"Put your heart and soul into everything that you do."
Purpose. Passion. Success.

Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children Policy

Intention

At Pattishall CE Primary School, looked-after and previously looked-after children are first and foremost children with strengths, interests, aspirations and individual needs. We are ambitious for their academic, personal, social and emotional development and will not allow care experience to lower expectations.

This is the school's policy for looked-after children (LAC) and previously looked-after children (PLAC). The statutory Designated Teacher role is a central part of the school's approach, but responsibility for these pupils is shared across leadership, governance and the wider staff team.

Our approach reflects our inclusive ethos and DR MOSS golden threads. In particular, we respond quickly to mobility and disrupted learning, build resilience and belonging, develop confident oracy and pupil voice, and ensure SEND and other barriers are identified and addressed through ambitious adaptive teaching.

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy has regard to current legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989, including the duties relating to looked-after children, care planning and Virtual School Heads.
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008, sections 20 and 20A, which place duties on maintained-school governing bodies in relation to the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC.
- The Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, including the extension of educational-achievement duties to eligible previously looked-after children.
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and associated statutory guidance.
- DfE statutory guidance: The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- DfE statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance - current statutory guidance.
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England - current statutory guidance.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years and the Equality Act 2010.
- Pupil premium: conditions of grant for the 2026 to 2027 financial year and current DfE pupil premium guidance.
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, including the provisions concerning the educational achievement of children in need and children in kinship care.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 provides a statutory framework for extending local-authority educational-achievement functions to children in need and children in kinship care. Operational guidance is in transition: KCSIE 2026 continues to describe the existing Virtual School Head (VSH) extensions for children with a social worker and children in kinship care as non-statutory. The school will therefore apply any commencement arrangements and updated statutory guidance as they take effect. This does not automatically extend the school's statutory Designated Teacher duty beyond LAC and PLAC.

Definitions

Looked-after child (LAC): a child who is looked after by a local authority within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989, including a child in local-authority care or provided with accommodation by a local authority for more than 24 hours.

Previously looked-after child (PLAC): a child who was looked after in England or Wales and ceased to be looked after as a result of an adoption order, special guardianship order or qualifying child arrangements order, or a child adopted from state care outside England and Wales who meets the statutory definition.

Personal Education Plan (PEP): the education element of a looked-after child's care plan. It is an official school record and sets out the child's educational needs, targets, provision, support and responsibilities. PEPs are not statutory for PLAC.

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Virtual School Head (VSH): the local-authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children looked after by that authority and for the wider functions set out in current law and guidance.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+): the part of pupil premium funding associated with LAC and PLAC. LAC PP+ is managed by the VSH/local authority; PLAC PP+ is managed by the school in accordance with the current conditions of grant.

Children with a social worker: for school monitoring, pupils currently receiving, or recently known to, children's social care because of safeguarding or welfare needs. This may include children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. This cohort is monitored separately from LAC and PLAC unless a pupil also meets one of those definitions.

Kinship care: arrangements in which a child is cared for by a relative, friend or other person connected with them. Some children in kinship care are PLAC; others are not. Entitlements depend on the child's legal status.

Our Designated Teacher

The school's Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children is Hannah Bowden. The Designated Teacher can be contacted through the school office.

The governing body will ensure that the Designated Teacher meets the statutory qualification and experience requirements, undertakes appropriate training and has sufficient seniority, time and support to carry out the role effectively.

Intent

We intend that LAC and PLAC at Pattishall will:

- experience stable, high-quality education and consistent relationships;
- be known well as individuals and have their strengths, interests, wishes and aspirations recognised;
- make strong academic, personal, social and emotional progress from their starting points;
- have gaps in learning identified quickly and addressed without lowering curriculum ambition;
- have excellent attendance wherever possible and receive prompt support where attendance becomes a concern;
- be fully included in trips, clubs, enrichment, leadership, outdoor learning and the wider life of the school;
- receive timely SEND, mental-health, pastoral and safeguarding support where needed;
- move successfully between placements, schools and phases of education with disruption minimised;
- know that their care status is treated sensitively and confidentially and that they are not publicly singled out.

