



## **Looked-after children designated teacher policy**

### **Introduction**

Being placed in the care of a Local Authority has a major impact on children's lives; nationally, looked-after children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that looked-after children remain healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

At St Aidan's we are committed to helping every looked-after child achieve the highest standards they can. We will support their aspirations to achieve and will champion their needs, raise awareness about the difficulties they face and challenge negative stereotypes about them, in order to ensure that they achieve the highest level possible.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's 2018 statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. It also takes into account section 20 and section 20A of the Child and Young Persons Act 2008. It should be read together with other related school policies: *Positive behaviour*, *Child protection and safeguarding*, *Inclusion*, *Supporting pupils with medical needs* and our *Induction and transition procedure*.

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## **1 Aims and objectives**

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that a member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- 1.2 The objective of the policy is that:
  - a. the educational achievements and social and emotional well-being of looked-after and previously looked-after children are fully promoted by the designated teacher, who will also support other staff members to do this.
  - b. Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, her/his responsibilities and how to get in contact.

## **2 Definitions**

- 2.1 Looked-after children are registered pupils who are:
  - a. in the care of a Local Authority (LA) or
  - b. provided with accommodation by a LA in the exercise of its social care functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.
- 2.2 Previously looked-after children are registered pupils who were looked after by a LA but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - a child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them;
  - a special guardianship order;
  - an adoption order.
- 2.3 Throughout this policy looked-after children/child and previously looked-after children/child will be abbreviated to LAC.

## **3 Roles and responsibilities**

- 3.1 **A Virtual School Head (VSH)** is a LA officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's LAC, wherever they are being educated. The VSH monitors and supports these children as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of LAC.
- 3.2 **The Governing Body (GB)** is responsible for:
  - nominating a lead governor for LAC.
  - ensuring that all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC;
  - allocating sufficient resources to meet the needs of LAC;
  - ensuring other school policies and procedures support their needs;
  - ensuring that these children are given top priority when applying for places in accordance with the school's over-subscription criteria;
  - monitoring their academic progress;
  - supporting the Headteacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of LAC are understood and met.
- 3.3 **The Headteacher** is responsible for:
  - appointing a Designated Teacher for LAC, bearing in mind Government guidance that this person should be, 'someone with sufficient authority to make things happen';



- appointing a suitable replacement quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave;
- ensuring that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusions of LAC and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations;
- ensuring that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities to this group of children.

3.4 **The Designated Teacher (DT)** at St Aidan's is our Special Educational Needs and disabilities Co-ordinator (SENCo) and can be contacted through the school office. She is responsible for:

- acting as an advocate for LAC, ensuring that all staff have high expectations of these children's achievements and an understanding of the key social and emotional issues that may affect their learning;
- advising staff and governors, raising their awareness of the needs of LAC and challenging unhelpful attitudes;
- tracking LAC's academic progress to ensure that they are doing as well as they can;
- monitoring LAC's attendance to ensure irregular attendance issues are addressed quickly;
- playing a key part in decisions about how pupil premium (PP) funding is used to support LAC, working with VSHs to agree how this money can most effectively be used to improve their attainment;
- ensuring that she and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in LAC as a result of previous experiences, knowing where the school can draw on specialist services;
- listening to what LAC say and taking their views into account when considering actions that will affect them;
- ensuring confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need to know basis;
- actively monitoring and preventing bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy, since 60% of LAC say that they are bullied;
- ensuring that each LAC chooses a member of staff (not necessarily the DT) with whom they feel comfortable in confiding:
  - members of staff taking on this role may need support and may need to link with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- setting up timely meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion;
- ensuring that LAC are able to take part in activities outside normal school hours, in recognition of the positive impact this may have on their self esteem and learning;
- discussions with social workers about how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom;
- encouraging active involvement of carers both in their child's education and in the life of the school;
- working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals, attending relevant planning and review meetings and sending reports if requested;
- talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the LA regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which might disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the LA should do to minimise disruption;
- ensuring the speedy transfer of information between individuals and agencies and – if the pupil moves school - to the new school;
- proactively supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.



## **4 Personal Education Plans**

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a statutory requirement which sets out what needs to happen to support the personalised learning of a LAC. It forms part of the child's Care Plan and is developed with the school. It provides essential information to ensure that appropriate support is in place to enable the child to achieve and reach his/her full potential. It is also a record of the child's leisure interests and educational achievement.

4.1 The DT has lead responsibility for the development and implementation of LAC's PEPs which includes:

- ensuring that the PEP is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, within 14 days of the child being taken into Care or within 14 days of being admitted to the school;
- ensuring that the PEP is reviewed once every 6 months before the statutory review of the child's Care Plan – this includes ensuring that it contains any new information since the last PEP review, including information about delivery of provision and follow up of recommendations;
- ensuring PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced;
- ensuring PEPs work in harmony with any Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) that a LAC may have;
- ensuring the updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan;
- ensuring that an up-to-date PEP is transferred to the LAC's next school and that the LA responsible for the child has the most recent version.

## **5 Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Care and Communication committee and approved by the full Governing Body.

Date of policy: MARCH 2024

Policy ratified: .....  ..... (Signature) 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 ..... (Date)

Review due: MARCH 2025