Policy for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children (LAC and PLAC)

Sir John Heron Primary School

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Policy for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy

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1 Introduction

The educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after children (LAC) and previously looked after children (PLAC) are of real concern. Schools are key in helping raise the educational outcomes and improving the life chances of these children through carefully planning, monitoring and evaluation. For the children who may have been subject to neglect and/or abuse and have their lives disrupted, school can also provide a source of continuity, "normality" and an environment where they feel safe.

The needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children may have implications for almost every school policy and therefore consideration is given to ensure that policies are effective in reflecting their needs. This policy operates particularly in conjunction with the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- DfE (2018, updated 2022): The Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children – Statutory Guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Local Authority and Virtual School policies.

2 Definition

For the purposes of this guidance:

- A child 'looked-after by a local authority' is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014;
- A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales; and
- A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if s/he is in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

The term "looked after" was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed

basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child's welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents n a part or full time basis.

Furthermore, the term "looked after", which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term "in public care."

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. This includes:

- 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 interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are subjects of a Special Guardianship order (Section 91)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

Section 20 of the 2008 Act places the following duties on governing bodies:

- To designate a member of staff (the designated teacher) as having the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children, including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at the school
- To ensure that the designated teacher undertakes appropriate training
- The governing body and the designated teacher must have regard to this guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State

Section 20(3) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 gives the Secretary of State Powers to make regulations setting out the qualifications and experience which the designated teacher should have.

The Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc) (England) Regulations 2009 require that the designated person is:

- A qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a teacher at the school or
- Head teacher or acting head teacher of the school

3 Objectives

Sir John Heron Primary School is committed to promoting the educational achievement and welfare of children in public care. We will:

- Ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC and PLAC as for all children.
- Ensure that all LAC and PLAC have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability.

- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extracurricular activities, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure that carers and social workers of LAC and PLAC are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- Ensure that LAC and PLAC are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision.
- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the local authority policies and arrangements, SEND legislation and guidance from the DfE and the Department of Health.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavor to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve their fullest possible academic potential.
- Using Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) effectively and transparently to meet individual needs.
- Strengthening the voice of the child through Pupil Voice in PEPs and school life.
- Supporting positive mental health and resilience alongside academic progress.
- Working in partnership with parents, carers, social workers, the Virtual School, and other professionals to provide joined-up care.
- Training staff so they understand attachment, trauma-informed practice, and the barriers LAC/PLAC may face.

4 Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the children's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

5 The Young Person

It is important that the young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. We emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education. The young person should be supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the Personal Education Plan to inform the PEP and Care Plan review meetings.

6 Communication with other agencies

Copies of all reports are forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker and if appropriate parent/s and the Virtual School. We work with social work colleagues within Children's Services to co-ordinate review

meetings, e.g. to have an Annual or a Statement Review and a Personal Education Plan meeting or review.

7 Review procedures

A child's care plan is reviewed regularly by the authority that looks after them. These reviews are statutory and must be done at the following intervals: the first review must happen within 20 working days of the date the child became looked after; the second at not more than three months after the first review; and the third and subsequent reviews at not more than six monthly intervals. The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO will ask about the child's educational progress as part of the overall care plan review and should have access to the most up-to-date PEP.

8 Developing the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All looked-after children must have a care plan. This is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority responsible for the child. It should identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to their emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP.

The PEP is a record of the child's education and training. It should describe what needs to happen for a looked-after child to help them fulfil their potential and reflect, but not duplicate, any existing plans such as EHC plans.

The care plan and PEP may have been drawn up before the child becomes looked-after and is placed. However, if a child becomes looked-after in an emergency, the PEP must be initiated within 10 working days of the start of the first placement. An initial version must be available for the 20 working-day review of the care plan.

The PEP should be initiated by the social worker as part of the care plan but developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. Where the child is on the roll of a school, this will include the designated teacher, although class would have considerable input. If the child has SEND, the SENDCo or head teacher would also contribute.

The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a looked-after child's official school record. If a child moves school, the PEP should be forwarded as a matter of urgency, along with other school records, to the new school when known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.

The PEP should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress and meet the child's educational needs, describing how that will be provided. For this reason, both schools and local authorities, through strong links between the designated teacher and the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) in the authority that looks after the child, have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document. The most effective PEPs reflect the individual planning that all schools undertake for all of their children.

Each young person has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is developed jointly by the Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This identifies specific areas of focus and include targets and associated action to improve the children's performance or educational achievement. Areas for consideration will include:

- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise)

- Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences)
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations)
- Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages
- Extended learning opportunities
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities
- Special needs
- Attendance
- Behaviour

The PEP is updated and reviewed at least annually or at the point of any major change and contribute to the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Designated Teacher is accountable for the implementation and review of the educational action to meet the targets within the Plan.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) has a statutory role to promote the educational achievement of both looked-after and previously looked-after children. The Designated Teacher will work closely with the VSH, sharing information and accessing training, guidance, and resources to support pupils.

