




The Heys School

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

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Date Reviewed:	June 2022
Next review Date:	June 2023
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Signed:	

Statement of Policy for Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

RATIONALE

“Though some do well, the educational achievement of looked after children as a group remains unacceptably low. That is why the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievements of looked after children”. (S52, Children Act, 2004)

Children and young people in care have a right to expect the outcomes that we want for every child. As a school, we play a vital role in supporting the local authority to achieve the highest possible educational standards and outcomes for all looked after or previously looked after children on our school roll.

Our school understands and supports the premise that as **Corporate Parents**, we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of children and young people in care. We take that duty seriously and our school ensures that there is a common understanding amongst all staff of the needs of children and young people in care.

This policy complies with the following statutory guidance issued to all local authorities:

- *Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children DfE (February 2018)*
- *Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children (March 2015)*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2020)*
- *The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children; Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities (February 2018)*
- *Improving the attainment of looked after young people in secondary schools: Guidance for Schools DCSF 2009*
- *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years - Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (2015);*
- *Mental Health and Behaviour in schools DfE Guidance (November 2018)*
- *Statutory guidance on the exclusion of students from local-authority-maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units (September 2017)*

And

- *The Bury Handbook Section 5.4.3 which outlines procedures for the education of looked after and previously looked after children within the local authority.*
https://www.proceduresonline.com/bury/cs/chapters/p_educ_lac.html

The statutory guidance issued by the Department of Education comes under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This means that it **must** be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it.

Looked After Child: A child who is looked after by a local authority (referred to as a looked-after child) as defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989 means a child (0-18 years of age) who is subject to a care order (or an interim care order) or who is accommodated by the local authority.

Previously Looked After Child: 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.

1. The role of The Heys School's Governing Body

The Governing Body has a legal duty to appoint the school's Designated Teacher (DT) ensuring that all statutory requirements are met and that the post holder has Qualified Teacher Status.

The Governing Body will endeavour to raise expectations for achievement of looked after children and encourage them to do well by combining high expectation and standards with inclusion. They will consider and set appropriately challenging targets and in so doing facilitate the appropriate resources in order to support the child to reach those targets. They will monitor and evaluate the impact of the school provision, teaching and learning and support for looked after children. The annual reporting cycle informs on the following key aspects of provision:

- the number of looked after children on roll;
- attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence; the frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded exclusion;
- how they are performing in core subjects, their progress and any value added measure when compared against initial baseline assessment;
- the frequency of them taking part in extra-curricular activities;
- the attainment relative to the targets set in core and foundation subjects;
- the provision arrangements for additional support identified to include 1:1 tuition at school and any externally added booster work provided in the care home;
- the quality and updating of the educational targets recorded in the PEP.

The school has a named Governor (Mrs K Edwards) with responsibility for Children and Young People in Care and the Local Authority's LAC Education team is kept informed of any change to that nomination. The Nominated Governor undertakes to attend training as required.

The Governing Body ensures that the needs of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are recognised in all school policies. The Governing Body has ensured that our school has a clear policy in relation to admissions, exclusions and access to school-based services and opportunities for all children /young people in care on our roll.

The Governing Body ensures that the Designated Teacher is able to attend training as required and as appropriate, but, as a minimum, annual training will be undertaken, in line with legislation. The Designated Teacher will be supported to ensure that learning from the training is effectively disseminated to all staff ensuring that all staff understand and support the ethos of **Corporate Parenting** and the school's role in supporting the educational journeys of looked after and previously looked after children.

2. The role of the Head Teacher

The Head Teacher expects every adult to prioritise the personal, emotional and academic needs of vulnerable children and young people.

The Head Teacher, in partnership with the senior leadership team, will ensure that specific needs and barriers to learning are identified and that all school policies are effective in reflecting the needs of looked after or previously looked after children.

The Head Teacher will hold the Designated Teacher to account through rigorous monitoring of the individual provisions put in place for looked after or previously looked after children to ensure that PEP spending is appropriate and the students are provided with every opportunity to overcome disadvantage and achieve their potential.

