

Policy for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children



Our Mission

'At SS John and Monica's we learn through the example of Jesus to love, respect, understand and value each other'

1. Purpose and commitment

SS John & Monica Catholic Primary School believes that, in partnership with the child's responsible local authority, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children's Trust where relevant, carers, families and Virtual Schools, we have a particular responsibility to safeguard, advocate for and promote the educational achievement of looked-after children (LAC) and previously looked-after children (PLAC).

We apply the corporate parenting principle: 'Would this be good enough for my child?' We aim to provide stability, high expectations, strong relationships, excellent teaching and timely support so that children in care and children who have previously been in care can flourish academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

2. Aims

Promote high aspirations, excellent attendance, engagement, progress and attainment.

Ensure each looked-after child has a high-quality, current Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is ambitious, child-centred and reviewed at least termly.

Use Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) effectively and evaluate its impact against clear PEP outcomes.

Prioritise educational stability and avoid unnecessary changes of school.

Ensure LAC and PLAC have equitable access to the full curriculum, enrichment, trips, clubs, leadership opportunities and pastoral support.

Recognise the potential impact of trauma, attachment disruption, loss, care experiences and disrupted education without lowering expectations.

Work closely with carers, social workers, Virtual Schools, parents/guardians of PLAC and other professionals.

Ensure the child's views, strengths, identity and aspirations are central to planning and decision-making.

3. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to current legislation and statutory/national guidance, including: Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.

Children and Young Persons Act 2008, including duties relating to the designated teacher and educational achievement of looked-after children.

Children and Social Work Act 2017, extending support duties to previously looked-after children.

Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.

DfE statutory guidance: The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

DfE statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

School Admissions Code 2021.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

School suspensions and permanent exclusions statutory guidance, updated July 2026.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance, statutory guidance updated July 2026.

Equality Act 2010 and SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

DfE Pupil Premium conditions of grant 2026–27.

Birmingham Virtual School PEP guidance and Pupil Premium Plus Policy 2026–2028.

4. Definitions

A looked-after child is a child who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority under the Children Act 1989. A previously looked-after child is a child who was looked after immediately before becoming subject to an adoption order, special

guardianship order or child arrangements order, including eligible children who were in state care outside England and Wales as defined in current legislation and funding guidance. The term 'Virtual School' refers to the Virtual School Head (VSH) and team responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children looked after by that local authority. For a child looked after by another authority, the school will work with that authority's Virtual School as well as Birmingham services where appropriate.

5. Designated Teacher

The Governing Board will appoint an appropriately qualified Designated Teacher (DT) to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. The current DT is Mrs M. Elliott. The DT will have sufficient time, authority, training and access to senior leadership to fulfil the role effectively.

Know which pupils are LAC and, where parents/guardians have disclosed status, PLAC, while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Act as a champion and advocate for pupils and ensure their educational needs remain visible in school improvement, curriculum, assessment, attendance, behaviour and pastoral systems.

Lead the school's contribution to each LAC PEP and ensure it is high quality, current and outcome-focused.

Lead PEP meetings once initiated by the social worker, ensuring the child's voice and carer's contribution are represented.

Ensure relevant staff understand the pupil's educational needs without sharing unnecessary information about care history.

Track attendance, attainment, progress, SEND, suspensions, pastoral needs, enrichment and transitions, responding rapidly to emerging concerns.

Work with the responsible Virtual School, social worker, carer, SENDCo, DSL, attendance lead and other professionals.

Ensure PP+ is linked to identified need, evidence-informed approaches and measurable outcomes.

Provide advice to parents/guardians of PLAC and liaise with Birmingham Virtual School PLAC support where appropriate.

Undertake appropriate continuing professional development and ensure staff receive relevant training.

Report at least annually to governors in a way that protects individual children's identities.

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) – Birmingham expectations

Every looked-after child must have a current PEP as part of their statutory care plan.

Birmingham Virtual School expects the PEP to be an evolving, high-quality education plan focused on enabling the child to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential.

Where a child enters care, the PEP should be initiated promptly and within the statutory timescale; Birmingham guidance states it should be started within 10 working days and available for the first statutory care review.

PEPs will be reviewed at least once each school term and more frequently when circumstances or educational needs require.

For Birmingham children in care, the school will use Birmingham's ePEP Online system and complete all school sections accurately and on time.

The DT will ensure the child has meaningful input. The child may contribute in writing, through pictures/other communication, via the ePEP or by attending the meeting.

Previous targets will be evaluated as achieved, not achieved or in progress. New targets will be specific, ambitious, measurable and linked to identified barriers and outcomes.

The PEP will include current attainment and progress, attendance, SEND, emotional wellbeing, aspirations, enrichment, transitions and other relevant educational information.

