

Brandwood Community School

Children Looked After & Previously Looked After Children Policy

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Children Looked After (CLA) & Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Policy

Designated Teacher for CLA & PLAC: Mrs Rachel Cameron

Deputy Designated Teacher for CLA & PLAC: Mrs Julie Jones

CLA & PLAC Governor: Mrs Nicola McGonagle

Introduction

The Governing Board is committed to providing a quality education for all its students based on equality of access, opportunities and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in the: statutory guidance on the duty on Local Authorities to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 (Updated Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of children who are looked after.

Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language (**Article 20 of the UNCRC**). Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care. The first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether they are adopted in the country where they were born, or if they are taken to live in another country (**Article 21 of the UNCRC**).

Under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014, a child is defined as 'looked after' if he or she is looked after by a Local Authority (LA) or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the LA. There are four main groups of children who are looked after:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20).
- Children who are the subjects of 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 can include children who are remanded to the LA or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term 'in care' applies only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are said to be 'accommodated' by the LA under section 20 of the Act.

Children may be looked after by:

- The LA where their school is situated
- Another LA but living in the same LA as their school is situated

This policy also refers to learners who were previously looked after by the Local Authority (PLAC) as referenced in the updated DfE guidance, 2018: 'The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children.'

Previously looked after children are those who:

- Are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements
- Were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales

Rationale

Legislation over the past four decades has slowly improved the outlook for children looked after or previously looked after, but there remains a significant gap between their prospects and those of other children. Their academic performance is usually lower, and they are over-represented in a range of vulnerable groups.

We monitor and track the progress of these children throughout the year. Interventions are put into place to ensure optimum progress is made by all and known barriers to learning are reduced or removed wherever

possible. Their personal development and emotional stability are equally important and as such is prioritised. Looked after children and previously looked after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional, and mental health issues than their peers. This can impact on their behaviour and education. The designated teacher will ensure they monitor the wellbeing of all looked after and previously looked after children and seek further advice and support from outside agencies where necessary.

Exclusions are a major issue for children who are looked after nationally; nearly 1% are permanently excluded from school as opposed to just over 0.1% of all children. As an inclusive school, we are especially mindful of children who are looked after or those who have been previously looked after because they are at risk of low attainment and exclusion. We try every means practical to keep these children in school, seeking professional advice as appropriate. The attendance and punctuality of all children who are looked after or previously looked after is monitored and tracked half termly in school and both are reported to other professionals at CLA Reviews and PEPs, which take place every six months.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- ◇ Prioritise and promote the educational achievement and welfare of children who are looked after or have been previously looked after
- ◇ Promote high levels of attendance for children who are looked after or have been previously looked after
- ◇ Monitor and support the health, medical needs and emotional well-being of children who are looked after or have been previously looked after
- ◇ Promote inclusion through challenging any negative attitudes
- ◇ Achieve stability and continuity
- ◇ Ensure all staff follow all policies and procedures for children who are looked after or have been previously looked after as for all children and receive relevant training as appropriate
- ◇ Ensure that children who are looked after or have been previously looked after have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that is, where appropriate, differentiated to meet their individual needs and ability
- ◇ Ensure that children who are looked after or have been previously looked after having prioritised access in respect of admission, out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
- ◇ Ensure that carers of children who are looked after are kept fully informed of their child's progress, attainment, and personal development
- ◇ Identify when early intervention and priority action are needed for children who are looked after or have been previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure that children who are looked after or have been previously looked after are involved, wherever practical, in decisions affecting their future provision
- ◇ Reduce suspensions and promote stability

Admissions

Children who are looked after or previously looked after are given the highest priority within school admission arrangements. The Governing Board endorses the council's policy for the admission of children who are looked after or previously looked after. Children who are looked after or previously looked after may be admitted into school at any time in the term. The school believes that it is vital that we provide each child who is looked after or previously looked after with a positive welcome and full support for their induction to help them settle and be part of our learning community.

Roles & Responsibilities

The School and Governing Board will:

- ◇ Ensure all members of staff and all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for children who are looked after or previously looked after to ensure their needs are met