Implementation

Whole-school practice

All staff share responsibility for creating the conditions in which LAC and PLAC can flourish. The school will:

- maintain high expectations and avoid assumptions based on care experience;
- use attachment-aware, relational and trauma-informed understanding where appropriate, without excusing harmful behaviour or defining a child by past experiences;
- identify prior-learning gaps, communication needs, SEND, emotional needs and barriers to participation promptly;
- use adaptive teaching, consistent routines, purposeful relationships and appropriate pastoral support to promote independence and success;
- ensure that information about care status is shared only with staff who need it to support or safeguard the child;
- seek the pupil's views and ensure those views influence plans, targets and support;
- work in partnership with carers, parents/guardians, social workers, VSHs, SEND services, health professionals and other relevant agencies;
- review school policies and routines to ensure they do not create unintended barriers for LAC or PLAC.

The Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher will:

- act as the central point of contact in school for matters relating to the education of LAC and PLAC;
- champion high expectations and a whole-school culture in which the educational, emotional and social needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and prioritised;
- work closely with the DSL, SENDCo, attendance lead, class teachers and senior leaders;

- provide staff with advice, training and challenge so that the impact of care experience, loss, separation, disrupted education, SEND and mental-health needs is understood appropriately;
- work directly with pupils and their carers, parents or guardians to strengthen home-school relationships and support progress and aspiration;
- lead the school's contribution to PEPs for LAC and ensure agreed actions are implemented and reviewed;
- work with the relevant VSH and social worker to secure appropriate educational support, including effective use of LAC PP+ through the PEP;
- support parents/guardians of PLAC, including signposting to VSH advice and discussing how PLAC PP+ may be used to address identified educational need;
- ensure transitions into, within and out of Pattishall are carefully planned and records, including the PEP for LAC, transfer promptly;
- alert leaders and governors to themes, barriers or policy issues requiring whole-school action while protecting individual confidentiality;
- keep their knowledge and training current, including through the WNC Virtual School training offer where appropriate.

Personal Education Plans for looked-after children

Every looked-after child must have a PEP as part of their care plan. The school will work with the social worker and VSH so that the PEP is a living, useful plan rather than an administrative document.

- Where a child becomes looked after in an emergency, the PEP must be initiated within 10 working days of the first placement and an initial version must be available for the 20-working-day care-plan review. The social worker initiates the PEP; the Designated Teacher leads the school contribution.
- The PEP will be based on up-to-date assessment of strengths, prior learning, barriers, attendance, SEND, wellbeing, participation and aspirations.
- Targets will be ambitious, specific and measurable and will identify who is responsible for each action.
- The child's views will be gathered before the PEP meeting and will shape the plan. Carer and parent views will be included where appropriate.
- The PEP will identify how PP+ and other resources will be used and what difference the support is intended to make.
- The PEP will reflect, but not duplicate, any EHCP or other plan and will be reviewed before the statutory review of the child's care plan and whenever there is a significant change affecting education.
- The school will follow current WNC Virtual School PEP processes and deadlines and ensure the updated PEP reaches the social worker and VSH in time for statutory review.
- If a pupil moves school, the current PEP and relevant records will be transferred as a matter of urgency.

Previously looked-after children

PLAC do not have a statutory PEP. Support will be individual, proportionate and agreed with the pupil's parents or guardians. Parents/guardians are responsible for informing the school of PLAC status and may be asked for reasonable evidence so that the school can access relevant entitlements and advice.

- The Designated Teacher will be the main school contact for educational advice and will involve parents/guardians in decisions affecting their child.
- The school will respect family preferences about who is told about the child's previous care status, subject to safeguarding and legal duties.
- Where appropriate and with parent/guardian involvement, the Designated Teacher may seek advice from the VSH about individual educational needs.
- PLAC PP+ will be planned and evaluated in line with current pupil premium conditions of grant and the pupil's identified educational needs.

Pupil Premium Plus

- For LAC, the VSH/local authority is responsible for managing PP+. The Designated Teacher will work with the VSH to link funding to robust PEP targets and evidence-informed approaches.
- For PLAC, the school is responsible for using PP+ to improve educational outcomes in line with the current DfE conditions of grant and menu of approaches.

- PP+ is not a personal budget for an individual child. Decisions will be needs-led, evidence-informed and evaluated for impact.
- Governors will scrutinise how PP+ supports LAC and PLAC as part of their wider pupil-premium and cohort monitoring.

