



LEAGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

‘Striving for Excellence, Learning for Life’

Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children Policy

Ratified by Governors
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STATUTORY

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

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LEAGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

LOOKED AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

1. Introduction

The purpose of Leagrave Primary School's Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy is to ensure that looked after children attending the school are enabled to reach their potential and leave with the best possible life chances, through:

- personalised educational support
- monitoring systems and record keeping
- effective multi-agency working
- and staff awareness of the needs of looked after children.

A 'Looked After Child' is any child in the care of the Local Authority either through voluntary accommodation or through an Interim Care Order or Care Order. A 'Previously Looked After Child' is any child who has been looked after by the Local Authority and then immediately after care became subject to an adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order. For further details of this definition, please see Appendix A.

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").

At Leagrave Primary School we strive to give every child equal opportunity to achieve his/her best results in a safe and secure, inclusive environment. We recognise that looked after children and previously looked after children can be especially vulnerable and are sometimes 'at risk' of failure in the learning context. We are committed to do all that we can to promote the educational achievement and wellbeing of looked after children and previously looked after children, supporting them in reaching their potential. (Please see Appendix B for further information on 'Reasons for Underachievement in the LAC population').

2. Aims for our Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children (LAC & previously LAC)

Our aims in supporting our looked after children and previously looked after children at Leagrave Primary School are:

- To ensure all school policies and procedures are followed sensitively for LAC & previously LAC.
- To ensure that all LAC & previously LAC have access to a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum.
- To ensure that LAC & previously LAC pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities.
- To provide personalised learning and curriculum appropriate to the child's needs and ability.
- To ensure that wherever possible looked after children and previously looked after children are involved in decisions affecting their learning and the interventions to support their education.
- To ensure that success is facilitated and recognized.

- To provide appropriate support for social development within the child's peer group.
- To ensure that any emerging concerns are followed up in a timely way with skill and sensitivity (e.g. deterioration of behaviour, attendance or achievement), communicating effectively with carers, parents as appropriate, social workers and accessing support from outside agencies.
- To ensure that carers, social workers and parents (as appropriate) of looked after children and previously looked after children are involved and kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

3. Record keeping, communication and confidentiality

- Our Designated Teacher for LAC and previously LAC will coordinate record keeping for all identified children in school.
- To include Individual Education Plans, up to date progress and attainment records, PEPs and personalised information relating to the child's care context as appropriate, in each child's LAC file.
- To appropriately 'flag' the LAC status of a child in school information management systems, ensuring information and planning records are readily available as required.
- To ensure there is ready access to information and up to date contact details for carers, parents (where appropriate), and social worker and clear direction regarding responsibilities and permissions, for the class teacher and office staff to follow.
- All appropriate records will be forwarded to a 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.

4. Monitoring the progress of our Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

We aim:

- To ensure progress for LAC and previously LAC pupils in school is monitored and supported via best practice guided by school policies for teaching and learning.
- To assess the pupils' needs and attainment on entry and to track their progress, to ensure continuity of learning and achievement at least in line with national averages.
- To ensure that the statutory Personal Education Plan (PEP) processes are delivered within the required timescales, within 20 days of the pupil joining the school or entering care then reviewed according to the needs of the pupil, but at least every 6 months.
- To actively and sensitively obtain the child's views in preparation for the PEP (either the key worker or Designated Teacher for LAC).
- To involve the child as actively as possible in their Personal Education Plan, in the selection of appropriate targets and with decisions relating to school and learning.
- To include and sensitively share the views of the child, parents (as appropriate), and carer in the PEP document and at the PEP meeting. (Please see Appendix C – PEP Guidance, for more detail).
- To use the Pupil Premium effectively to overcome barriers to learning.

5. Staff and Governors' development and training

- All staff and governors are encouraged to develop professionally via reflective practice. We encourage ongoing engagement with relevant CPD to maintain and extend individual and team expertise in supporting looked after children to reach their potential.
- Our Designated Teacher makes particular efforts to develop good awareness and understanding of issues, latest guidance and developments associated with the looked after children context. The Designated Teacher disseminates knowledge and skills to colleagues in school as appropriate and necessary.

6. Admissions Policy

- The Governing Body supports Luton LA's approach to admissions giving looked after children the highest priority for admission to the identified school.
- Our school 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. We will give a positive welcome, a planned entry, offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help pupils settle in school, as appropriate.

7. Exclusions Policy

In accordance with The Revised Statutory Guidance on School Exclusions (2012) the Headteacher will, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding a looked after child. The school will work in close partnership with carers and local authority agencies to support any behavioural needs of our looked after children. In the event of an exclusion the school will work with the local authority to ensure alternative education provision for a looked after child, from the first day following the exclusion.