Detailed meeting discussion, agreed actions, responsible persons, timescales and the date of the next PEP will be recorded.

The school will respond promptly to any Birmingham Virtual School quality-assurance feedback or request for additional information.

The PEP is a shared responsibility between the school and the local authority that looks after the child. The school will not wait for a PEP meeting before putting necessary educational or pastoral support in place.

7. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

PP+ for looked-after children is managed by the Virtual School Head of the local authority that looks after the child. For Birmingham children in care, spending will comply with Birmingham Virtual School's PP+ Policy 2026–2028 and current DfE conditions of grant. PP+ requests and spending will be clearly linked to individual PEP targets and identified educational needs.

Interventions will be evidence-informed and selected to improve educational outcomes, including progress, attainment, attendance, engagement or readiness to learn.

The DT will discuss proposed use of funding through the PEP process and with the Virtual School as required.

The impact of funded provision will be evaluated at each PEP review and adjusted where it is not having the intended impact.

Clear records of allocation, expenditure, intervention and impact will be maintained.

Any pooling of Birmingham LAC PP+ will only take place with agreement from the relevant Virtual School Officer and in accordance with Birmingham's current PP+ policy.

For PLAC, PP+ is allocated directly to eligible schools through the pupil premium arrangements. The school will encourage eligible parents/guardians to disclose their child's status confidentially so eligibility can be recorded appropriately. PLAC funding will be used through the school's pupil premium strategy to address identified needs; an individual statutory PEP is not required for PLAC.

8. Attendance and absence

Looked-after and previously looked-after children will receive the same high expectations for attendance as all pupils, alongside rapid, sensitive and child-centred support where barriers emerge.

Attendance will be monitored closely by the DT and attendance lead, with patterns acted upon early.

Changes in attendance, punctuality or engagement will be considered in the context of safeguarding, placement stability, SEND, health, emotional wellbeing and care circumstances.

The responsible social worker, carer and Virtual School will be involved promptly where attendance is a concern.

Attendance information and agreed actions will be reflected in the PEP for LAC.

Support will be coordinated rather than duplicated, with the child's welfare and educational continuity central to decisions.

9. Admissions, school moves and educational stability

LAC and PLAC have the highest priority within school admission arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code. The school will cooperate with the local authority and Virtual School to secure timely admission and minimise gaps in education. Educational stability is particularly important for children in care. A change of school should not occur merely because a care placement changes. Where a move is being considered, the child's educational needs, existing relationships, progress, SEND, transport, safeguarding and views must be carefully considered by the responsible professionals.

Records will be transferred securely and promptly when a pupil changes school.

The DT will liaise directly with the receiving school's DT wherever possible.

Transitions into Reception, between year groups, to secondary school and following placement changes will be planned carefully.

Where a pupil joins the school mid-year, baseline information and immediate support needs will be established quickly.

10. Attainment, progress and curriculum

Being looked after or previously looked after will never be treated as a reason for lower expectations. Teachers remain responsible for high-quality teaching, assessment and adaptive provision.

Progress will be tracked against age-related expectations and the child's starting points. Underachievement or slowing progress will trigger timely assessment and evidence-informed intervention.

Children will have access to reading, mathematics and wider-curriculum support as required, while avoiding unnecessary withdrawal from high-quality classroom teaching.

More-able LAC/PLAC will receive appropriate challenge and opportunities to achieve greater depth.

Enrichment, cultural capital, sport, music, trips, residential and leadership opportunities will be actively promoted.

Homework and access to books, technology, equipment or quiet study space will be considered through the PEP where relevant.

11. SEND, health and emotional wellbeing

LAC are more likely than their peers to have SEND and may have overlapping educational, health, safeguarding and emotional needs. The DT, SENDCo and DSL will work closely together while avoiding assumptions that difficulties arise solely from a child's care experience.

Needs will be identified early and the graduated approach used where SEND is suspected. PEPs, SEN Support Plans, EHC plans and Individual Healthcare Plans will be aligned rather than operating as separate or conflicting plans.

Reasonable adjustments will be made under the Equality Act 2010.

Trauma-aware and attachment-aware approaches may inform practice where appropriate, but will not replace individual assessment or evidence-informed teaching.

Access to pastoral or therapeutic support will be considered where it supports educational engagement and wellbeing.

12. Behaviour, suspensions and permanent exclusion

The school will maintain high expectations while recognising that behaviour may communicate unmet need, trauma, SEND, instability or other barriers. Support and reasonable adjustments will be considered before difficulties escalate.

The DT will be involved at an early stage where a LAC/PLAC pupil is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion.

For LAC, the social worker and Virtual School will be contacted promptly and the PEP reviewed where appropriate.

Alternatives and additional support will be explored, including multi-agency planning, before permanent exclusion is considered.

