

# Highfield CE Primary School

## Looked After Children Policy



**Approved by:** The governing body

**Date:** 24.4.24

**Last reviewed on:** 24.4.24

**Next review due by:** 24.4.25

# Highfield CE Primary School Looked After Children Policy

## Aims and Principles

At Highfield School, we are committed to do all that we can to promote the educational achievement and well being of looked after children (LAC), supporting them in reaching their God-given potential.

**Our designated teacher for LAC is: Mr Carl Iszatt (SENCO)**

**In the event of absence, the designated teacher for LAC is: Mrs Rosie Walford (Headteacher)**

This policy describes our approach to meeting the requirements set out in the Statutory Guidance of Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children); Care Matters: Time for change 2007 Guidance (Chapter 4 “A First Class Education”).

In line with our school ethos and principles, and our commitment to being a ‘good corporate parent’, our policy is to identify specific roles & responsibilities within school to promote the learning, progress & well being of children in care. (*see Appendix 2 – Roles and Responsibilities; Rationale’*)

## Definitions

**Looked-after children** are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

**Previously looked-after children** are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
  - A special guardianship order
  - An adoption order
- They appear to the governing board to have:
  - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

**Personal education plan (PEP)** is part of a looked-after child’s care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

**Virtual school head (VSH)** is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority’s looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

## **Governing Body and School commitment to enhanced support for LAC**

- The Governing Body and all staff will ensure that quality learning opportunities & education are provided for all our pupils.
- We will ensure equality of access to opportunities & learning outcomes for all.
- We aim to support all pupils in achieving across the five outcome areas of Every Child Matters, whatever their background or circumstances.
- At our school we recognise that Looked After Children can be especially vulnerable and are sometimes 'at risk' of failure in the learning context.

### **Aims for our Looked After Learners**

Our aims in supporting Looked After learners in our Schools are:

- To ensure all school policies & procedures are followed sensitively for LAC.
- To ensure that all LAC have access to a broad, balanced & stimulating curriculum.
- To provide personalised learning & curriculum appropriate to needs and ability.
- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this too
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for
- To support and monitor social progress; ensuring key adults prioritise respectful and responsive relationship building with individual children & provide appropriate support for social development within the peer group.
- To ensure that LAC pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities.
- To ensure that Carers, Social Workers & Parents (as appropriate) of Looked After pupils are involved and kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- To ensure that wherever possible Looked After pupils are involved in decisions affecting their learning, the plans for progress and future provision.
- To ensure that success is appropriately recognized and reinforced
- To ensure that any emerging concerns are followed up in a timely way with skill and sensitivity (eg changes in patterns of behaviour & attendance).

### **Admissions to Our Schools**

- The Governing Body supports Southampton LA's approach to admissions giving Looked After Children the highest priority for admission to the identified school.
- Our schools will ensure Looked After Children are named as first priority within our school written admission criteria.
- Sometimes care placement changes lead to Looked After Children entering school mid-term or mid year. As necessary, we will give a positive welcome, plan entry, offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help pupils settle in school.

### **Inclusion and Allocation of Resources**

- Our policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based, and stimulating curriculum and learning programme.
- For Looked After Children there can often be a need to develop learning opportunities emphasising personalised planning & planned inclusive approaches.
- The Governing Body will ensure our school makes all appropriate learning provision for LAC pupils. Resources are allocated to support LAC in line with this policy and with our wider school teaching & learning policies and good practice.

### **Monitoring the Progress of LAC**

- The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring progress for LAC pupils in school is monitored and supported via best practice guided by school policies for teaching and learning.
- We monitor and track the achievement and attainment of LAC pupils at regular intervals.
- We ensure that the statutory Personal Education Plan (PEP) processes are supported systematically delivered within appropriate timescales.
- Each PEP will be reviewed according to the needs of the pupil, but at least every 6 months (initiated by the Social Worker or Reviewing Officer).
- The pupils' views are actively and sensitively sought by the appropriate key partner (Designated Member of Staff, Social Worker, Carer, Education Caseworker).
- The views of the pupil and Carers are noted within the PEP Form and shared sensitively at the meeting. The pupil is as actively involved as possible in selecting appropriate targets and with decisions relating to school and learning (*see Appendix 3 – PEP Guidance*).

