

SAE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

AIMS OF THE POLICY

To support our Looked After Children (LAC) in a safe and secure environment and give them access to every opportunity to continually achieve and enjoy their learning.

To recognise and support the specific challenges faced by LAC (see Appendix 1), while continuing to foster a culture of high expectations of learning, behaviour and progress.

DEFINITION

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 'Looked After Children' (LAC) 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)

THE GOVERNORS

- 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 the DT has access to appropriate training, and have sufficient time to carry out duties and to receive support.
- Support the Principal, DT and other members of staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met, and in particular to have a named governor for LAC
- Receive as a minimum an annual report from the DT (see Appendix 4)

THE PRINCIPAL

- Will ensure that the DT carries out their role to the highest possible standard, as outlined in Appendix 2
- Will ensure that all staff, led by the DT, fulfil their roles and responsibilities
Will ensure that all staff are fully aware and up to date with information about their roles and responsibilities regarding LAC as outlined in appendix 3

- Ensure CPD to keep staff, including new staff, fully informed about LAC
All Staff
- Will ensure they know and fulfil their roles and responsibilities relating to LAC
- Be fully aware of the information relating to LAC (Appendix 5)
- Know who LAC are, and do all they professionally can to support LAC

All Governors and staff

- Will support the local authority in its statutory duty to promote the following:

BACKGROUND (APPENDIX 1)

We recognise that many Looked After Children 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, 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 Looked After Children 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. Looked After Children are prioritised in this 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 (eg 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.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACH (DT) (APPENDIX 2)

- The role of the Designated Representative is:
- To promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed, and aspire to further training, education and higher education, and/or employment.
- To maintain an up to date register of Looked After Children 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 Looked After Children.
- Ensure that they keep the school up to date with current legislation and its implications for the school in respect of Looked After Children.
- 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, (teaching and non-teaching), and governors so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantage affecting many Looked After Children and young people. To

understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome any disadvantages, and the need to promote the involvement of Looked After Children in, for example: school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils.

- Report to the Governing Body annually on the performance of the Looked After Children who are on the roll of the school (see section Responsibilities of the School Governing Body).
- To ensure all teachers know when there is a Looked After Child in their class, and what that child's specific needs are. This does not mean that all staff are informed about the child's Looked After status, or that they are given all details.
- 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 Looked After Children, 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 Looked After Children in order to inform the school's development plan. To ensure that all Looked After Children have targets which although realistic are also challenging. The targets should reflect the high expectations we hold about Looked After Children.
- 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, regardless of whether a PEP meeting has been arranged.
- To ensure that the actions identified in the plan are implemented and reviewed as advised by the Devon Virtual Head for LAC or at twice annually.
- To facilitate the completion of the student section of the PEP.

- Ensure that someone is available to attend LAC 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 Looked After Children and ensure appropriate induction and transition support into school.
- To consider, wherever possible:
 - that the child starts school on the same day that other children are admitted
 - that they have a ‘buddy’ allocated from the first day
 - that they know where to go to report to, in the event of any difficulties that may arise.
- Ensure that each pupil in care has an identified member 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 school’s Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Ensure that Looked After Children play a full and active part in the life of the school and have access to extended school provision where required.
- Ensure that if/when the child transfers to another school, all relevant information is forwarded to the receiving school with minimal delay.
- If a Looked After Child 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 liaise with the appropriate Local Authority team member for the twice yearly monitoring of the Looked After Children in the school.
- To contact/liaise with the LA team member if a Looked After Child in the school needs extra support
- If a Looked After Child transfers out of care, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed. The Designated Teacher will still remain involved and continue to support the parents, class teacher and other staff members, in order to ensure that the child’s needs continue to be met. The SAE Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)Policy will come into operation

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF (APPENDIX 3)

- 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 Looked After Children.

- Respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) 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 LAC 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 Looked After students your belief in their ability to achieve.

