



Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children Policy

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1. Introduction

Looked after children are some of the most vulnerable learners in NET Academies. Most children enter care as a result of abuse or neglect and can often experience issues of attachment, loss and trauma. These outcomes often impact on learning and wellbeing. Nationally it is recognised that Looked after children do considerably less well than their peers, resulting in poor exam success and often leading to limited further education, employment and training opportunities.

NET Academies is committed to achieving improved educational outcomes for Looked after children (LAC) and previously Looked after children (PLAC), through providing access to a high quality and accessible curriculum, taking account of their additional needs.

Our school recognises that this is a whole school approach and all governors, staff and volunteers contribute to achieving the very best for Looked after children and previously LAC children.

NET Academies subscribes to the five priorities of the Essex Virtual School. These are;

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for Looked after children across all key stages
- Improve school attendance and reduce exclusion
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans
- Support school leadership to enhance a shared objective of improving life opportunities through education.
- Provide access to advice, support and intervention for children adopted, Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order to schools and families

1.1 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 can happen under a number of arrangements:

- a) Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20).
- b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order (section 31) or interim Care Order (section 38)
- c) Children who are subject to emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- d) 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).

1.2 Previously LAC children refers to those children that are no longer in care through:

- a) Adoption
- b) Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)
- c) Child Arrangement orders (CAO)

1.3 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

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Governing Body

The Governing body of NET Academies will:

Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Looked after children;

Ensure that staff has the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep Looked after children safe;

Ensure there is a designated teacher for Looked after children and previously LAC children, who is trained and has sufficient time to fulfil the role;

Ensure the admission criteria and practice prioritises Looked after children and previously LAC children in accordance with the Admissions Code of Practice 2014

Nominate a governor with responsibility for Looked after children and Previously LAC children who links with the Designated Teacher.

Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher which should include:

- The number of Looked after children and previously LAC children on roll
- Confirmation that each has an up to date high quality Personal Education Plan
- Information about their school attendance and exclusion rates in comparison to other pupils
- Their progress and attainment data
- Destinations for Looked after children and Previously LAC children that leave the school
- The use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus in accelerating progress

* All information collected and reported will be done anonymously for safeguarding reasons and to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of the children and young people concerned.

Ensure that the schools' policies and practice give equal access to:

- Admission to school
- The curriculum and access to take examinations both academic and vocational
- Support and participation in out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
- Work experience and careers guidance

Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for Looked after children and Previously LAC children.

2.2 Head of School / Headteacher

As the school leader the Head of School / Headteacher will:

- Identify a designated Teacher for Looked after children and previously LAC children, where possible ensuring that there is a deputy designated teacher in case of staff absence.
- Be knowledgeable about the Schools Admission Code in relation to school admissions

- Carefully consider any proposed exclusion, taking account of the vulnerability of a looked after child and the potential impact on their care arrangements and give due consideration to alternatives to exclusion wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of the designated Teacher to enable them to fulfil their role;
- Provide sufficient time to allow them to undertake the requirements of the role effectively.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor and take effective action regarding the admission, attendance and progress of Looked after children and previously LAC children.
- Ensure all staff receive relevant training opportunities and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

2.3 Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher of each academy will:

- Know all the details about each looked after child in relation to which Local Authority has care responsibilities, their legal status, care and contact arrangements, parental responsibility and the level of delegated authority given to carers.
- Provide a welcome and smooth introduction to the school for the child and their carer(s)
- Ensure the school safeguarding lead has details of the child's social worker and name of the Virtual School Head in the Local Authority that looks after the child or young person.
- Have a lead responsibility in promoting and raising the educational achievement of every looked after child on the school roll;
- Ensure their educational, personal social and emotional needs are prioritised;
- Take the lead responsibility for helping all school staff to understand the factors that can affect how Looked after children learn and achieve along with the impact of attachment and trauma.
- Have high expectations for the progress of Looked after children;
- Ensure every child has a high quality up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) and regularly monitor the progress of learning objectives.
- Maintain the overview of progress, attendance and provision including the effective use of Pupil Premium Plus, linking with the Virtual School as necessary.
- Ensure any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are addressed in accordance with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- Be an advocate for Looked after children and Previously LAC children
- Attend any relevant training and ensure training and CPD opportunities are regularly reviewed and records updated;
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals in relation to Looked after children and previously LAC children
- Ensure all Looked after children have a positive and considered integration or transition to or from school.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and reviewed regularly.
- Where a looked after child or previously LAC is experiencing difficulties in school, will communicate effectively with parents, carers and other professionals to plan targeted, effective intervention and support.

- Ensure the confidentiality of Looked after children and previously LAC children sharing confidential/personal information on a need to know basis only.
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to Looked after children and previously LAC children;
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and in particular school events i.e. school plays, open evenings and celebration events.
- Actively encourage and promote home learning and extra-curricular activities
- Ensure speedy transfer of information when a looked after child or previously LAC child transfers to another educational placement
- Contribute to Looked after children statutory reviews when required
- Provide regular reports (as set out above) to the Governing body regarding Looked after children and previously LAC children

2.4 School staff

Ensuring Looked after children and Previously LAC children do well and are supported requires a whole school approach. As a school we will:

- Have high expectations and aspirations for the educational achievements of Looked after children and previously LAC children;
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked after children and previously LAC.
- Ensure that any looked after child is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained within safeguarding requirements;
- Be familiar with the guidance on Looked after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support Personal Education Plans and review meetings.
- Ensure the designated Teacher is informed where a looked after child or previously LAC child is experiencing difficulties in class or within the school.
- Only use exclusion as a last resort in line with the exclusion guidance, being mindful that exclusion may place the care placement under duress and causing further disruption to care and education.
- Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
- Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour

3. Staff Development

The Designated Teacher should be trained for the role and should ensure access to ongoing professional development opportunities for the role through various opportunities. As a school we encourage staff to participate in training opportunities that will enable them to meet the needs of Looked after children and previously LAC children more effectively. Part of the Designated Teachers' role is to raise awareness of the issues and barriers to learning for these children within the whole school environment:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium plus funding

- Access training and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them
- Liaise with VSHs to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus funding and other support for these children, including encouraging parents to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium plus funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure other staff also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHCP) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

4. Personal Education Plans

Every looked after child must have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) that contributes to the overall care plan. Each Local Authority has its own approach to PEPs

Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs

Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs

Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs

If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP

Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place

During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils

5. Pupil Premium Plus

Each looked after child and previously LAC child attracts the Pupil Premium Plus grant (PPG+). The purpose of the grant is to reduce the difference in educational outcomes between these children and their peers. As a school we will carefully plan and regularly review the use and effectiveness of the PPG+ to ensure it is accelerating progress and meeting the needs of the looked after child as identified in their PEP. For previously LAC children we will target resources linked directly to the child's needs and communicate regularly with their parents and guardians.

6. Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
- Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans

- Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
- Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
- Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process

7. References

Children and Young Persons Act. The Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009

Children and Social Work Act 2017

The role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (Statutory Guidance for Governors) DfE 2009

Promoting the Education of Looked After Children (Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities) DfE 2018

Keeping Children Safe in Education. DfE 2022

Pupil Premium Plus and the role of the Virtual School Head DfE 2015

Education and Participation Strategy, Essex County Council 2013-2018

Pupil Premium Policy and Practice, Essex County Council

School Admissions Code -Statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeals panels. DfE 2022

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion. DfE 2022

8. Essex Virtual School Contact Details

Email: Virtual.School@essex.gov.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/virtualschool