8. The Corporate Parent - Multi-agency working

Our school values the views of carers and parents. We firmly believe in developing strong partnerships with carers/ parents and residential care workers as well as external agencies to enable pupils to achieve their potential. We aim:

- To develop close relationships and work collaboratively to promote the learning and wellbeing of our looked after children, both in and out of school.
- To work closely with the Virtual Schools for LAC in Luton and other local authorities who are responsible for our LAC and Previously LAC, by attending Designated Teacher Network meetings, seeking advice and support on matters such as admissions, behaviour support, exclusions.
- To enhance partnerships through PEP meetings, other school liaison and consultation processes and informal day to day dialogue.
- To develop positive partnerships with external agencies, who make essential contributions to the support of looked after children.

Some of our key partners for looked after children include: -

LAC Team (Social Workers, Family Support Workers, Education Caseworkers); Virtual Schools for LAC; Educational Psychologists; SEN Team; Behaviour Support; Learning Support; Other Local Authority Services; Medical Officers; School Nurses; CAMH; Education Welfare Officers; Social Care, Residential Care Staff; Independent Review Officers; Advocacy Services.

9. The Role of the Class Teacher and Other School Staff

- To follow school procedures, policies and best practice in line with the school's mission and principles to support LAC and previously LAC in his/ her class/ area of responsibility.
- To keep the Designated Teacher informed about an identified child's progress
- To liaise closely with the Designated Teacher where a LAC or previously LAC is experiencing difficulties
- To have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC or previously LAC
- To ensure IEPs are up to date for all LAC and previously LAC where applicable
- To positively promote the raising of a LAC and previously LAC's self esteem
- To ensure any LAC and previously LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- To be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and previously LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- 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 Designated Teacher, other professionals, parents/carers and children as appropriate

10. The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

Direct support for the children

- To build relationships with all LAC and previously LAC in school, so they are aware of who the Designated Teacher for LAC and previously LAC is and the nature of his/ her role.
- To consult with each child as to his/ her wishes regarding the confidentiality of their LAC status.
- 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 him/ her settle.
- To arrange a mentor/ key worker to whom the child can regularly talk, particularly when the pupil is new to school (either the Designated Teacher for LAC and previously LAC or another suitable adult).
- To actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for LAC and previously LAC.
- To implement the school's policy for looked after children in partnership with the Headteacher and Governing Body, with the support of the whole school staff.

Record-keeping

- To ensure confidentiality for each LAC and previously LAC, sharing confidential and personal information on a 'need to know' basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual child.
- To ensure a timely transfer of information, where appropriate, when a LAC and previously LAC transfers to another educational placement.
- To ensure that all LAC have an up to date PEP that is used as a working, relevant document and that relevant parties are informed of the child's PEP targets.

Multi-agency working

- To take a proactive approach in identifying SEN and additional needs; working collaboratively with the LA
- To seek support from and work closely with agencies such as Behaviour Support Service, Education Psychology, SEN Assessment Team, CAMHS etc
- Working with LA partners to provide smooth transitions between key stages, schools and providers, including mid-phase transfers and appropriate alternative provision
- To ensure there is effective communication between Social Care and school on day to day matters as well as for invitations to meetings, parents evenings and other school events.
- To act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the Virtual School for LAC and outside agencies as appropriate.
- To ensure the availability of all relevant details/ records from school record-keeping systems as required for PEPs and by outside agencies.
- To ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENDCo and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN.
- To communicate effectively with the class teachers regarding important information from the social worker, as necessary.
- To convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties including being at risk of exclusion.
- To contribute an educational update in liaison with the class teacher to LAC Review meetings.
- To attend governor meetings as appropriate e.g. on matters of admission and exclusion.

Training

- To attend relevant CPD and Network meetings about LAC and previously LAC.
- To act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC and previously LAC.
- To report to the Governing body on LAC and previously LAC in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development (see appendix F).
- To work with the virtual schools to remain up to date on relevant issues relating to LAC and previously LAC.

11. The Role of the Headteacher

- To ensure that provision/ outcomes for looked after children and previously looked after children are specifically recorded or mentioned in:
 - School Development Plan
 - All appropriate school policies and procedures
 - Any issued reports on:
Behaviour; sanctions; exclusions; praise and rewards; public examinations and SATs; pupil progress in relation to targets and FFT; extra-curricular activities and successes; attendance; gifted and talented provision; admissions; school council; CPD for staff
- To provide an annual report on the provision for, and progress of, looked after children to the Governing Body each September
- To make it clear to staff and other school stakeholders that many looked after children require sensitivity and positive personalised planning above and beyond most peers, and that school policy clearly supports this approach
- To give the Designated Teacher 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
- To show a personal commitment and involvement with looked after children in the school
- To challenge any negative stereotypes of looked after children and previously looked after children, and to insist on the highest of expectations in terms of looked after children and previously looked after children achieving their potential
- To give looked after children the highest priority in terms of admissions to the school in the event of over subscription
- To provide CPD for staff on issues pertaining to looked after children and to ensure that the Designated Teacher attends regular network meetings and training
- To avoid fixed term or permanent exclusions for LAC, wherever possible (see Statutory Guidance on School Exclusions 2012 paragraphs 20, 22-24, 46 and 48.)