DESIGNATED TEACHER ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNORS (APPENDIX 4)

Governors must receive as a minimum an annual report from the DT. The report should typically include:

- The number of Looked After Children in the school (both Devon and from other Local Authorities).
- A clear overview of the educational needs and levels of progress of Looked After Children in the school
- Attendance and fixed term exclusion compared to the whole school population
- Any SEN
- Whether any Looked After Children are gifted or talented
- Destinations of Looked After Children who leave the school
- Ensure that school policies and procedures give Looked After Children equal access and/or positively discriminate Looked After Children by prioritising their needs e.g.
 - Transition support
 - Public examinations
 - Additional support
 - Curriculum planning
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Work experience and career guidance

- How the teaching and learning needs of Looked After Children are reflected in school development plans.
- Whether the school is making full use of all available resources, in order to maximise opportunity for Looked After Children to achieve two levels of progress across a key stage. Or for students working at levels P1 to P3, two sub-levels progress across a key stage.
- As part of arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the role, the report should enable the Governing body to make overall judgments about the DT role in the context of wider school planning.

INFORMATION SHARING (APPENDIX 5)

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. Many Looked After Children are 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. All staff must be sensitive to the degree of information disclosure needed, according to the case and situation. All effort is taken to fully include the Looked After Child in the school and local community, and steps are taken to avoid stigmatising. For example, the DT will address any parental or community concerns with individuals, on an 'as and when basis'. Teaching staff will address any issues or prejudice amongst students through the curriculum, preferably when the Looked After Child is not present.

The DT will decide, with local authority 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 and understanding. (The explanation should emphasise that the school, social worker and carers are working together to promote the young person's education). For a child who is newly looked after, it is likely to be important to establish his/her view of their changed circumstances, and to monitor how this impacts on their behaviour, attendance and performance.

Looked After Children may need adult support to prepare for when they are asked about home by other students or staff. We aim to plan for this by discussing this with the child, on their entry to the school. (Or before, where possible, eg at a transition planning meeting). This may also need to be considered when their care status changes, as needed.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PLACED BY OTHER AUTHORITIES

Looked After Children 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 (PEP) 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 Exeter the Children in Care Team are able to contact other LAs on behalf of the school to request support from them for their Looked After Children.

SAE will carefully manage a new LAC students and their timetable may reflect their needs on arrival.

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are likely to have English as an Additional Language and associated learning needs. They have often experienced trauma both in their home country and/or on route to the UK. This group of young people are often at risk of exploitation prior to being taken into care. School will seek support from the Local Authority EAL support professionals. All UASC will need access to enriched language environments. This needs to be carefully planned for, and a tailored timetable will be provided to meet each individual learner's needs. School staff will work closely with the care placement to help meet the student's cultural, social, emotional and personal development needs.

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. Placements under this time do not count as private fostering. In accordance with an amendment to the Children Act 2004 schools should alert carers that the latter need to inform children's services of these arrangements.

Young people who are privately fostered are likely to be experiencing significant upheavals and instability in their home lives. They are likely to need additional pastoral and learning support and may need closer monitoring and tracking of

progress. We will implement student progress meetings to tackle barriers to learning on a half termly basis.

Including Looked After Children

ADMISSION

Fewer children are moving care placement, however, there still remains a high degree of mobility within the looked after population, often resulting in a change of school and subsequent gaps in education. It is critical that Looked After Children are admitted to school with minimal delays. Prolonged periods at home can put the foster placement under great pressure and young people more likely to become disaffected.

The application for a school place is made by the social worker unless they have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). In this instance, the statement casework officer will liaise with schools and the social worker to agree an appropriate educational placement that meets the student's SEN.

ARRIVING AT SCHOOL

Some Looked After Children may have long journeys to school, particularly if they live long distances from the school, as a result of changes in care placement. It is important that consideration is given to how late arrivals are managed and recorded, given that this may be out of the child/young person's control. Staff should be sensitive to how they address this.