### **Record Keeping and Information Sharing**

- Our Designated Member of Staff will coordinate record keeping for all LAC in school.
- Records will include individual learning plans, up to date progress & attainment records, PEP planning records and personalised information relating to care context as appropriate.
- LAC status is appropriately 'flagged' in school information management systems, ensuring information & planning records are readily available as required.
- We will ensure there is ready access to information and up to date contact details for Carers, Parents (where appropriate), & Social Worker.
- All appropriate records will be forwarded to receiving school promptly if there is a transfer to another school
- Sensitivity is a priority in sharing information with members of school staff team. We are guided by best practice and on the 'need to know'. Wherever possible pupils' wishes are taken into account in sharing information within the staff team.

### **Staff and Governors' Development and Training**

- All staff and governors are encouraged to develop via reflective processes. We encourage ongoing engagement with relevant CPD to maintain and extend individual and team expertise in supporting Looked After Children to progress.
- Our Designated Member of Staff makes particular efforts to develop good awareness and understanding of issues, guidance and developments associated with the Looked After Children context. The Designated Member of Staff disseminates knowledge and skills to colleagues in school as appropriate and necessary. Partnership working and collaboration with the LA & Virtual School for LAC is essential here (*see Appendix 3*)

## Partnership Working

- Our school values the views of Carers & Parents. We firmly believe in developing strong partnerships with Carers/Parents & Residential Care workers to enable pupils achieve their potential.
- We will develop close relationships and collaborative work to promote the learning and well being of individual children, both in and out of school.
- PEP meetings, other school liaison & consultation processes and informal day to day dialogue are all seen as good opportunities to enhance our partnerships.
- We recognise the essential contributions that external support services make in supporting Looked After Children. We commit to developing positive partnerships with all involved. Our partnerships with community partners are extensive; some of our key partners for Looked After Children include:-  
*LAC Team (Social Workers, Family Support Workers, Education Caseworkers); Educational Psychologists; SEN Team; Behaviour Support; Learning Support; Other Local Authority Services; Medical Officers; School Nurses; CAMHS; Education Welfare Officers; Social Care Sessional Staff/ Community Care worker/ Residential Care Staff; Youth Offending Service; Locality Team Workers; Independent Review Officers; Advocacy Services.*

## Monitoring and Review

*This policy was reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body : 17 April 2024*

## APPENDIX 1 – 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. Looked After Children may fall into one of following 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 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 includes 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.

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’ (LAC). They may be Looked After by our Local Authority (LA), or may be in the care of another LA, but living in or attending a school in our LA.

## APPENDIX 2 – SCHOOL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rationale for Roles and Responsibilities

Looked After Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is widely recognised that they underachieve in education and learning contexts compared to their peers. Evidence strongly suggests that poor outcomes and qualifications impact significantly on subsequent life chances. Their experience:

- High level of instability, disruption and change in school placements
- Poor involvement in extra curricular activities/positive activity out of school
- Inconsistent attention paid to out of school learning & homework.

These can often result in:

- Poor attainment, exam success and qualifications gained in comparison with the general population
- Underachievement in further and higher education
- Low self esteem & confidence, disengagement from learning, training & subsequent employment

Many children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. To date the outcomes achieved by LAC have been unacceptably poor. Government, Southampton LA and schools are committed to addressing this disparity. Our role as corporate parents means that in school we all have a part to play mindfully applying the principles of good parenting by;

- Prioritising learning and achievement, and raising standards
- Ensuring we have high expectations and aspirations for each YP
- Skilled listening to children, ensuring YP involvement in decision making
- Promoting inclusion and personalized approaches to learning
- Providing stability, continuity, consistency and building meaningful relationships across school and home contexts
- Taking our corporate responsibilities seriously
- Intervening early to support success and solve difficulties
- Promoting good practice in early years learning experience
- Celebrating success, reinforcing achievements, providing timely incentives & rewards

## **HEADTEACHER : SLT ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To ensure that provision/outcomes for Looked After Children are specifically recorded or mentioned in:-
  1. School Development Plan and the SEF as part of raising attainment foci
  2. All appropriate school policies and procedures
  3. Any issued reports on:-

Behaviour; sanctions; exclusions; praise and rewards; public examinations and SATS (analysis and entries); student progress in relation to targets & FFT; extra curricular; activities and successes; attendance; gifted and talented provision; admissions; student voice activities/school council; complaints; student destinations; work experience; CPD for staff

    - I. To provide an annual report on the provision for, and progress of, Looked After Children to the Governing Body each October , following data reviews in the Summer term
    - II. To make it clear to staff and other school stakeholders that many Looked After Children require sensitivity and positive personalized planning above and beyond most peers, and that school policy clearly supports this approach

