



**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)
and
PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
(PLAC)
POLICY**

Hylands School

Reviewed by	Hannah Norton-Lawrence
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This policy has been written in accordance with guidance from the “Policy for Children Looked After” by Children’s Services (CSF 4093) –September 2018 and the “Guidance for Schools on the Education of Children Looked After - September 2018.

Background

There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995 a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care / children looked after and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework
- Underachievement in further and higher education

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children, who may also face additional barriers because of their race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation or because they are disabled.

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term ‘in care’ now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are ‘accommodated’ by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be ‘looked after children’ (LAC) or children in care or ‘children looked after’ (CLA) by the local authority. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person’s legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home, or
- In a residential school

The Children and Families Act 2014 amends section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. This officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH).

It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day to day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

Policy Aim:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).

At Hylands School we aim to create an environment where LAC and PLAC children have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with the DfE Guidance Document for Designated Teachers - February 2018.

We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for LAC and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development. We promote staff training in their specific needs, so that all adults are sensitive to the barriers to learning that LAC experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise.

Our school community aims to champion the needs of LAC to ensure they make rapid progress during their period in care.

Our Aims for LAC:

- to provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of LAC and PLAC
- to narrow the gap between the attainment of LAC and PLAC and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- that they benefit from school-based interventions and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- for all LAC to have a minimum of three Personal Education Planning (PEP) meetings in an academic year and for the joint planning to actively impact on each child's learning on a daily basis, to ensure accelerated and rapid progress
- for all adults to provide discreet, sensitive, child-led support
- that the LAC Coordinator will mentor and take a special interest in the child's daily life at school
- that school systems facilitate discrete support, as appropriate
- LAC will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for
- LAC and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community in recognition of the particular needs of this group

Educational Planning for Children Looked After

Personal Education Plans (PEP):

The school will ensure that every LAC on roll has a Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer and other relevant professionals. The school will complete the PEP to inform the Virtual School of whichever local authority the child is assigned to, of the school's policy and practice, to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding and to inform the school Governing Body annually.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Headteacher and Governing Body

will be committed to promoting improved educational life chances for LAC and PLAC. They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

will promote improved educational life chances for LAC and PLAC by:

- ensuring that the LAC or PLAC has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of LAC and PLAC across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book scrutinies
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies

- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- developing expertise in the field of LAC
- providing and attending training and offering advice to all school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for LAC and PLAC
- identifying and delivering staff training needs for working with this group
- prioritising LAC for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria
- ensuring that LAC and PLAC are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each LAC as requested, to inform the annual health review
- ensuring that carers and care staff are engaged with the targets outlined in the PEP

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for LAC and PLAC by:

- reading the school policy for LAC
- attending training, as appropriate
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher or Coordinator
- referring to the Designated Teacher and or Coordinator for advice
- playing their part in creating a 'LAC-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for LAC by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available

Attendance:

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of LAC and PLAC to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school contacts the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in the attendance policy.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support LAC during admission and transition include:

- prioritising LAC and PLAC at the point of admission
- the swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits
- early identification of staff mentor and peer buddy
- additional support and planning for LAC and PLAC at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Additional Educational Needs: The Graduated Approach:

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for LAC and PLAC with additional educational needs by:

- having high expectations
- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria
- ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified and teaching is systematic; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the expectation of progress each academic year, as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit and PEP
- taking into account the Pupil Passport when planning and delivering lessons

Special Educational Needs:

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for LAC and PLAC who have special educational needs by:

- adhering to graduated approach as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (Assess, Plan, Do, Review)
- having high expectation of minimum levels of progress each academic year (in line with the expectation set out in the PEP)
- ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching is systematic
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEND Code of Practice
- Designated Teacher / SENDCO monitor delivery of interventions and review outcomes with class teacher
- where an EHCP is in place, PEPs and EHCP should be aligned to avoid duplication

Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on LAC and PLAC by: familiarising themselves with the school's child protection policy and the 'DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' document (September 2021), if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Alternative Provision:

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision, alternative to daily attendance at school, will be:

- a plan that will retain the LAC or PLAC on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for reporting and accountable for the PP+
- an agreed part of the overall PEP for the student

- full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- meet the educational needs of the LAC or PLAC
- will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting
- will be monitored regularly and that PEPs will include the school and the alternative provider

Exclusion:

We will make every effort to avoid excluding a LAC or PLAC, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of LAC and PLAC. (Ref: DfE Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England: Statutory Guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion. September 2017)

Multi-Agency Working:

School staff will engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This should include: Virtual Schools, Social Care, health, carers. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of LAC and PLAC.

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