ATTENDANCE

It is vital that Looked After Children 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 Looked After Child is a cause for concern:

The DT will problem-solve barriers to attendance with the carer and student in a face to face meeting at the earliest opportunity. If concerns continue, these will be raised with the Education Welfare Service 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

EXCLUSIONS

Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on exclusions from schools and pupil referral units (2008) draws particular attention to Looked After Children as a group particularly at risk of exclusion. The School will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school and will involve the child's social worker and seek advice and support from Children's Services professionals as soon as possible.

Improving Behaviour and Attendance Guidance (2008) states:

77. *Looked-after children are no less able than other children. Many looked-after children have unmet social and emotional needs and, as a group, are more likely to be at risk of exclusion. Schools are expected to proactively support and cooperate with foster carers and the local authority as a corporate parent in doing everything possible to avoid excluding a looked-after child. Exclusion from school/PRUs, and permanent exclusion in particular, can place great strain on care placements and lead to even more disruption in a child's life if the care placement breaks down as a result. Local authorities, schools/PRUs, social workers and carers all share the responsibility for reducing exclusions of looked-after children. Schools/PRUs, supported by their local authority, should put in place strategies to reduce the need for exclusion for looked-after children. Virtual school Head Teachers, who are senior figures within an LA, are being introduced to help support schools and local authorities to raise the attainment and ensure progression of all looked-after children and young people within their authority.*

78. *Exclusion of looked-after children should be an absolute last resort. It is vital that schools/PRUs and social workers work together in partnership with other professionals and try every practicable means to maintain them in school /PRUs (if that is where they are placed) and to exclude them only in the most exceptional circumstances. Before excluding, schools/PRUs, in conjunction with the local authority, should first consider alternative options for supporting the looked-after child or young person. No looked-after child should be excluded from a school/PRU without discussion with the local authority to ensure that there is suitable alternative provision available elsewhere.*

79. *The document Supporting looked-after learners – a practical guide for school governors provides information on what effective schools do to help staff understand and manage challenging behaviour where it occurs. Those schools which are most successful in preventing exclusion have policies which tackle underlying causes of poor behaviour with strategies such as Pastoral Support Programmes and intervention from behaviour support specialists.*

80. *The child's social workers should be involved at the earliest opportunity to work with the school to avoid the need for exclusion. The role of Designated Teacher for looked-after children in a school is central to involving other children's services and, where appropriate, securing additional support.*

81. *In cases where a looked-after child or young person is excluded, anyone who is legally defined as a parent will have the right to make representations and to appeal. The definition of a parent for the purposes of the Education Acts is broadly drawn and includes any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where they have a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) with whom the child lives. These are in addition to the child's birth parent(s). This means that there could be a number of people who will*

have the right to make representations and appeal. At any exclusion hearings, especially where support for the child may not be consistent or robust, the school should ensure that children and young people have a voice and that they feel they are being listened to. The hearing should take place in an atmosphere where they feel comfortable and able to speak openly.

82. *Even where the local authority does not have parental responsibility, (i.e. where the child is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 but is not the subject of a care order) the child's social worker should be involved at the earliest opportunity about the possibility of any exclusion. The Designated Teacher for looked-after children will be able to advise on the legal status of looked-after children in the school.*

83. *Although the Education and Inspections Act 2006 only requires full-time education to be provided from the sixth day of an exclusion, such a break in education will have an impact on the education of looked-after children. To ensure there is minimal disruption to their education, where a looked-after child or young person is excluded, it is the Government's view that schools and local authorities as appropriate should arrange alternative provision from the first day of the exclusion.*

Where a managed move is sought for a Looked After Child, steps will need to be taken to minimise the impact of previous multiple rejections that Looked After Children 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 move is likely to have a deeper emotional impact on a Looked After Child than other students. The impact of trauma, separation and loss on all Looked After Children should be considered as part of an assessment of needs, when planning significant interventions such as managed moves. We recognise that any move is often seen as another rejection by a Looked After Child 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.

