

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Statement of Practice



Lees Brook
Academy

Document Owner:	Mrs K Heffern
Date Reviewed:	July 2023
Date to be Reviewed:	July 2024

Introduction

Who are 'Looked After' Children?

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

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or 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 the schools local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in the schools LA.

This policy has been developed in consultation with Derby City Council's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Policy. (See Appendix 1)

Statement of Practice Looked After Children

Aims

The school will:

- Ensure that its policies and procedures are followed for those Looked After as for all children
- Ensure that all Looked After Children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- Provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the needs and ability of individual students
- Ensure that Looked After students take as full a part as possible in all school activities

- Ensure that carers and social workers of Looked After students are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- Ensure that, where practicable, Looked After students are involved in decisions affecting their future provision.

The Policy in Action

The school will have a designated member of the senior leadership team and the Academy Advisory Board will have a designated governor with responsibility for Looked After Children.

Designated Senior Leader for Looked After Children: Catherine Heffern

See Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Admissions

The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against Looked After students. This stance is also endorsed by the Derby City Admissions Forum. Due to care placement changes, Looked After Children may enter school mid-term. It is vital that they are given a positive welcome. If necessary, additional support and pre-entry visits will be provided to help the new student settle in.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. The school's Looked After Children policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive.

Monitoring the progress of Looked After Children

The social worker for the Looked After student should initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of the student joining the school or entering care, and ensure that the young person is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each Looked After student's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The school monitors and tracks the achievement and attainment of all students at regular intervals. Looked After Children will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing officer or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

See Appendix 3: Derby City Council's guidance on PEP forms

Record Keeping

The Designated Senior Leader will know who all the Looked After Children in school are and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The Designated Senior Leader will also know about any Looked After Children from other local authorities. It is important that the school flags Looked After Child status appropriately in its information systems so that information is readily available as required.

Staff Development

The school will encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support Looked After Children. Part of the Designated Senior Leader's role is to develop awareness of issues associated with Looked After Children.

Partnership with Parents/Carers and Care Workers

The school firmly believes in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable Looked After Children to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

Links with External Agencies and Organisations

The school also recognises the important contribution that external support services make in supporting Looked After Children. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual Looked After Children:

- Looked After Children teams
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service
- School-age parents' officer.

Policy Review and Evaluation

The school considers the Looked After Children policy to be important and it will undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review will inform the school's Strategic Development Plan.

Appendix 1: What Looked After Children Say

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

Appendix 2: Roles and

Responsibilities

Rationale

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

- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.

This may result in:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- Under-achievement in further and higher education.

These issues may also affect adopted young people.

The Designated Senior Leader will:

- Be an advocate for LAC within school
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the LAC and the rest of the school community
- Know who are all the LAC 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
- Attend relevant training about LAC
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the LAC team when appropriate.
- Ensure that LAC 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
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- Act as the key adviser for staff and AAB on issues relevant to LAC
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra curricular activities for LAC
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- Report to the Academy Advisory Board on LAC in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- Prepare reports for AAB meetings to include: the number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education
- Contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- Arrange a mentor or befriender (adult and/or pupil) to whom the young person can talk, particularly when the pupil is new to school
- 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 six to eight times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs than the general school population.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date, the outcomes achieved by Looked After Children have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents, we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- Agreeing with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc.
- Attending governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of Looked After Children
- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Promoting early years experiences
- Celebrating success.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- Their attendance compared to other pupils
- Their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils.
- The number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- The destinations of students who leave the school

the school will ensure the actions of its staff will be consistent with good practice. They will:

- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC.
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress.
- Follow school procedures.
- Positively promote the raising of a LAC's self esteem.
- Ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties.
- Give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement.
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times.
- Ensure that all LAC have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care (see Derby City's guidance on PEPs in Appendix 3) and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan.

The Local Authority will:

- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for LAC.
- Ensure that the education for this group is as good as that provided for every other Derby City student.
- Ensure that LAC receive full time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible.
- Ensure that every LAC has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Derby

from another authority.

- Make sure that each LAC has a PEP according to national guidance.
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for LAC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training.
- Provide alternative educational provision where appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible.
- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1,2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer.
- Identify a designated officer who has responsibility for championing the education of LAC.
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of LAC and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs.
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate.
- Make extra copies of reports available when required..

Local Authority contact numbers for the Education of Looked After Children are:

Graeme Ferguson
Virtual Headteacher
01332 640341

Children in Care Team
01332 640277

Appendix 3 : Personal Education Plan Guidance

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are part of the statutory care plans for Looked After Children (LAC) and are a legal requirement.

The Personal Education Plan:

- Reflects any existing education plans, such as an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or individual education plan (IEP)
- Contains information about the child's progress, attainment and social and emotional development
- Identifies the child's needs and how they will be addressed in school. Targets are set at each PEP meeting and reviewed at the next meeting
- Is an opportunity to ensure there is good communication and understanding between school and carer.

In Derby, we have developed an electronic version of the PEP which can be accessed securely online through Welfare Call. The designated teacher for children in care at the child's school and the social worker, have access to the ePEP on Welfare Call extranet.

A PEP is a meeting usually held at the school and includes:

- The young person
- The child's social worker
- A representative from the school
- The carer
- A Virtual School specialist education officer if required.

The PEP meeting is to make sure that everything is in place for the young person to achieve the educational outcomes of which they are capable. During the PEP, targets are set and the school can apply for Pupil Premium Plus to support the achievement of these targets.

How often does it take place?

PEP meetings in primary and secondary schools are usually held three times a year.

- Transition PEPs also take place when a school move is planned to ensure a transition plan is put in place
- Early years children have a transition to school PEP in the summer term
- Post-16 PEPs take place as part of the Pathway Plan

Who should attend?

The PEP is part of the child's care plan and the social worker holds responsibility for determining who should attend. Usually meetings are attended by carer(s), social worker, DT (or another adult from school). Where necessary, education improvement officers from Derby Virtual School will attend and chair PEPs. Other people may also be invited, such as fostering social workers, birth family, Looked After Children (LAC) nurses or speech and language therapists. The child/young person should attend the meeting if appropriate.

Whose views?

Everybody should have the opportunity to express their opinions about the education on offer, but it is most important that the views of the child are represented at the PEP. Before the meeting, Derby Virtual School sends a Pupil Views booklet to fill in so that his/her views can be discussed and addressed at the meeting.

It is also important for the carer to be able to represent the child's best interests and feel confident in supporting and working with school to ensure progress is being made. This will include:

- Supporting with homework
- Ensuring the PP+ is being spent effectively
- Helping raise aspirations by encouraging young people to access extra-curricular activities.

The school should also consider:

- If the child/young person has Special Educational Needs, it may wish to hold the PEP and IEP reviews together to minimise paperwork and time.
- If the child/young person moves to another school, the completed PEP, including the review documents, should be forwarded with the child's school file in the normal way to the receiving school.

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