3. The role of the Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked after and previously looked after child on the school's roll. The role should make a positive difference by promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked after and previously looked after child is important and their personal, emotional, and academic needs are prioritised.

Please refer to our separate policy which outlines the role of the Designated Teacher in promoting the educational achievement of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

4) Role of teaching and support staff

We expect all our school Teaching and Support Staff to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after children by requiring all staff to:

- ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained;
- be familiar with, and respond appropriately to, requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews;
- respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with;
- ensure that no child in care becomes the victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and eradicated;
- positively promote the self-esteem of looked after children;
- convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

All staff are aware that the new OFSTED inspection framework will consider the provisions that we, as a whole school, have put in place to support looked after children. We understand that a judgement will be made within the OFSTED framework in terms of how far this school is able to support looked after young people. The formal report will include comments about the progress and support provided to these vulnerable young people.

Our staff are aware that our children and young people in care may sometimes exhibit inappropriate behaviour to gain attention but awareness is not confused with acceptance and expectations remain high as our teachers must not be diverted from the focus on teaching and learning.

We expect our teachers to set challenging targets when reviewing progress and we ensure that there are regular opportunities for enrichment activities to consolidate learning.

5) Special Educational needs:

The majority of looked after children have special educational needs. Of those, a proportion will, subject to transition arrangements resulting from changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014, have an EHC Plan. Some children may have undiagnosed special needs when they start to be looked after.

As a consequence, our SENDCO will also be closely involved with the provision for this group.

6) Admissions:

Looked after children are given the highest priority within school admission arrangements. Admission authorities understand that Fair Access Protocols do not apply to looked after children.

We understand and comply with the local authority's duty, as **Corporate Parent**, to avoid delay where there are children in care without an education placement that is appropriate to their assessed needs. We acknowledge that the local authority has powers of direction in those cases where delay occurs as a result of protracted negotiation. This school supports the School Admissions Code.

7) Exclusions:

As a school we understand that these young people require understanding and flexibility in respect of behaviour. We will ensure that everything possible is done to ensure that looked after children are never permanently excluded and that fixed term exclusions are avoided as far as possible. We will work together with the young person, their carer and social worker and the local authority's Virtual Head to develop and implement flexible and creative approaches to address difficulties and avoid exclusion. We understand that any disruption to the young person's learning will compound their feelings of rejection and loss of self-esteem.

It is the responsibility of all **Corporate Parents** to work together collaboratively to avoid the use of exclusions. However, where it is unavoidable due to a serious breach of this school's behaviour policy or if there is a risk to the welfare of the pupil or others within the school then we will ensure that we adhere to statutory expectation. Whenever we have concerns about a looked after child's behaviour, the Virtual School Head (from the child's originating home local authority) will be informed and, where necessary, involved at the earliest opportunity.

Every school does its best to avoid excluding children. In the case of looked after children it is even more important. Designated Teachers, in partnership with others in the school and the school governing body, as necessary, should:

- ***Be involved in any discussions related to decisions about potential exclusions of looked after children on roll; and***
- ***Ensure that the authority which looks after the child (the VSH) and the child's carers, are involved such decisions.***

8) Communication and collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders

Communication with Carers

Carers will always be informed who the Designated Teacher is and are welcomed by the school and able to ask questions etc.

The Designated Teacher remains in regular contact with carers, is easily contactable and takes a proactive role in ensuring that both carer and pupil are aware of important deadlines e.g. Coursework, examination dates, Parents' Evenings etc

The Designated Teacher ensures that information re trips, study guides etc is conveyed effectively and will check that information has been received by the right people: this is particularly pertinent at the time of placement change which may leave the child/young person feeling lost and confused.

The Designated Teacher will also receive information from carers and others and ensures that it is recorded and processed appropriately.

The Designated Teacher understands the importance of the carer's role in partnership working and fosters a collaborative working relationship with both carers and parents (as appropriate).

The Designated Teacher acknowledges and fully understands the issue of Parental Responsibility: whilst Carers do not hold any (unless they have been granted specific Orders eg. Special Guardianship Orders) there will be many cases where the birth parents retain full PR and the Designated Teacher must be guided by the social worker where there may be complex situations requiring sensitive handling.

