

The Avenue Primary School

Looked After Children (LAC) Policy



Policy Lead	Jayne Gibson
Date implemented	Jan 2017
Date reviewed	Jan 2023
Next review date	Jan 2025

1. Definition

- The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child's welfare).
- Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.
- The term 'looked after', which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term "in public care", which has been adopted by the DfES in their publication, 'The Education of Young People in Public Care (2010)'.

2. Legal Framework

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children. In September 2018 the duties were extended to children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship and child arrangement orders. In this policy, the term 'looked after' will also include those children who were previously looked after. The term 'currently looked after' will refer to those children currently under the care of the local authority.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education for all looked after children
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked after children
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked after children
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children
- Develop systems of communications and protocols
- Promote the attendance of looked after children

3. Rationale

- Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children.
- Schools play a major part in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation.

- Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption.
- School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.
- Raising levels of achievement is a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

4. Objectives

The Avenue Primary School will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each currently looked after child has an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child’s current or previous care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LEA’s Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavour to support all looked after children educated at The Avenue Primary School to achieve to their fullest possible potential in all areas.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The named Governor is Mrs R. Jones; she will work in co-operation with the Head of School, J. Hunter and **Designated Teacher, Mrs J Gibson**, as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children.

6. Governor role and responsibilities

To ensure that:

- The school has a coherent policy for looked after children
- The school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines
- The designated teacher has received appropriate training
- Looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum

7. Head Teacher role and responsibilities

The Head Teacher will:

- Appoint the designated teacher
- Ensure that the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- Oversee the development of the policy on looked after children
- Be responsible for all systems to support looked after children.

8. Designated Teacher role and responsibilities

The Designated Teacher will

- Serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all looked after children in the school.
- Help to establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after children of the school by:
- Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all looked after children and ensure information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- Ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by looked after children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements.
- Acting as an advocate for looked after children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
- Monitoring and recording the progress of looked after children through the PEP.
- Facilitating effective communication with the LA, parents/carers/school staff regarding looked after children.

9. Monitoring and recording the progress of looked after children

The designated teacher will:

- Set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all looked after children.
- Gather and hold all information regarding children who are looked after.

- Maintain records regarding all looked after children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018.
- Establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
- Monitor the educational progress of all looked after children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concerns.

10. Facilitating effective communication

The designated teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- Building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue.
- Developing a relationship with the looked after child in order to gain the 'voice of the child'.
- Being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP.
- Playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of looked after children.
- Helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings.
- Serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education.
- Ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties.
- Liaising with the named social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- Ensure all looked after children with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning.
- Requesting support from the Virtual Schools Service, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support.
- Making teachers aware of signs of potential mental health issues within looked after children and how to access further assessment and support.

11. Personal Education Plans (PEP's)

- Each 'currently looked after' child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The designated teacher will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review the PEP, with a written report from the child's class teacher.

12. Content of the PEP

The PEP will consider:

- The child's strengths and weaknesses
- Interests, both in and out of school
- Developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- Future plans, and how these can be supported
- Issues arising for the child
- Targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting
- The voice of the child

13. Admission/Induction Arrangements

- Looked after children are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LEA's published admission criteria.
- Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received, a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.
- In the first PEP meeting, The Avenue Primary School will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed.

14. Complaints

- If a young person, parent/carers or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should, in the first instance, raise it with the designated teacher who will try to resolve the situation.
- If the issue cannot be resolved by the designated teacher, then the school complaints procedures should be followed.

15. Review of the looked after children policy

- This policy will be reviewed every two years.