- III. To give the Designated Member of Staff for LAC the time and facilities to carry out his/her job description fully and effectively, and to support them at all times in their work
- IV. To show a personal commitment and involvement with Looked After Children in the school
- V. To challenge negative stereotypes of Looked After Children, and to insist on the highest of expectations in terms of Looked After Children achieving their potential
- VI. To give Looked After Children the highest priority in terms of admissions to the school in the event of over subscription
- VII. To provide CPD for staff on issues pertaining to Looked After Children and to ensure that the Designated Member of Staff attends regular network meetings and training

## **DESIGNATED MEMBER OF STAFF ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To be an advocate for LAC within school
- To be aware and build relationships with all LAC in school and ensure the availability of all relevant details/records from school record-keeping systems as required
- To attend relevant CPD and Networks about LAC
- To act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the LAC Team & other professionals as appropriate
- To ensure that LAC receive 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
- To keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- To convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- To 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
- To act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC
- To ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings, parents evenings and other school events
- To actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra curricular activities for LAC
- To ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- To contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- To report to the Governing body on LAC in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- Reports to governors to include:
  - The number of LAC on roll
  - The number that have a Personal Education Plan
  - Attainment and progress of individuals/group of LAC
  - Comparisons of attainment and progress to others in school
  - Interventions implemented to address gaps/difficulties
  - Their attendance compared to other pupils
  - Their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils
  - The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions
  - The destinations for pupils who leave the school
- To agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc
- To attend governor meetings as appropriate e.g. admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC

- To arrange a mentor or ‘befriender’ (adult and/or pupil) to whom the young person can talk, e.g. school mentor or through the learning mentor scheme or through Connexions, particularly when the pupil is new to school
- To ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCo and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. (LAC are 6-8 times more likely to have an SEN Statement than other pupils in school)

*N.B. DT Roles/Responsibilities should be reviewed on release of Statutory Guidance for DTs (summer 2009)*

### **SCHOOL STAFF ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- To follow school procedures, policies and best practice in line with school mission and principles
- To keep the Designated Member of Staff informed about a LAC’s progress
- To have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC
- To positively promote the raising of a LAC’s self esteem
- To ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- To be familiar with the school’s policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- To liaise closely with the Designated Member of Staff where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- To contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- To keep appropriate records and maintain appropriate confidentiality; to make these available to the DT, other professionals, parents/carers & YP as appropriate

### **SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- To use official exclusions only as the very last resort and in line with the school’s exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement. LAC should have ‘first day’ provision following any exclusion
- To ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the latest Admissions Code of Practice
- To ensure all governors are fully aware of the statutory duties and requirement to promote learning and achievement for LAC
- To ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced Designated Member of Staff for LAC is appointed and has a job description in line with the Statutory Guidance for Designated Members of Staff
- To liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Member of Staff and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- To nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC who liaised regularly with the Designated Member of Staff
- To read and respond appropriately to regular reports from the Designated Member of Staff
- To ensure that the school’s policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of: admission to school, National Curriculum and examinations (academic and vocational), out of school learning and extra curricular activities, work experience and careers guidance.
- To review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC annually
- To ensure that the Designated Member of Staff is invited to any exclusion meetings of LAC

## **APPENDIX 3 – PARTNERSHIP WITH LA LAC TEAM/VIRTUAL SCHOOL**



School & the Designated Member of Staff for LAC will develop positive partnerships with the Virtual School/LAC Team by:-

- Contributing to termly Designated Member of Staff Network meetings which involve sharing of good practice & information, CPD linked to the LAC context and valuable opportunities for Designated Member of Staff networking.
- Engaging in other relevant LA CPD programmes and following 'sign posts' provided to relevant training opportunities
- Accessing support via coaching, reflective practitioner support as requested or necessary
- Work with LA to ensure every LAC is placed on a school role as early as possible; certainly within 20 days of coming into care or being placed in Southampton
- Ensure every LAC has an up to date PEP, reviewed in line with best practice
- Collaboration to help Designated Member of Staff access Social Care Teams and multi-agency support (where necessary Virtual School/LAC Ed liaison as a conduit for information flow both ways, as appropriate)
- Seeking advice and support to find alternative approaches to exclusion within the LA for LAC 'at risk'; arranging 'first day' provision for 'last resort and unavoidable' fixed term exclusions
- Establish good working relationships, developing regular liaison routes between Designated Member of Staff and the Virtual School/LAC Ed Team; engaging in collaborative problem solving
- Taking a proactive approach in identifying SEN & additional needs; working collaboratively with LA in line with SEN CoP to ensure needs are met
- Working with LA partners to provide smooth transitions between key stages, schools and providers, including mid-phase transfers & appropriate alternative provision