- ◇ Ensure a member of the Leadership Team is Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC (Mrs Rachel Cameron) to take lead responsibility for dealing with all issues related to children who are looked after or previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure an additional member of the Leadership Team is Deputy Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC (Mrs Julie Jones) and is available to take lead responsibility in the absence of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC
- ◇ Ensure appropriate, regular training is provided for the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC and the Deputy Designated Teacher for CLA and PLAC
- ◇ Assess all children who are looked after or previously looked after on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of these children at regular intervals and report this information to governors termly
- ◇ Review the effective implementation of school policies and procedures to ensure they give children who are looked after or previously looked after equal access in respect of:
 - The National Curriculum and examinations
 - Out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
 - Additional educational support
- ◇ Avoid excluding children who are looked after or previously looked after, but, when necessary, exclude in line with the behaviour policy of the school, always being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement. In the event of an exclusion the Designated Teacher will be invited to the exclusion meeting of the child who is looked after or previously looked after
- ◇ Work closely with the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH) to ensure the best possible outcomes for all children who are looked after and seek advice or information, if necessary, regarding those who have been previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure the admissions criteria and practices prioritise children who are looked after or previously looked after in accordance with the DFE Admissions Code of Practice 2012 as updated in 2015 and again in 2018
- ◇ Ensure all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for the children who are looked after or previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure the Designated Teacher is empowered to champion children who are looked after or previously looked after, influence policy and practices across the school and ensure early intervention for any child experiencing difficulties
- ◇ Ensure the school and governors receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher and act on any issues it raises to support the designated teacher and maximise the impact of the role
- ◇ Ensure all children who are looked after have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is regularly reviewed and shared with all involved in the care and education of the child
- ◇ Ensure the LA is fully advised about the progress and attendance of all children who are looked after. This will be done in liaison with the VSH

The Designated Teacher will:

- ◇ Act as an advocate for children who are looked after or previously looked after within school
- ◇ Proactively identify ways in which the school can raise attainment of children who are looked after or previously looked after

- ◇ Work in partnership with Bolton VSH, and/or the VSH for those children who are from other LAs, providing termly progress data for children who are looked after
- ◇ Know all the children who have been previously looked after or who are looked after in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record keeping systems as required
- ◇ Attend relevant training about children who are looked after or previously looked after and disseminate information and good practice to other staff
- ◇ Be empowered to champion children who are looked after or previously looked after, influence policy and practices across the school and ensure early intervention for any of these children experiencing difficulties
- ◇ Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to children who are looked after or previously looked after including, where relevant;
 - Social Workers
 - Virtual School Head Teachers (VSH)
 - Educational Psychologists
 - Medical Professionals
 - School Nurses
 - Children’s Advocates
 - CAMHS
 - The Local Authority’s Post Adoption Support Team
- ◇ Ensure children who are looked after or previously looked after receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year, and offer additional support wherever possible
- ◇ Ensure all children who are looked after have an appropriate Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or entering care and that the young person contributes to the plan. Under the new SEND code of practice, some children who are looked after may also have an Education, Health, and Care Plan, which will involve the participation of the school
- ◇ Arrange and lead PEP review meetings. Retain PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and required intervals including end of year reviews
- ◇ Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the targets set out in the PEP
- ◇ Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a child who is looked after or previously looked after is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ◇ Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need-to-know basis
- ◇ Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to children who are looked after or previously looked after. Provide the Head Teacher and governors with regular reports on the attainment and achievement of children who are looked after and previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure the LA are fully advised about the progress and attendance of children who are looked after. This will be done in liaison with the VSH
- ◇ Undertake a thorough review and evaluation of the impact of the Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy

School staff will:

- ◇ Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of children who are looked after or previously looked after and positively promote raising the self-esteem of these children
- ◇ Keep the Designated Teacher fully informed about the progress of a child who is looked after or previously looked after.
- ◇ Ensure any child who is looked after or previously looked after is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- ◇ Follow school procedures, be familiar with the CLA and PLAC policy and guidance on children who are looked after or previously looked after and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- ◇ Keep appropriate records and discuss with the Designated Teacher where a child who is looked after or previously looked after is experiencing difficulties

The Local Authority (LA) will:

- ◇ Provide a VSH who has the responsibility for championing the education of children who are looked after and provide information and advice for those previously looked after
- ◇ Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for children who are looked after or previously looked after
- ◇ Ensure that the education for children who are looked after or previously looked after is as good as that provided for every other child
- ◇ Ensure that children who are looked after or previously looked after receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ◇ Ensure that every child who is looked after has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming into Bolton from another authority
- ◇ Ensure that each child who is looked after has a PEP according to national guidance and every school has a Designated Teacher for children who are looked after
- ◇ Provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ◇ Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special educational needs of children who are looked after or previously looked after and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs

The Role of the Virtual School Head Teacher (VSH)

- ◇ The VSH ensures that schools understand the role of the LA as corporate parent and its duty to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after. The VSH must also ensure that a culture is promoted by the LA that takes account of the views of the child according to age and understanding in identifying and meeting their educational needs
- ◇ In arranging a school placement for a child who is looked after, a school will be sought that is best suited to the child's individual needs. Equally, since there is a likelihood that the child may move school during their educational careers, the VSH must ensure that there is an informed decision about their choice of school that will best meet their needs. Schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding should be prioritised for children who are looked after and need a new school. The VSH will ensure that these children are given the highest priority within school admission arrangements and as excepted children they have special rights in relation to infant class size regulations