Permanent exclusion will only be used in accordance with statutory guidance and as a last resort where the statutory test is met.

Reintegration following suspension will be carefully planned and support adjusted to reduce recurrence.

13. Safeguarding, confidentiality and information sharing

LAC and PLAC are not a homogeneous group and care status itself must not be treated as a safeguarding concern. However, some children may have increased vulnerabilities arising from their individual circumstances.

Information about care status will be shared only with staff who need it to support the child.

Safeguarding concerns will be reported immediately in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2026.

The DT and DSL will liaise closely while respecting the distinct responsibilities of each role. Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and securely with carers, social workers, Virtual Schools and other professionals where necessary.

Staff will avoid public references to a child's care status or arrangements and will handle family-related activities sensitively.

14. Pupil voice, identity and relationships

The child is at the centre of our approach. Adults will build stable, respectful relationships and create opportunities for children to express their views without requiring them to repeatedly retell difficult experiences.

Seek and record the child's views for the PEP in a way suited to their age and communication needs.

Involve the child in setting and reviewing educational targets.

Discuss aspirations, interests, strengths and future goals, not only difficulties.

Ensure curriculum activities involving family, identity or home life are handled sensitively.

Support participation in clubs, school responsibilities, faith life and wider opportunities.

Identify trusted adults the child can approach when they need help.

15. Previously looked-after children (PLAC)

The school's statutory responsibility to promote educational achievement extends to PLAC. Parents and guardians are not required to disclose PLAC status, but the school will explain sensitively why disclosure can enable additional support and funding.

The DT/designated person will provide advice and support to staff and parents/guardians. Support will be based on individual need rather than assumptions about adoption, special guardianship or care experience.

Where helpful and with appropriate parental involvement, the school may seek advice from Birmingham Virtual School's PLAC service.

An individual statutory PEP is not required for PLAC; Birmingham's Education Plan for PLAC or other school planning tools may be used where helpful.

The school will ensure the needs of PLAC are appropriately reflected in its pupil premium strategy.

16. Birmingham Virtual School expectations and partnership

For Birmingham children in care, the school will work proactively with Birmingham Virtual School and follow its current operational guidance.

Use ePEP Online accurately and meet required PEP completion and sign-off expectations.

Ensure PEP meetings are child-focused and include meaningful child and carer voice.

Review PEP targets and PP+ impact termly and set the next PEP date before completion/sign-off.

Respond to Virtual School quality assurance and advice within required timescales.

Engage with Birmingham Virtual School training and professional support for DTs and relevant staff.

Use the Birmingham Virtual School School Evaluation Framework where appropriate to evaluate strategic provision for LAC and PLAC.

Consult the Virtual School promptly regarding significant attendance, progress, placement, admission, exclusion or transition concerns.

17. Governing Board

The Governing Board will ensure the statutory DT arrangements are in place and will hold leaders to account for the educational experiences and outcomes of LAC and PLAC.

Birmingham Virtual School considers a named governor for LAC/PLAC to be good practice, although a separate named governor is not itself a statutory requirement.

Receive at least an annual anonymised report from the DT.
Consider attendance, progress, attainment, SEND, suspensions, enrichment and pupil premium impact while protecting confidentiality.
Ensure the DT has sufficient time, training and authority.
Challenge leaders on barriers, quality of provision and whether LAC/PLAC receive equitable access to opportunities.
Consider LAC/PLAC within school improvement, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, SEND and pupil premium oversight.

18. Staff responsibilities

All staff will maintain high expectations, provide a secure and inclusive learning environment, preserve confidentiality and alert the DT promptly to concerns about progress, attendance, wellbeing, behaviour, relationships or participation. Staff will undertake relevant training and follow agreed PEP strategies without unnecessarily identifying a pupil as looked after to others.

19. Monitoring and annual reporting

The DT will maintain appropriate confidential oversight of LAC/PLAC and report to governors at least annually. The report will be anonymised and should include, where numbers allow without identifying individuals, attendance, progress and attainment, PEP quality/timeliness, SEND, suspensions, enrichment, transitions, staff training, PP+ use and impact, and priorities for improvement.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if national legislation, statutory guidance or Birmingham Virtual School expectations change.

Appendix 1 – Designated Teacher termly checklist

Confirm LAC/PLAC information is current and securely held.
Check each LAC has a current PEP and next meeting date.
Complete/update ePEP sections and pupil voice before the meeting.
Review attendance, attainment, progress, SEND, wellbeing and enrichment.
Evaluate previous PEP targets and PP+ impact.
Agree ambitious new targets and evidence-informed provision.
Ensure proposed PP+ spend meets current Birmingham/DfE requirements.
Follow up actions and Virtual School quality-assurance feedback promptly.
Review transition or school-stability risks.
Escalate concerns early to the appropriate Virtual School/social worker.