Attendance, admissions, behaviour and exclusion

- The school will work with WNC and placing authorities to avoid delays or unintended barriers to admission and to support rapid, well-planned transition.
- Attendance will be monitored closely. Emerging patterns of absence will trigger early work with the pupil, carers/parents, social worker, VSH and attendance services as appropriate.
- Behaviour will be understood in context and the school will consider appropriate reasonable adjustments and additional support while maintaining clear, safe expectations.
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the school will involve the VSH and social worker at the earliest opportunity and make statutory notifications as required. Permanent exclusion is a last resort.
- Where a PLAC pupil is at risk of suspension or exclusion, the school will involve the pupil's parents/guardians and seek VSH advice where appropriate.
- Any use of a part-time timetable, off-site direction or alternative provision will follow current statutory guidance, be time-limited and reviewed, and will not reduce the school's ambition for the pupil.

Safeguarding, SEND and mental health

- KCSIE recognises LAC and PLAC as potentially particularly vulnerable. The DSL and Designated Teacher will work closely together.
- The DSL will hold the contact details of the social worker and relevant VSH for each looked-after child and ensure appropriate staff understand legal status, care arrangements and delegated authority on a need-to-know basis.
- SEND will be identified and supported through the graduated approach. PEPs and EHCPs will work together rather than duplicate each other.
- The Designated Teacher will work with the SENDCo and pastoral/mental-health staff to ensure emotional, behavioural, communication and mental-health needs are identified and supported.
- Safeguarding, behaviour, attendance or wellbeing concerns will be recorded and responded to through the school's normal systems; care status will never be used to explain away a concern.

Children with a social worker and children in kinship care

The school recognises the wider educational vulnerability of children with a social worker and children living in kinship care. These children are not automatically LAC or PLAC and are not automatically within the statutory school Designated Teacher duty.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 provides for strengthened local-authority educational-achievement duties for children in need and children in kinship care. Until all operational requirements and replacement DfE guidance are settled, Pattishall will take a practical whole-school approach rather than wait for a new statutory school role.

- The DSL, Designated Teacher, SENDCo, attendance lead and class teacher will work together so that educational barriers are identified early and support is coherent.
- The school will work with the VSH, social worker and other professionals and will contribute educational information to Child in Need, Child Protection or other statutory planning where appropriate.
- Attendance, persistent absence, attainment/progress, SEND, suspensions/exclusions, participation and wellbeing will be considered at cohort level as part of vulnerable-pupil monitoring.
- There is no statutory PEP requirement for a child solely because they have or have had a social worker, and there is no automatic PP+ entitlement unless the pupil separately meets LAC/PLAC eligibility.
- The school will review this section promptly when further commencement regulations or DfE statutory guidance under the 2026 Act is issued.

Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced Designated Teacher and ensure they receive appropriate training;
- ensure the Designated Teacher has sufficient seniority, time, resources and access to specialist advice to carry out the role effectively;
- hold leaders to account for the educational achievement, attendance, wellbeing and inclusion of LAC and PLAC;
- ensure school policies do not create unintended barriers for LAC and PLAC and that their needs are considered across curriculum, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, SEND, admissions, trips and enrichment;
- scrutinise the use and impact of PP+ and the quality and impact of provision, not simply whether funding has been spent;
- receive regular, anonymised cohort reporting from the Designated Teacher and challenge leaders where outcomes, participation or implementation are not secure;
- ensure governor monitoring protects confidentiality, particularly where cohort numbers are very small. Individual cases will not be discussed unless there is a lawful and necessary governance reason.

Headteacher and Senior Leaders

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently and that LAC/PLAC priorities are reflected in school improvement, curriculum, staffing and resource decisions;
- support and challenge the Designated Teacher and ensure agreed whole-school actions are followed through;
- ensure suspension, exclusion, attendance and alternative-provision decisions comply with statutory guidance and involve the VSH/social worker where required;
- ensure staff receive appropriate training and that impact is monitored.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

- work closely with the Designated Teacher and ensure safeguarding information is shared appropriately;
- hold relevant social worker, care-status, delegated-authority and VSH information for looked-after children;
- ensure concerns about LAC, PLAC or children with a social worker are acted on promptly in line with KCSIE and local safeguarding procedures.

SENDCo

- work with the Designated Teacher to identify and meet SEND and disability needs promptly;
- ensure PEP and EHCP/SEND planning are aligned and that agreed classroom adaptations are understood and implemented;
- support staff to distinguish possible SEND, communication, sensory or regulation needs from assumptions about care experience.

Class Teachers and Support Staff

- maintain high expectations and know the agreed educational priorities and adaptations for pupils they teach;
- contribute accurate assessment, pupil voice and evidence to PEPs/reviews where relevant;
- implement agreed actions and communicate concerns promptly to the Designated Teacher/DSL/SENDCo as appropriate;
- protect confidentiality and avoid publicly identifying or treating pupils differently because of care status.

