



Children that are looked after and previously looked after policy

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| Date of last review: | 2024 | Review period: | 2 Yearly |
| Date of next review: | 2026 | Written by: | Alison Hopkins |
| Type of policy: | Non- Statutory | Committee: | |
| Designated Teacher- Lauren Gillam | | Designated Governor- Kelly Yapp | |

Introduction

Children that are looked after/Children in Care

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after if s/he is in the care of or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by, a local authority. The term 'Child that is looked after' refers to:

- (i) Children accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- (ii) Children subject to a care order (section 31.1) or interim care order (section 38)
- (iii) Children who are subject to emergency orders for the protection of the child (section 44)

It is worth noting that some local authorities refer to pupils that are looked after as 'Children in Care'

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. A child on a care order, for example, could be living:

- with foster carers.
- in a children's home.
- with relatives or friends.
- with one or both parents under supervision by social care.
- with prospective adoptive parents (but still retain Looked After legal status until final adoption order is made by the courts)

Previously Looked After Children

Previously Looked After Children are those who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989) because:

- they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State Care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Background

We recognise that many Previously Looked After and Children That Are Looked After have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. The gaps in their learning, and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, as well as their learning disabilities, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of any fragmented educational experience needs careful assessment and planning.

We understand that all Previously Looked After and Children that are looked after will have suffered significant loss and trauma and may have experienced abuse and/or neglect. This is likely to have considerable impact on their ability to access the curriculum. They are prioritised at Wyre Forest School for additional support to manage their learning and behaviour, where needed.

We also recognise that whilst in care, some events can retrigger traumatic experiences (e.g. a court hearing, contact with family or friends, or an aspect of the curriculum that cannot be anticipated). This can affect behaviour and may affect progress, even for pupils who had previously been settled and 'on track'. Staff working with the child will need to use additional strategies, specific to that child's needs and all staff need to be aware of the impact that attachment issues will bring to the young person.

Aims

To support our Previously Looked After and Children that are Looked After and give them access to every opportunity to continually achieve and enjoy their learning.

To recognise and support the specific challenges faced by Previously Looked After and Children that are Looked After, while continuing to foster a culture of high expectations of learning, behaviour and progress.

To fulfil our school's role as corporate parents in promoting and supporting the educational achievement of all Previously Looked After and Children that are looked after by asking the question 'Would this be good enough for any pupil at Wyre Forest School?'

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of the School Governing Body

Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 ("the 2008 Act") places a duty on the governing body of maintained schools to designate a member of staff (the 'designated teacher') as having responsibility to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children who are registered pupils at the school. This includes those aged between 16 and 18.

Under section 20 (2) the governing body must ensure that the designated teacher (DT) undertakes appropriate training.

The governing body will:

Ensure that there is a qualified and experienced teacher named as the Designated Teacher (DT) for Looked After Children, and that s/he is enabled to carry out his/her responsibilities. Ensure that they have access to appropriate training, and have sufficient time to carry out duties and to receive support.

Support the Headteacher, DT and other members of staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met.

It is recommended that each school has a named school governor for Looked After Children.

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children that are looked after in the School.

The Role of the Designated Teacher is:

- To promote a culture in which children that are looked after believe they can succeed, and aspire to further training, education and higher education, and/or employment.
- To maintain an up-to-date register of children that are looked after and inform colleagues on a need-to-know basis. Sensitivity and confidentiality are critical.
- To attend relevant training so that they are aware of statutory responsibilities and procedures for these pupils.
- Ensure that they keep the school up to date with current legislation and its implications for the school in respect of Children that are looked after.
- To understand the impact of trauma, loss and separation and how this can affect behaviour, including how attachment styles can affect their learning.
- To co-ordinate/deliver training to staff, and governors so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantage affecting many children that are looked after and young people. To understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome any disadvantages, and the need to promote the involvement of children that are looked after in all aspects of life at WFS
- Report to the Governing Body annually on the performance of the children that are looked after who are on the roll of the school.
- To ensure all teachers know when there is a child that is looked after in their class, and what that child's specific needs are.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, social care colleagues and other Children's Services professionals who support the child.