9 Receiving the PEP in school

When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after or a looked-after child transfers to the school, the local authority which looks after them must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the up-to-date PEP as a matter of urgency. This should be pre-populated with basic information and should include details about the child, such as:

- Their age, care status, where the child lives, school history, whether the child has special educational needs (including whether they have an Education, Health and Care – EHC - Plan or statement of SEND), and how this is being addressed.
- The child's carers and their level of delegated authority.
- The child's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to their contact with the child.
- Whom to contact within the local authority that looks after the child (social worker and VSH).
- The designated teacher will then develop the PEP.
- Children who are already looked-after when they join the school should have an existing PEP. It should contain all the information about educational progress and how s/he learns best, and arrangements should have been made to have it transferred to the child's new school. If the local authority has not provided the most recent PEP, the designated teacher should follow this up with the authority that looks after the child, either through the VSH or the child's social worker.

10 Roles and responsibilities

10.1 Headteacher

- Identify, or be, the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC, whose role is set out below. It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave

- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of LAC and PLAC and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of LAC and PLAC to all parties involved.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance
- Ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used to good effect, for the benefit of all disadvantaged children

10.2 Governing Body

- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC and PLAC.
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC and PLAC who links with the Designated Teacher.
- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritise LAC.
- Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of LAC and PLAC.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Headteacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of LAC and PLAC are recognised and met.
- Receive a report once a year setting out:
    - The number of LAC and PLAC on the school's roll (if any)
    - Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other children
    - Their Teacher Assessment, as a discreet group, compared to other children
    - The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any)
    - The destinations of children who leave the school
    - The information for this report should be collected and repo reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the children concerned

10.3 Designated Teacher

Government guidance says that the Designated Teacher should be "someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, who should be an advocate for LAC and PLAC assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them." A member of the senior leadership team has been given the role of Designated Teacher.

The designated teacher should be a central point of initial contact within the school. This helps to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.

Designated teachers are also likely to have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation.

Our Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for LAC and PLAC within school and ensure relevant staff know who are LAC or PLAC.

- Know who are LAC and PLAC in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within school and ensure a speedy transfer of information, records, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement.
- Co-ordinate any support for the LAC and PLAC that is necessary within school.
- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker.
- Ensure particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the promote an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve.
- Ensure there are effective procedures in place to support a LAC and PLAC learning.
- Work closely with other staff in school to make sure the child's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated. They should be able to: judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing; and know whether the young person is likely to meet the attainment targets in their PEP.
- If the a child is not on track to meet targets, the designated teacher should be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with teachers and the child in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in the PEP.
- Record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics.
- Ensure transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion.
- Ensure there are no barriers to looked-after children accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its children (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for looked-after children to attend meetings)
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage LAC and PLAC to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning.
- Say what will happen, or is already happening, to put in place any additional support which may be required - e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist, or local authority education services (information contained within a EHC plan does not have to be duplicated in the PEP, a reference is sufficient as long as the plans work together to meet overall needs).
- Identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences.
- Set short and long-term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate.
- Include a record of planned actions, including milestones on homework, extra tuition and study support, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child, based on an assessment of their educational needs.
- Ensure that each LAC and PLAC has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes.

- Ensure confidentiality for individual children, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.
- Ensure, as far as possible, attendance at planning and review meetings.
- Set up timely meetings with relevant parties where a child is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of LAC and PLAC including of things, which can affect how LAC and PLAC learn and how the whole school support the educational achievement of these children.
- Actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored.
- Attend relevant training about LAC and PLAC and act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC and PLAC, seeking advice from the LAC and PLAC team where appropriate.
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies.
- The Designated Teacher will ensure that LAC and PLAC have access to appropriate pastoral and mental health support, recognising the impact of trauma and loss.

Not all aspects of the role of the designated teacher need necessarily be carried out by a single individual or by a qualified teacher. While lead responsibility for raising attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll must rest with the designated teacher, certain functions within it, including pastoral and administrative tasks, are delegated to appropriate members of staff.

10.4 Staff

All our staff will:

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC and PLAC, as for all children.
- Be aware of any LAC and PLAC children.
- Record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics.
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's and PLAC progress and contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals.
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and PLAC.
- Maintain LAC and PLAC confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Work to enable LAC and PLAC to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all LAC and PLAC.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of LAC and PLAC including the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour; understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their looked-after or previously looked-after status.
- Work to prevent bullying in line with the School's anti-bullying policy.

11 Transfer of the official school PEP record

The designated teacher is fundamental to helping looked-after children make a smooth transition to their next school. This includes arrangements to achieve speedy transfer of the LAC or PLAC's school records to a new school; ensure the child's PEP is up to date; and that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most recent version of the PEP.

12 Transfer out of care

When children cease to be looked-after, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed significantly simply because their care status has changed. Although they will no longer be required to have a PEP, designated teachers will wish to consider what is best for continuity and meeting the child's educational needs. This will particularly apply to those who leave care through adoption, Special Guardianship or a Child Arrangements Order, where the designated teacher has a duty to promote their educational attainment. As part of this, designated teachers should maintain links with VSHs who must make advice and information available to them for the purposes of promoting the educational achievement of this group of previously looked-after children.