Attendance Lead

- monitor attendance and emerging patterns of absence for vulnerable cohorts and work with the Designated Teacher and DSL on early action;
- ensure statutory attendance processes and notifications are followed and that attendance support plans are joined up with PEP or social-care planning where appropriate.

Parents, Carers and Guardians

- work in partnership with the school and share relevant information that will help the child succeed;

- contribute views to planning and review and support attendance and engagement;
- for PLAC, provide evidence of eligibility where reasonably needed to access PP+ or VSH advice and tell the school how widely they are comfortable with status information being shared.

Pupils

- will be listened to and involved in decisions about their education in a way that reflects their age, understanding and wishes;
- will be supported to understand their targets and the help available to them;
- will be encouraged to participate fully in school life and to express concerns, aspirations and ideas about what helps them learn.

Impact

We will judge the effectiveness of this policy by the difference it makes for pupils. Evidence will include:

- strong attendance and reduced persistent absence where attendance has been a concern;
- good or improving progress from starting points, including accelerated progress where gaps have arisen through disrupted education;
- timely, high-quality PEPs for LAC with clear targets, pupil voice, implemented actions and evidence of impact;
- appropriate use of PP+ with a clear rationale and evidence of educational benefit;
- successful transitions and minimal loss of learning when placements or schools change;
- full participation in curriculum and wider opportunities;
- appropriate identification and support for SEND, mental-health and wellbeing needs;
- low or reducing suspension/exclusion and evidence of early support where behaviour or attendance is becoming a barrier;
- pupils and carers/parents reporting that they feel known, listened to, included and ambitious for the future;
- staff and governors able to explain the school's responsibilities and the impact of its provision.

Monitoring and reporting to governors

The Designated Teacher will provide a report to governors at least termly, either to the Full Governing Body or through the agreed link-governor/committee route. Reporting will be proportionate to cohort size and anonymised so that individual children cannot be identified.

The report will normally cover, where relevant and safe to report:

- the number of LAC and PLAC on roll and the number of placing local authorities involved;
- a separately identified wider vulnerable cohort of children with a social worker/children in kinship care where this can be reported without identifying individuals;
- attendance and persistent absence compared with school patterns;
- attainment and progress from starting points, including whether pupils are on track to meet ambitious targets;
- PEP timeliness, quality and implementation for LAC, including the strength of pupil voice;
- SEND/EHCP and mental-health/wellbeing themes and whether support is timely and effective;
- suspensions, permanent exclusions, off-site directions, alternative provision or part-time timetables, where any apply;
- access to trips, clubs, enrichment, leadership and wider curriculum opportunities;
- significant transition, mobility or admission issues;
- PP+ use and evidence of impact for LAC/PLAC;
- staff/Designated Teacher training and any policy or resource implications;
- what monitoring has found, the impact on pupils and the next actions.

Governors will receive enough information to challenge and assure themselves that duties are being met, but not detailed safeguarding or care information that they do not need for governance. Where very small numbers create a risk of identification, data will be aggregated, described thematically or reported privately through the appropriate governance route.

Working with the Virtual School and other agencies

- The school will maintain effective links with West Northamptonshire Virtual School and with VSHs from other placing authorities where a child is looked after elsewhere.
- The Designated Teacher and relevant governors will make use of WNC Virtual School training and advice, including Designated Teacher and governor development opportunities.
- The school will work constructively with social workers, carers, parents/guardians, Independent Reviewing Officers, SEND and health services and any other relevant professional.
- Changes in care placement, school placement or family arrangements that may disrupt education will be discussed promptly with the appropriate professionals so that educational stability is protected.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Information about a child's looked-after, previously looked-after or social-care status is sensitive personal information. It will be shared lawfully, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding requirements and data-protection law. Staff must never discuss a child's status publicly or assume that peers or other families know it.

Cross References

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Nurturing Positive Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy / procedures
- SEND and Inclusion Policy and SEN Information Report
- Pupil Premium Strategy
- Equality Policy / Equality Information and Objectives
- Accessibility Policy and Plan
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy
- Educational Visits procedures
- Curriculum Policy and DR MOSS planning

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Teacher and Headteacher and approved by the Full Governing Body. It will be reviewed sooner if legislation, KCSIE, DfE statutory guidance, pupil-premium conditions or WNC Virtual School arrangements change.