- To be the first point of contact for other professionals working with children that are looked after, and ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies. To ensure in conjunction with the social worker, that all relevant education and care information is available at the point of admission into the school so that appropriate placement can occur. Where a child leaves the school, to pass the child's records to the social worker if possible, so as to avoid admission delays with the new school. Where difficulties arise in obtaining information from a previous school, the Integrated Service for Looked After Children (ISL) can help to obtain this information.
- To monitor the educational progress of all children that are looked after in order to inform the school's development plan. To ensure that all have targets which although realistic are also challenging. The targets should reflect the high expectations we hold for children that are looked after.
- Ensure the child, carer(s), social worker and other relevant parties receive early notification of school-based meetings, parents evenings and other events and that communication, both written and verbal, remains regular and positive.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, repeated or sustained absence, internal truancy or risk of exclusion.
- To identify with teachers the student's strengths and gaps in learning, and any barriers to learning. This should form the basis of the PEP, or the refinement of it.
- To ensure the young person has an up-to-date personal education plan (PEP). If not, then to arrange the meeting in partnership with the child's social worker. The DT will ensure that the school has updated information on the child's attainment, progress and educational needs, irregardless of whether a PEP meeting has been arranged.
- To ensure that the actions identified in the plan are implemented and reviewed termly.
- To facilitate the completion of the school and pupil section of the PEP.
- Ensure that someone is available to attend CLA Reviews on each child/young person and/or always prepares a written report which promotes the continuity and stability of their education.
- To supervise admission of new children that are looked after and ensure appropriate induction and transition support into school.
- Ensure that each pupil in care has trusted members of staff they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher but should be based on the child's own wishes. Members of staff who take on this role may themselves need some emotional support at times, by an appropriate member of staff. They should also be alert to any child protection issues, any disclosures that pupils may make, and know what action to take. They should link closely therefore with the DSL

- Ensure that if/when the child transfers to another school, all relevant information is forwarded to the receiving school as with minimal delay.
- If a child that is looked after on roll moves educational setting, the DT will advise the social worker about the likely impact of a move on the child's education and what should be done to minimise this.
- To contact/liaise with the virtual school if a child that is looked after requires extra support.
- If a pupil transfers out of care, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed. The Designated Teacher will liaise with/hand-over monitoring and support to other staff members, in order to ensure that the child's needs continue to be met.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

The school staff will:

- Ensure any child in care is sensitively supported and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievements of Previously Looked After and Children that are Looked After
- Respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of Personal Education Plans and other documentation needed as part of review meetings.
- Contribute to the designated teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate.
- Attend CLA Reviews as a professional with direct understanding of the child/young person's educational needs, where appropriate, and as indicated by the Designated Teacher.
- Be aware of challenging behaviours that can result from trauma. Adapt behaviour management strategies in response to any challenging behaviour resulting from re-triggering of trauma, and seek advice from the designated teacher, as needed.
- Provide a supportive climate in school, enabling children in care to achieve stability.
- As a corporate parent, make additional efforts to communicate to pupils that are looked after our belief in their ability to achieve.

All Governors and Staff will:

- Support the local authority in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of children that are looked after.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER AND CHILD THAT IS LOOKED AFTER

Confidentiality

The designated teacher will decide, in conjunction with relevant local authority staff, their approach to sharing sensitive information about an individual child. This is not just about keeping records but also about a child's identity in school. Some pupils that are looked after may be reluctant for information to be known, as they may feel stigmatised or different because they do not live with their families. For other children there will be official requirements that their status is not identified.

The DT will decide, with LA staff, the extent to which information will be shared, and with which staff, including Teaching Assistants, on a case-by-case basis. It may not be necessary to share details of the child's traumatic past, where an understanding can be reached about the child's current needs and strategies to support these. Some cases may require selected staff to understand how specific previous experiences are impacting on current behaviour.

Where information is shared by selected staff, the young person is made aware of this, although how this is shared with them will depend on their age, understanding and learning disabilities.

Children Looked After That Are Placed by Other Authorities

Pupils placed in care placements outside their originating authority, and especially those who are a long way from home, are especially vulnerable. It is the responsibility of the originating authority to ensure that the identified educational needs of any child placed in another authority area will be effectively met in the proposed placement before it is agreed.

