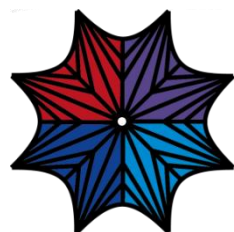


Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children Policy



South York
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Approved by:	Board of Trustees	Date: February 2023
Last reviewed on:	January 2023	
Next review due by:	September 2025	

Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and statutory responsibilities	2
3. Definitions	3
4. Roles and responsibilities	3
5. Personal Educational Plans (PEPs)	6
6. Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)	6
7. Training	7
8. Safeguarding	7
9. Student mental health	7
10. Suspensions and exclusions	8
11. Students with SEND	8
12. Information sharing	8
13. Monitoring and review	9

1. Aims

The Trust is committed to providing quality education for all our children and young people based on equality of opportunity, equitable practice and access as well as outcomes. We recognise that, nationally, the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children, as a group, remains a real concern and gaps in their learning and/or emotional impact of their experiences may have formed barriers to progress. The Trust intends that LAC and Previously LAC who attend the school make excellent educational progress and develop their cultural, moral and social understanding effectively.

2. Legislation and statutory responsibilities

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2017) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' Page 4 of 12
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Bullying and Discrimination Policy
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy

3. Definitions

“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.

“Previously-LAC” 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).

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.2 The Trust Board

The Trust board will:

- Ensure that Governors at all schools are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children & Previously Looked After Children
- Ensure each school has an overview of the needs and progress of Looked After Children & Previously Looked After Children
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of Looked After Children & Previously Looked After Children
- Ensure the school’s other policies and procedures support their needs.

4.1 The governing board

The governing board will:

- Ensure that a Designated Teacher for Looked After and previously Looked After Children is appointed who has the appropriate seniority, professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of Looked After and previously Looked After Children
- Monitor compliance with legal requirements and guidance to assess the effectiveness of the role of the designated teacher
- Receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher which delineates numbers of Looked after and previously Looked After Children on role, levels of progress made, data regarding attendance and exclusions, effectiveness of PEP's, identification of this cohort as gifted and talented and/or SEND, destinations of Looked after and previously Looked After Children, and how their teaching and learning needs are reflected in the school improvement plan.
- Protect the child's need for confidentiality.
- Appoint a named Governor to take a special interest in this area of the school's work

4.2 The Virtual School Head

The virtual school head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's LAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC.
- Working with the school to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP.
 - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC.
 - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
 - Ensure the education achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

4.3 The Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- To appoint a Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children who is a qualified teacher and who is either the Headteacher, the SENCO, or a Senior Leader who has sufficient authority to influence the provision for Looked after Children.
- To ensure the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out their responsibilities and receives the appropriate and adequate training.
- Overseeing the policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the governing board annually.

4.4 Designated Teacher for LAC and Previously LAC

The designated teacher for LAC and previously LAC is responsible for:

- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and previously-LAC at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Liaising with the SENCO to ensure all pupil needs are met.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP (Personal Education Plan).
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be used to support the child's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Working with the headteacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all LAC and previously-LAC.

4.5 Staff

All staff will:

- Have high expectations in regard to the achievement of LAC and Previously LAC pupils.
- Ensure that the individual needs of LAC and Previously LAC are met through quality, differentiated teaching.
- Be aware that LAC and Previously LAC have high rates of SEND and flag concerns to the SENCO and Designated Teacher
- Work proactively with the Designated Teacher to ensure that LAC and Previously LAC meet their targets and achieve, highlighting any barriers to learning, and inclusion at the earliest opportunity.

- Work to ensure the inclusion of LAC and Previously LAC within the school community, maintaining their confidentiality while also providing support with raising their self-esteem, and supporting their relationships with peers in line with the Anti Bullying Policy.

5. Personal Educational Plans (PEPs)

All LAC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.

- The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a student to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child. The school with other professionals and the child's carers will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances. All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the Designated Teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages. The PEP will address the student's full range of education and development needs, including:
 - On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
 - Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
 - Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
 - School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
 - Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
 - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
 - Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
 - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a LAC or previously-LAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment. Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the student.

6. Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)

Each school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers. The school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of LAC with their statutory care review. The school will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, suspensions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard LAC and previously-LAC.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child. The Designated Teacher for LAC and previously-LAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP. Through the Designated Teacher, the school will work with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.

The Designated Teacher will communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress. PP+ for previously-LAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. The school will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or previously-LAC, and according to their needs. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

The Designated Teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation. The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and previously-LAC.

7. Training

The Designated Teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and previously-LAC have received the appropriate training, this includes information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Suspensions and exclusions
- Homework
- GCSE options
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting students to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

8. Safeguarding

The Trust recognises that many LAC and previously-LAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

All staff in the Trust will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and previously-LAC as soon as possible.

Where a LAC or previously-LAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.

Each school's headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and previously-LAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or previously-LAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a LAC or previously-LAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

9. Student mental health

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated Teachers will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to

behaviour management and mental health. The Designated Teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The Trust understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and previously-LAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or previously-LAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be used on a termly basis to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about LAC and previously-LAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

Each school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and previously-LAC, and will always either be a member of, or be supported by the senior leadership team and could be the pastoral lead, SENCO, or DSL.

10. Suspensions and exclusions

Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy. The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid suspending or excluding any LAC.

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a LAC to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour and improving this behaviour. Suspension will only be used as a last resort, after the school and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent suspension, and any additional arrangements to support the student's education in the event of suspension. The school will inform carers that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid suspension.

Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behavioural Policy or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

11. Students with SEND

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews. The SENCO, class teacher, Designated Teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and previously-LAC with SEND are supported in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for LAC, e.g. where LAC are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident

12. Information sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the educational needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and previously LAC and how data will remain secure.
- How students and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual students is passed between authorities, departments and the school when students move.

13. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Trust Board, the school's Designated Teachers and Headteachers. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2024. All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.