC.

## **Partnership with parents/carers and care workers**

At school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working. We also seek to further our communication with LAC in foster and care homes with regular phone calls /online meetings and through any daily in-person contact.

## Private Fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not their parent or a relative, and the arrangement was made **privately**.

## Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship is an order made by the Family Court that places a child or young person to live with someone other than their parent(s) on a long-term basis. The person(s) with whom a child is placed will become the child's **Special** Guardian.

## Links with external agencies/organisations

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting LAC.

LAC teams

Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services

Medical officers

School Nurses

CAMHS

Education Welfare Officers

Social care worker/Community care worker/Residential childcare worker

Youth Offending Team

School Age parents' Officer

Policy Sign off and review

	By whom	Date
Policy signed off by	Noreen Khan	13.01.2022
Reviewed by	Noreen Khan	08.09.2023
Next Review By	Noreen Khan	08.09.2024

## **APPENDIX 1**

Looked After Children say...

- "I would like to have a say as to whether I move school or not."
- "Money should not be the most important thing when deciding if I should move schools."
- "I would really like to have a chance to visit the school before I start."
- "I would like my schoolwork and achievements to be passed on to my new school and not forgotten about."
- "I would have liked a buddy or peer mentor when I moved to my new school to help me get settled."
- "We want to be treated as normal. We don't want to be pitied or treated differently."
- "I'd like to be able to choose a particular teacher to talk to – not just the designated teacher."
- "I want to keep my life private. I don't want people knowing everything about me unless I say so."
- "I don't want my teachers hearing embarrassing/personal details about me and my family at review meetings."
- "I want my own copy of school reports and I want my parents to have a copy."
- "The head of year is extremely important in passing on 'need to know' information to individual subject teachers."

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Rationale for roles and responsibilities:**

Looked After Children – LAC - are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- a high level of disruption and change in school placements
- lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
- inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.

This may result in:

- poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- underachievement in further and higher education.

These issues may also affect adopted young people. The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children.

To date the outcomes achieved by LAC have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- giving priority to education
- listening to children
- providing stability and continuity
- taking corporate responsibility
- promoting inclusion
- raising standards
- intervening early
- promoting early years experiences
- celebrating success.

#### **The Designated Teacher will:**

- be an advocate for LAC within school
- give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the LAC and the rest of the school community
- know who all the LAC in school are, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- attend relevant training about LAC
- act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the LAC team when appropriate.
- ensure that LAC receives a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle.

- ensure that all LAC have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care (see Derby City's guidance on PEPs in Appendix 3) and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC
- ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for LAC
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc.
- prepare reports for The Local Authorities to include:
  - the number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP.
  - their attendance compared to other pupils.
- their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils.
- the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- the destinations of pupils who leave the school.
- attend meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC.
- arrange a mentor to whom the young person can talk,
- ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. LAC are six to eight times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs than the general school population.

**Good practice suggests that all school staff will:**

- follow school procedures.
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress.
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC.
- positively promote the raising of a LAC's self-esteem.
- ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to another professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required.

**Good practice suggests that the Head will:**

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the DfES Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure all staff are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC
- liaise with the Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher.



- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:
  - admission to school
  - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
  - out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
  - work experience and careers guidance.
- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC.
- ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings of LAC.

**The Local Authorities will:**

- lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for LAC
- ensure that the education for this group is as good as that provided for every other Pupil
- ensure that LAC receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ensure that every LAC has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to their authority from another authority
- make sure that each LAC has a PEP according to national guidance
- ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for LAC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer
- identify a designated officer who has responsibility for championing the education of LAC
- be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of LAC and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs.

Local Authority contact numbers for the Education of LAC are:

LAC Team Bromley 0208 313 4198 – Denise Stephenson

LAC Lewisham Virtual School 0773089715 Des Benjamin

## **APPENDIX 3 – PEP GUIDANCE**

### **(A) Initiating PEPs on Child's entry to care**

Complete the education sections of the PEP in consultation with the social worker/carer/parents/child as appropriate.

Discuss plan with child/young person. Encourage and record their comments

Keep original completed PEP in child's school file and use as a working document.

### **(B) For Statutory Care Plan Review meetings**

It is a statutory requirement that PEPs are reviewed every six months.

Before the Statutory Care Plan review, update the PEP by

Recording any additions

- Reviewing targets and actions from last PEP meeting
- Completing a new PEP-Plan/Review. Be sure to record any changes here as well as setting new targets and record any comments from child/young person

Put a copy of the PEP- Plan/Review form (and any updated information) with the original PEP in the child/young person's school file.

#### **Also consider:**

If the child/young person has Special Educational Needs, you may wish to hold the PEP and IEP reviews together to minimise paperwork and time.

If child/young person moves school forward the completed PEP, including the review documents, along with the child's school file in the normal way to the receiving school.

For fuller explanations please refer to the DfES "Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care."