School and the social worker should ensure that the Personal Education Plan is completed within 20 school days of the young person starting school, and that this is completed with the child and their carer. Where additional support is identified by the school, record this on the personal education plan.

However, where there are delays, school will endeavour to gain information from the previous school. Good practice would be to assess educational needs promptly and to plan for additional support where needed. This can occur before a PEP meeting and in readiness for the PEP.

In Worcestershire the Virtual School are able to contact other LAs on behalf of the school to request support from them for the children that are looked after.

Private Fostering

A child is in private fostering if they live with friends/neighbours or relatives who are one step removed, (e.g. second cousin). The arrangement must exist for longer than 28 days.

INCLUDING PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER AND CHILDREN THAT ARE LOOKED AFTER

Attendance

It is vital that our pupils that are looked after have good attendance, as a means to improve their educational outcomes. School closely monitors the attendance of all Looked After Children on roll. Where attendance of a child that is looked after is a cause for concern, the class teacher will log this on CPOMS and alert the Designated Teacher and DSL and DT any concerns with attendance. Typically, the class teacher and DT will problem-solve barriers to attendance with the carer (and pupil where appropriate) in a meeting at the earliest opportunity. If concerns continue, these will be raised with the social worker and virtual school learning advocate, and a multi-agency approach to improving attendance and engagement in learning will be planned and recorded as part of the PEP. Holistic needs and barriers to learning should be addressed by identified professionals within a specified time frame on a case-by-case basis

Suspensions, Exclusions and Alternative Provision

Where a significant intervention/response is sought for a child that is looked after, steps will need to be taken to minimise the impact of previous multiple rejections that CLA have typically received, and also to ensure that transitions are managed and planned supportively. The aim of such move is usually to encourage behavioural change, provide a fresh start, whilst understanding that a change is likely to have a deeper emotional impact on a child that is looked after than other pupils. The impact of trauma, separation and loss on all children that are looked after should be considered as part of an assessment of need, when planning significant interventions such as managed moves. We recognise that any move is often seen as another rejection by a child that is looked after and the consequences of this can be considerable and long term. These measures are only considered when all other options and strategies have been exhausted.

The Personal Education Plan (PEPs)

Personal Education Plans for Looked After Children are statutory planning meetings which should occur within 20 school days of a child becoming looked after and reviewed at least annually. Our practice is to update PEPs termly with latest tracking information. A current PEP is in evidence at every statutory review of the child's care plan, and updated if significant changes occur (e.g. change in school place, care placement). PEPs are significant vehicles for celebrating the achievements of young people and effecting change. Education targets and strategies set through the PEP will be known by teaching staff.

The young person should be involved in the PEP wherever possible and/or appropriate to their learning needs.

The PEP would encompass all the additional educational plans, such as those described under part time and alternative provision. Worcestershire Virtual Schools team support the PEP writing process and our advocate is Anne Griffin

Communication

The importance of communication for Previously Looked After pupils and pupils that are looked after cannot be underestimated. WFS staff must prioritise communication with carers and other relevant agencies. This communication will focus on ensuring that this cohort of pupils receive consistent messages from all adults involved in their care and reduce the increase in anxiety that inconsistent and poorly planned approaches bring.

Ensuring the Progress of Previously Looked After and Children that are Looked After at WFS

Wyre Forest School are proud of the achievements and progress of all our pupils but recognise the importance of rigorous monitoring of Previously Looked After and Children that are looked after to ensure progress is in line with peers. Our school Individual Provision Plan supports the focus on progress additional to the traditional school curriculum model, e.g. emotional, physical, communication and we use the following strategies to ensure previously looked after and looked after pupils are monitored;

| Strategy | Statutory or school based | How often? |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| CLA review | Statutory | Every 6 months |
| PEP review | Statutory | Termly |
| Progress / behaviour / attendance reports to governors | School based | Termly |
| Parent / carer evenings | School based | Three times per year |
| Mid-term PEP updates | School based | Half termly (to coincide with PEP dates) |
| Progress data and pupil progress meetings | School based | Twice per year |
| DT regular update (check in with teachers of Previously LAC and CLA pupils) | School based | Half Termly |

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as to its effective implementation on a bi-annual basis and updated as appropriate.