- ◇ School Governing Boards should be reminded by the VSH of the importance of specific professional development for senior leaders and designated teachers in supported the achievement of children who are looked after
- ◇ The VSH have a quality assurance role in relation to personal education plans (PEPs). The VSH will ensure that PEPs are reviewed each school term, to keep abreast of the educational progress of the child and to ensure that this information is fed into the next care plan review
- ◇ An up-to-date list of Designated Teachers for CLA should be maintained by the VSH to assist with internal communications both within their home LA but also to assist other authorities that have placed children in the home authority
- ◇ The VSH will oversee planning for spending the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) to ensure the money is being used as effectively as possible based on the individual needs and abilities of each child that is looked after
- ◇ For previously looked after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to support designated teacher and their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible

Pupil Premium Plus

- ◇ All children looked after who have been in care for at least one day and are aged 4 to 15 on 31st August, as recorded in the latest child looked after data return, are eligible for the pupil premium grant plus (PPG+)
- ◇ For the financial year 2024-2025, the PPG+ for children who are looked after is £2,570. Schools will also receive £2,570 for each child who has left LA care because of adoption, a special guardianship, child arrangements order or a residence order (PLAC)
- ◇ The LA will allocate the PPG+ for each eligible child who is looked after or previously looked after
- ◇ The LA can decide whether to make this payment on an annual or a termly basis
- ◇ The school decides how the PPG+ is spent based on the individual needs of each child, this is reviewed by the LA and VH

SEND

- ◇ Nationally over 70% of children who are looked after have some form of SEND. Under the new SEND Code of Practice 2014 (Updated 2015), a significant proportion of these children will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). An annual review will take place for all children who are looked after with an EHCP to look at all aspects of the LEHCP
- ◇ LAs will have responsibilities for these children and will act as a 'corporate parent', which means that everyone working for the LA has a shared responsibility for safeguarding and promoting their welfare, including meeting all identified additional needs
- ◇ Some children may have undiagnosed special needs when they start to be looked after. As part of the PEP process, their current needs will be identified and addressed, and support put in place to allow them to make as much progress as possible
- ◇ The Children and Families Act 2014 requires every LA to have a VSH who leads a virtual school team which tracks the progress of children who are looked after by the LA as if they attended a single school. The Designated Teacher and school SENDCos work closely with the VSH to ensure that the LA has effective processes in place for meeting the SEND of children who are looked after
- ◇ For previously looked after children, the SENDCo, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All children who are looked after have a PEP which is part of the child's care plan or detention placement plan that is reviewed every term. The PEP must include the contact details of the VSH for the LA that looks after the child. The Designated Teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the pupil's progress towards education floor standards is monitored. The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for each child to enable them to make expected progress and fulfil their potential. This includes:

- ◇ Access to a nursery or other high quality early years provision
- ◇ Continuous 'catch up' support for those who have fallen behind with schoolwork
- ◇ Provision of immediate support if a child is not in school
- ◇ Transition support where needed
- ◇ Support to enable the child to meet short- and long-term academic achievements and aspirations
- ◇ Out of hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests
- ◇ Appropriate in-school and extra-curricular targets for the child because the PEP must be concerned with education in its broadest sense
- ◇ Financial help to ensure equality of access to extra-curricular provision and activities

Parents, Carers & Social Workers

- ◇ The school believes firmly in developing a strong partnership with parents, carers and social workers to enable children who are looked after to achieve their potential and aid their future economic well-being. Review and PEP meetings can be used to further this collaboration and partnership
- ◇ Parents, carers and social workers of children who are looked after are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment during PEP and review meetings and twice-yearly parent and carer evenings
- ◇ The school also recognises the important contribution that external support services make in supporting children who are looked after or previously looked after

Record Keeping

The Designated Teacher knows all the children who are looked after or have been previously looked after in school and has access to their relevant contact details, including parents, carers, VSH and allocated social workers. The status of children who are looked after or have been previously looked after is identified within the school information systems so that information is readily available to all class teachers and relevant staff. Children who are looked after or previously looked after are identified as a vulnerable group when tracking, monitoring and reporting on attainment and progress. PEPs, annual review minutes along with any referrals, appointments or feedback from external agencies are logged on CPOMS.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier, if necessary, by the Pupil Inclusion and Community Governor Committee.

Additional Information

A change in legislation means that as of April 2018 there was a shift of funding to support the education of looked after and previously looked after children (PLAC). The 'looked after children' factor was removed from the Local Authority funding formulae and is now purely funded through an increased pupil premium plus (going directly to schools).

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