12. The Role of the Governing Body

- To use 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.
- 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 and previously LAC
- To ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced Designated Teacher for LAC and previously LAC is appointed and is working in line with the Statutory Guidance for Designated Teachers.
- To liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC and previously LAC are met
- To nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC and previously LAC to liaise as needed with the Designated Teacher
- To read and respond appropriately to reports from the Designated Teacher
- To ensure that the school's policies and procedures give LAC and previously LAC equal or prioritised access in respect of: admission to school, National Curriculum and examinations, out of school learning and extra-curricular activities.

- To review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC and previously LAC annually
- To ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to any exclusion meetings of LAC.

13. Internal and external contacts

Internal

Debbie Bastin – 01582 571951

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

Edel Gillespie – 01582 571951

Person who acts in the absence of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

Governor responsible for Looked After Children via the school – 01582 571951

External

LAC Social Care Team – Children's Services 01582 546000

APPENDIX A

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 looked after by another LA, but living in or attending a school in our LA.

Who are Previously Looked After Children?

The Department for Education define a Previously Looked After Child as those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order;
- or were adopted from ‘state care’ outside England and Wales. ‘State care’ is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

APPENDIX B

Reasons for underachievement in the LAC population

Many children become looked after because they have suffered abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect or a combination of these). Such experiences, particularly if occurring during a child's early years, can have a profoundly negative impact on the child's later development and educational achievement. Compounding this further are the experiences looked after children can have once removed from the original home setting such as:

- A high level of instability and disruption due to changes in care and school placements
- Poor involvement in extra-curricular activities (e.g. due to being picked up by taxis, commitments to attend contact with family members, living far away from the school).
- Inconsistent attention paid to out of school learning and homework (which may be due to long distances to school, changes in care placement).
- Low expectations from adults of looked after children to achieve.

All these factors can result in:

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

Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. To date, the outcomes achieved by looked after children across the UK have been unacceptably poor. (Include statistic?) However, as the Government has invested in the educational support for looked after children, it has also been shown that looked after children can overcome these challenges, and can leave school with good qualifications and therefore with much improved life chances.

School can provide a place of stability and normality for our looked after children, for whom life outside of school may be confusing, uncertain and challenging. 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 looked after child
- Listening skillfully to children, ensuring their involvement in decision-making
- Promoting inclusion and personalised approaches to learning
- Providing stability, continuity, consistency and building meaningful relationships across school and home contexts
- Taking our corporate parenting responsibilities seriously
- Intervening early to support success and solve difficulties
- Celebrating success, reinforcing achievements, providing timely incentives and rewards

APPENDIX C

PEP Guidance

1. The social worker will initiate the first PEP for a looked after child and will send out the invitations. This should be within 20 days of becoming looked after/ starting at school. The Designated Teacher should contact the Virtual School for LAC if no date has been arranged by the social worker.
2. The Designated Teacher (DT) receives a PEP form from the Virtual School for LAC administrator with the Personal Information Section completed by the social worker.
3. The DT completes the education section of the PEP in consultation with the class teacher, key worker, SENCo etc as applicable, prior to the meeting.
4. The DT forwards the carer's views section to the carer, for completion prior to the meeting.
5. The DT consults with the child using the views section of the PEP form and discusses how he/ she feels they are progressing with their current targets as well as any future targets they would like to work towards and support they would like.
6. The DT arranges for the class teacher/ key worker to attend the PEP meeting if necessary/appropriate.
7. The DT chairs the meeting and involves all present in contributing their thoughts on the child's progress as well as ideas for setting up further support and for new targets.
7. The DT ensures the targets are SMART in order to make the PEP an effective planning and monitoring tool.
8. A date is agreed at the PEP meeting for the following PEP to take place within six months. The date can be brought forward by the request of the school, carers or social worker, in order to further support and monitor the child.
9. The DT returns the completed PEP form to the Virtual School administrator within 10 days of the PEP meeting. The VS administrator distributes the PEP to the parties detailed on the form. The DT ensures a copy of the PEP is held on the child's LAC file, the class teacher's file and also distributed to the SENCo, as applicable.

APPENDIX D

Annual LAC Report to Governors

Reports to governors to include:

- The number of LAC on roll
- The number of LAC that have a Personal Education Plan
- Attainment and progress of each LAC
- Comparisons of attainment and progress to peers in school
- Interventions implemented to address gaps/ difficulties
- Attendance of LAC compared to general school population
- Attainment (SATs/ TAs) of LAC compared to peers
- The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- The destinations of LAC who leave the school

This policy is freely available to all staff, parents/ carers and service partners. It will form part of staff induction.

This policy was written by the designated teacher for LAC in consultation with staff, school governors and parents/carers. It will be reviewed annually or earlier if procedures change.