Our Designated Member of Staff and staff will work with the Virtual School/LAC Team to remain up to date on relevant issues relating to Looked after Children on a continuous and regular basis. The Virtual School/LAC Team provide support to school as appropriate, but the school will seek appropriate support from other teams (e.g. Behaviour Support Service, Educational Psychology, SEN Assessment Team, Learning Support Service, other advisors/specialists & provision, SALT, CAMHS)

N.B. Given the geographical barriers and vulnerability of 'Out of Authority' LAC, the role of Designated Member of Staff is again very important for those students placed to other LAs outside Southampton. The Virtual School/LAC Team of 'placing LA' should develop close links with Designated Member of staff, with visits and all appropriate phone/email support.

## **PEP GUIDANCE**

- i. School/DT should receive a PEP Form from the case holding Social worker with the Personal Information Section and Section 3 (Social Care Key Information) pages completed
- ii. Complete the Education Sections of the PEP (Section 4 and appropriate parts of Section 5) in consultation with other partners as appropriate
- iii. Forward Section 3 (Carers' Views About the Young Person's School and Education) to Carer. Ensure it is returned to you in good time for the PEP Meeting
- iv. Review progress towards current Action Plan targets with colleagues in school and discuss the current Action Plan with child/young person. Use an appropriate consultation process to ensure meaningful information received from YP, in relation to his/her views of school and learning progress
- v. Following iv), complete Section 1 'Young Person's Views about School'.
- vi. When appropriate, inform the School Nurse that the young person has entered public care or that a young person in care has joined the school
- vii. Keep the original completed PEP Form to use as a working document at the meeting and copies for all partners attending the meeting

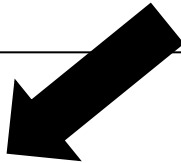
- viii. Arrange for class teacher/tutor to accompany you to PEP meeting if necessary/appropriate
- ix. Ensure all details in Section 5 and the new/updated Action Plan are completed as soon as possible after the PEP meeting. Ensure this current fully completed PEP Form is circulated to all key partners Social Worker, Key School Staff (e.g. Class Teacher/Form tutor, Carer, LAC Team Education Caseworker), and added to YP's school file.
- x. Completed PEP Form (including Action Plan) forwarded to Reviewing Officer (by Social Worker) for Statutory Care Plan Review Meeting
- xi. Consider holding the PEP/IEP/SEN Statutory Review Meetings together for efficiency and to avoid duplication

## APPENDIX 3 – PEP GUIDANCE CONTINUED – Process for Initiating and Reviewing PEP

PEP INITIATED BY SW WITH SCHOOL/DESIGNATED MEMBER OF STAFF. PEP COMPLETED WITHIN 14 WORKING DAYS (FROM NEW EVENT) YP INVOLVED PEP ACTION PLAN WRITTEN UP



INITIAL LAC STATUTORY REVIEW WITHIN 28 DAYS. PEP ACTION PLAN DISCUSSED AT REVIEW WITH IRO. ACTIONS BUILT INTO CARE PLAN YP CONSULTED RESHARING PEP INFORMATION IN LAC STATUTORY REVIEW



CURRENT ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTED. ONGOING ACTIONS SUPPORTED BY ALL PARTNERS. SW, DESIGNATED MEMBER OF STAFF & CASEWORKER MONITOR PROGRESS & SUPPORT STRATEGIES. INTERIM PEP MEETING ORGANISED AS NECESSARY

2<sup>nd</sup> LAC STATUTORY REVIEW 3 MONTHS AFTER INITIAL STATUTORY REVIEW. IRO CHECKS PEP ACTION PLAN IS BEING IMPLEMENTED



PEP REVIEW ARRANGED BY SCHOOL & SW. MEETING HELD PRIOR TO 6 MONTHLY LAC STATUTORY REVIEW. YP INVOLVED IN PLANNING (PEP REVIEW TIMESCALE FOLLOWS AT 6 MONTHLY INTERVALS, OR EARLIER IF NECESSARY)



3<sup>rd</sup> LAC STATUTORY REVIEWS HELD. SUMMARY OF PEP REVIEW MEETING DISCUSSED IRO CHECKS PEP ACTION PLAN