Communication with Childrens' Services and other agencies

The Designated Teacher promotes strong, positive, working relationships between social workers, health professionals and others and all The Heys School staff involved with the child/young person in care.

The Designated Teacher recognises the importance of effective communication with all professionals involved and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that information is effectively passed between agencies.

The Designated Teacher provides information as requested by social care colleagues or other professionals involved with the child/young person in care.

The Designated Teacher will always be mindful of the child's legal status and will advise accordingly on the issue of Parental Responsibilities.

Communication with the LAC Education Team (Virtual School)

The Designated Teacher understands that the LAC Education team is the primary source of information concerning educational issues and, equally, the team must be kept informed of any developments in the child's life which may impact on educational progress and attainment e.g. exclusions for behaviour concerns.

The Designated Teacher will provide all information requested by LAC Education colleagues or other professionals involved with the child/young person in care.

The Designated Teacher will endeavour to undertake regular training in line with statutory expectations. If this is not possible, then the Designated Teacher understands that 1:1 training, advice and support is always available from the LAC Education Team.

9) Giving the child/young person a voice

Everyone in our school will ensure that at every stage the child/young person will be fully involved in meetings, discussions and decision-making processes in relation to their education. We will fully support them to attend their PEP meetings and to ensure that their wishes and feelings about their education are taken into account in the development, implementation and review of PEPs, PSPs, personalised planning processes etc

If the child is too young or feels unable to attend the meeting their views will be brought by the most appropriate person and the key discussion points will be shared in an appropriate way after the meeting.

Where their wishes, feelings or preferences cannot be fully met, for example, if a specific decision is felt not to be in their best interest, then it will be carefully explained why this is the case and these conversations will be logged/noted in the PEP and raised at the next review.

10) Supporting transitions from care (Secondary schools)

Our school understands that the duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children extends to looked after young people aged 16 or 17 preparing to leave care (eligible children) .

We will ensure that the PEP is maintained as part of the preparation and review of the Pathway Plan (which will be initiated by Social Care during year 11, for those who are eligible due to the length and nature of their care history) and that it builds on the young person's educational progress.

We recognise that a Pathway Plan scrutinises the measures being taken to help the child prepare for when he/she ceases to be looked after. The Plan will consider:

- The young person's progress in education or training and
- How he/she is able to access all the services needed to prepare for training, further or higher education or employment.

We will ensure an effective transition to Further Education College or other institution and we will support these young people in making the right choices.

We acknowledge the on-going responsibility we share as **Corporate Parents**.

11) Safeguarding looked after and previously looked after children in school

At The Heys School, the designated safeguarding lead is also the Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children. This group is extremely vulnerable, the most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect and the school is aware of the need to monitor the welfare and ensure the support of children in this category.

The designated safeguarding lead will retain details of the of the legal status of each individual looked after child's care arrangements and what the contact arrangements are with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. They will also know the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her.

All staff in the school are aware of the systems in the school that support safeguarding.

At induction, staff are guided through the safeguarding policy and have an awareness of safeguarding issues and be clear about how to report concerns and who they should report to. Staff are aware that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education and sexting put children in danger.

All children should feel and be safe in the school they attend. Looked after and previously looked after children are a vulnerable group.

Staff are aware that Looked after and Previously Looked After children are particularly vulnerable to individual or group bullying either in person or through social media where they can be subject to verbal and physical violence and/or sexual violence and harassment.

Staff will apply their understanding and awareness of safeguarding issues to ensure that the safety and well-being of looked after and previously looked after children is not compromised.

12) Mental Health

Looked-after and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, fetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.

The designated teachers is not required to be a mental health expert; however, they have an important role in ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as HYM. The designated teacher, school counsellor and pastoral team aim to:

- Identify signs of potential mental health issues and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENDCO and LAC support team where applicable; and recognise that these issues will continue to affect previously looked-after children, and that the school needs to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.

Related School policies:

- **Admissions**
- **SEN**
- **Attendance**
- **Teaching and Learning**
- **Safeguarding**
- **Pupil Premium**
- **Behaviour and Behaviour Principles**
- **EAL**
- **Equality**