

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Looked After Children Policy



“Doing our best for God”

Signed: *Karen Pearson* (Assistant Head/LAC Coordinator)

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Definition of a Looked After Child

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer.

Looked After Children (LAC) are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents or respite care.

Previously - Looked After Children (PLAC) are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

Reasons for being Looked After

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people enter care.

- The child's parents might have agreed to this - for example, if they are too unwell to look after their child or if their child has a disability and needs respite care.
- The child could be an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them.
- Children's services may have intervened because they felt the child was at significant risk of harm. If this is the case the child is usually the subject of a court-made legal order.

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. However local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family. (NSPCC)

Looked After Children may (or may not) have some or all the following issues which can make them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life chances:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others.
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends

- have behaviour issues.
- poor attachments to others.
- have a need to be very private.

School Commitment

Nationally, 'Looked After Children' (LAC) and 'Previously Looked After Children' (PLAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances.

75% of LAC and PLAC leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping LAC and PLAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

St Bernadette's recognises that LAC and PLAC can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and are committed to ensuring they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that LAC and PLAC may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances.

St Bernadette's is committed to enhancing the achievement and welfare of LAC and PLAC in the following ways:

- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children.
- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all Looked After children.
- All LAC and PLAC will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require.

Roles and Responsibilities

Head Teacher

- Identify, or be, the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC, whose role is set out below. It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of LAC and PLAC and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of LAC and PLAC to all parties involved.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- Ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used to good effect, for the benefit of all disadvantaged students and for the whole student body. This funding should not be assigned to individual students, but a cumulative amount to improve learning experiences and progress

Governing Body

- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of LAC and PLAC.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.
- Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Head teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of LAC and PLAC are recognised and met.
- Receive a report once a year setting out:
 - The number of LAC and PLAC students on the school's roll (if any).
 - Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
 - Their Teacher Assessment, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
 - The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
 - The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
 - The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

Designated Teacher

The role became statutory in September 2009 under the Children and Young Persons' Act 2008 (the 2008 Act). The Designated Teacher must be a qualified teacher or a member of staff. Ideally, s/he should be a senior member of staff who has enough status and experience to advise and provide training to school staff on issues relating to LAC. They need to be able to influence decisions about the teaching and learning of these children.

Our Designated Teacher will:

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker.
- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Ensure that each LAC and PLAC has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes.
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately reporting to carer/s as school policy.
- Co-ordinate any support for the LAC and PLAC that is necessary within school.
- Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.
- Encourage LAC and PLAC to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning.
- Ensure, as far as possible, attendance at planning and review meetings.
- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- Set up timely meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure the speedy transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school - to a new school.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- Track academic progress and target support appropriately.

Ensure that all written information is kept in a locked cupboard **including** any teacher/teaching assistant notes. No information regarding LAC/PLAC children must be taken off premises by any person.

- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life.
- Be aware that 60% of LAC and PLAC say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored (alongside SFSW).

Attend relevant training about LAC and produce a yearly report to governors produce **at least one** annual report to the governing body which should include: current progress, attendance and exclusions (if any), any concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the actions put in place are effective in addressing the learning needs of LAC, how the DT works in partnership with the LA, training undertaken for carrying out the role effectively. The report must not mention the children's names for confidentiality reasons.

Staff

All our staff will:

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC and PLAC, as for all students.
- Maintain LAC and PLAC confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable LAC and PLAC to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all LAC and PLAC.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of LAC and PLAC.
- Be aware that 60% of LAC and PLAC say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy.

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

All LAC must have a care plan drawn up and reviewed by Blackpool Local Authority that looks after them. The care plan must include a Personal Education Plan (PEP); this forms part of the child's official school record. The school and Blackpool Local Authority have a shared responsibility for making sure that the PEP is a useful document. There will be discussion about how the child, the school and the Local Authority can together ensure that through the content, implementation and review of the PEP, the child achieves well. These meetings will involve the young person concerned, the parents/carers, the social worker, a teacher and other professionals, as appropriate. If the child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, this should be reviewed annually and should, where possible, tie in with the PEP.

Confidentiality

Information on LAC and PLAC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know basis". The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Any notes pertaining to the LAC that may have been recorded **MUST** be left in school with the LAC Lead and under no circumstances be removed from the premises as this could be deemed as a breach of confidentiality.

Specific Support

One-to-one Tuition

All LAC are entitled to extra support as part of a government scheme; this includes one-to-one tuition in English and/or Maths even if they appear to be reaching expected levels of attainment. The school is committed to prioritising all LAC for this tuition.

Additional funding

LAC and PLAC are entitled to additional funding to help improve their outcomes and narrow the gap between their outcomes and those of their peers. Eligibility for such funding and the sums of money available will be determined

in line with government policy. The school is committed to ensuring effective use of this dedicated funding, where available, for all eligible LAC and PLAC on roll to provide additional, personalised support and ensure accelerated progress in order to improve outcomes. The appropriate use of allocated funding will be assessed by reference to the Personal Education Plan.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that LAC and PLAC enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips and other enrichment activities which they are eligible for and by allowing sufficient time to gain the necessary consent. Responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities lies with the social worker, although this is often delegated to carers. The person who may give permission will be identified at the first PEP meeting. If there is any uncertainty, we will always send consent forms to the social worker.