PART TIME AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Where a part time time-table is sought to support the Looked After Child to access a curriculum and/or to address a behavioural need, we recognise that the child continues to have an entitlement to a full time education. Any changes to this must be agreed with the child's social worker and carer through a pastoral support plan or Personal Education Plan. Part-time schooling can place the care placement under enormous pressure, if school is considering this, it must be discussed with the designated member of staff. In the event of part time provision at school, or elsewhere, we will have regard to the statutory guidance for local authorities and schools on *Information Passports and Personal Learning Plans and Core Entitlement for all pupils in Pupil Referral Units and other Alternative Provision (2009)*. This outlines the 'core entitlement' that is the baseline of what is expected, and that this is typically full-time for most students, and should include at least the functional

elements of English and maths, scientific literacy, ICT and personal and social development (practical life skills of which PSHE is a part).

Where a student cannot cope with full time education, they should be provided with as many hours of provision as they are capable of attending. We understand that engagement in full time education is proven to reduce the risk of offending and anti-social behaviour in children/young people. The school will consider how the remaining hours of education per week will be delivered, so that learning is uninterrupted, wherever possible. The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children will have oversight of all the education provided, where it is delivered elsewhere. No students are placed on part time timetables indefinitely. A part time timetable is always part of a plan to return the student to full time education (e.g. a pastoral support plan, or a personal learning plan, for alternative provision) and within a specified time frame (e.g. within four weeks).

The guidance suggests that where Looked After Children have been identified as being in need of alternative provision they should be placed in suitable provision within two weeks; and support services should be put into place no later than two weeks after the placement starts. 'Back on Track' emphasises the importance of a multi-agency approach to addressing pupils' needs, and makes clear that pupils in alternative provision are likely to need support from educational psychologists, CAMHS and social workers where needed. We will arrange a multi-agency meeting to plan for significant changes to educational provision and support, as required.

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 regularly as part of the six month LAC review or in line with the LA Virtual School advice and procedures. 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, school programme disruption). PEPs are significant vehicles for celebrating the achievements of young people and effecting change. They should address the 5 key outcomes of Every Child Matters agenda, and ensure appropriate resources and responsibilities are allocated in order that these are achieved. Education targets and strategies set through the PEP should be known by teaching staff. This is especially important if issues have arisen regarding classroom, homework or behaviour in certain lessons.

The young person should be involved in the PEP. Where a young person does not wish to attend, the meeting should nevertheless take place, and they should be encouraged to comment on their education and progress through the relevant section of the PEP. Issues around confidentiality for the Looked After Child should be respected, and information shared on a need to know basis. Teaching staff who are in contact with the child should be aware that he/she is looked after, in order to promote an

understanding of the child's / young person's needs, and to ensure positive systems of support are in place.

The PEP would encompass all the additional educational plans, such as those described under part time and alternative provision.

PERSONAL EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

Exeter Looked After Children who have been in care for more than 28 days, who are aged 5 - 16 yrs. and not meeting expected levels of progress are entitled to a personal education allowance (PEA), from the date of their first LAC Review. At the PEP meeting school staff or the student will suggest activities or tutoring that could help to boost the student's attainment or motivation. If the student is in agreement then those at the meeting will complete a PEA request form.

ONE TO ONE TUITION

All Looked After Children are prioritised for one to one tuition where they are not meeting expected standards or levels of progress. Some Looked After Children, who do not meet these criteria but are also not meeting their expected rate of progress, are provided with additional support to boost attainment and progress as part of a reviewed intervention plan.

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Looked After Children are under-represented in higher education and there is a high drop-out rate in further education. They need additional encouragement to consider educational and training opportunities post 16, as there may not be any other adult in their lives able to communicate this. The Personal Education Plan and Pathway Plan (in the case of a young person aged 16), provide practical tools for focusing on educational development, including the opportunity for young people to explore their potential for higher education. The focus for a looked after young person going to further or higher education should begin early in order to build a good record of achievement. Where there are opportunities to attend taster days offered by colleges and universities, young people should be encouraged to attend. School will support all Looked After Children to engage in activities organised by educational establishments that encourage higher educational aspirations.

RELATED POLICIES

Previously Looked Afer Children (PLAC)

SEND

Behaviour

Safeguarding and Child Protection

