



St Paul's Church of England Primary School Looked After Children Policy

Adopted by: Children, Families and Communities

On: 8th February 2017

Review: Spring 2018

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Mrs Corinne Lee

Designated Governor for Looked After Children: Mrs Sara Ward

Statement of purpose:

Looked After Children (LAC) are potentially a very vulnerable group. Their previous experience of education may be fragmented and include periods of time with little or no education input. They may have attended a number of different schools over a relatively short period of time. *The gaps in their learning – and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences – are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. (The Role and Responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children, dcsf, 2009).*

The purpose of this policy is to recognise the potential difficulties facing looked after children and those caring for them and to put in place structures to promote the best educational and emotional outcomes for them.

We believe that all governors and staff have a role to play in supporting and promoting the interests of LAC children.

Definition of Looked After Children

In the 2009 Statutory Guidance (*The Role and Responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children, dcsf, 2009*) looked after children are defined as follow:

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They include the following:

- (i) children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20);
- (ii) children who are the subject of a care order (section 31(1)) or interim care order (section 38); and
- (iii) children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child (section 44).

What is the difference between being “accommodated” and being on a care order?

Looked after children are “accommodated” by the local authority under section 20 when:

- there is no person who has parental responsibility for them;
- the child is lost or abandoned;
- the person who has been caring for him or her is prevented from providing him or her with suitable accommodation or care.

The local authority is also empowered to provide accommodation for any child if it will safeguard or promote his or her welfare.

The majority of children who are being accommodated by the local authority will be doing so with the full agreement of those who have parental responsibility for them. In practice, children are accommodated because there are particularly difficult family circumstances which mean that they cannot be cared for in their normal family environment. While they are accommodated, the child’s parents [or guardians] retain full parental responsibility and may at any time remove them from local authority provided accommodation.

Some looked after children are the subject of a care order. If the local authority believes that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer “significant harm” if s/he remains with his or her birth family then they can apply to the courts for a care order to assume parental responsibility for the child. While it is possible that children on care orders live with their parents or other family members if that is what the courts decide, most will live with foster carers.

Our Aims:

- i) To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
- ii) To support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential, enjoy learning and take as full a part as possible in all school activities.
- iii) To ensure that school policies and procedures support the interests of LAC children and are followed for LAC as for all children.
- iv) To work with the Virtual School and ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of their child’s progress and attainment.
- v) To fulfil our schools’ role as corporate parents to promote and support the education of our Looked After Children, by asking the question, ‘Would this be good enough for my child?’

Our school’s approach to supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education
- Promoting attendance

- Targeting support
- Having high expectations
- Promoting inclusion
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Early intervention and priority action
- Listening to children
- Promoting health and well-being
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals

Responsibilities

The Governing Body & Headteacher

- To appoint a suitably qualified and significant teacher in the role of designated teacher for looked after children;
- To ensure that an appropriate level of support is available to the designated teacher for looked after children in order to fulfil their role;
- In conjunction with the headteacher, ensure that, through their training and development, the designated teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of looked after children;
- Make sure that the designated teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting looks after children to achieve;
- In conjunction with the headteacher, monitor how well the role of designated teacher is working;
- As a minimum, receive an annual report from the designated teacher to make overall judgements about the designated teacher role in the context of wider school planning;
- Make sure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about the provision for, and attainment of, looked after children on the school's roll on a regular basis throughout the school year.

The Designated Teacher for looked after children

The designated teacher for looked after children should be a qualified teacher with appropriate experience. At St Paul's school, the role rests with the Inclusion Coordinator. The senior leader who champions LAC children is the headteacher. The Inclusion Coordinator and headteacher meet weekly.

The responsibilities of the designated teacher include:

- Having lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how looked after children learn and achieve;
- Ensure effective communication of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and its actions to all key staff involved in delivery;

- have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children but the teacher should not allow this to be an excuse for lowering expectations of what a child is capable of achieving;
- understand how important it is to see looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogenous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about the child's looked after status;
- having lead responsibility for developing each LAC child's Personal Education Plan, in conjunction with other relevant professionals both within and outside the school, as well as with carers and the child themselves (in an age appropriate manner)
- appreciate the central importance of the child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential;
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, virtual school heads in local authorities and how education – and the functions of the PEP – fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child;
- promote the educational achievement of looked after pupils;
- Liaise with the headteacher to ensure that LAC attainment, progress and social/emotional development is effective;
- Inform governors of the schools actions and outcomes for LAC pupils through an annual report to the FGB in the Autumn term (summary of previous year and plans for current year) and meet termly with the designated LAC governor

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The Personal Education Plan is one of a number of statutory documents used to support the care and development of looked after children. The local authority must draw up a care plan for each looked after child that they look after. The care plan will identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to his or her emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills. The PEP forms part of the care plan, alongside a health plan – both of these are drawn up with relevant professionals.

The designated teacher for looked after children is responsible for developing the PEP for LAC children on the roll at our school.

The PEP forms part of the LAC child's school record. Where an LAC child moves school, the designated teacher must forward the PEP alongside the other school records for the LAC child to the new school, if known and the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.

The PEP is an essential document to provide a 'collective memory' for the large number of professionals who will work to support an LAC child. The school and local authority have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document.

Receiving the PEP template

When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after, the local authority which looks after him or her must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the PEP. This should be pre-populated with basic information (listed in *The Role and Responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children*, dcsf, 2009, pg 14).

Children who are already LAC when they join the school should already have a PEP. This should be transferred to our school by the previous school/LA. If the local authority has not provided the most recent PEP, the designated teacher should make sure that this is followed up with the authority which looks after the child, through the virtual school headteacher.

What should the school do with the PEP?

- The designated teacher should make sure his or her specific educational needs are assessed without delay, whenever they join in the school year;
- The designated teacher should work closely with other teachers as necessary to identify the young person's strengths and weaknesses and any barriers to learning. The assessment of needs should form the basis for the development of or – if it already exists – the review and refinement of the PEP.
- The designated teacher will lead on the development and implementation of the PEP in the school;
- The PEP is not written solely by the designated teacher. The class teacher and others in the school will also contribute to the PEP.
- The designated teacher should ensure that the PEP:
 - Identifies developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences;
 - Sets short and long term targets agreed in partnership with the child and carer where appropriate;
 - Is a record of planned actions;
 - Includes information on how the progress of the child is to be rigorously monitored;

- records details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure that personal education targets are met;
- says what will happen or is already happening to put in place any additional support which may be required;
- sets out how a child's aspiration and self confidence and ambition is being nurtured;
- is a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities;
- provides information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works well for him/her.
- has clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions in the plan happen.

Some LAC pupils may have an Educational Health Care Plan (for special needs). Where this is the case, the PEP should include relevant information, but doesn't need to duplicate the EHCP information in full.

There are statutory review timescales for PEPs. These are set out in *The Role and Responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children, pg 16.*

Transferring the PEP

The designated teacher has a key role in helping looked after children make a smooth transition to their next school or college. The designated teacher should make sure that arrangements are in place to achieve speedy transfer of the looked after child's school records to a new school and that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most up-to-date version of the PEP.