



Looked After Children Policy 2024

Date Issued:	January 2024
Prepared by:	Head Teacher

Review date:	January 2024
Date Adopted by Governing Body:	February 2024

Durham Lane Primary School believes that, in partnership with Stockton Borough Council, as Corporate Parents we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of looked after children.

Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. The majority of children who come into care are there because of abuse or neglect, domestic violence or parents' drug related issues. As a school, we recognise that outcomes nationally for looked after children fall well below national averages and we understand and support the government agenda to address this disparity. As a school, we have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- Giving priority to education;
- Listening to children;
- Providing stability and continuity;
- Taking corporate responsibility;
- Promoting inclusion;
- Raising standards;
- Intervening early;
- Promoting early years experiences;
- Celebrating success.

The governing body of Durham Lane Primary School is committed to providing high quality education for all its pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (November 2005), the revised guidance under The Children Act 1989, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (March 2010) updated July 2021, the Statutory guidance for governing bodies 2009 and associated guidance on the education of looked after children and "The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities"- February 2018.

We aim to give looked after children within our school the best opportunities and support to be safe and healthy, to achieve in education and their career, and enable them to play an active role in their community.

Above all, as a school we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with:

"If this were my child I would..."

The aims of the school are to:

- Ensure that school policies and procedures are inclusive of looked after children;
- Ensure that all looked after children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and this includes the provision of a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability;
- Ensure that looked after children take as full a part as possible in all school activities including extracurricular activities;
- Ensure that carers and social workers and the Virtual School Headteacher for looked after children are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment, attendance and transition arrangements;
- Ensure that appropriate intervention strategies are put in place when there is concern about a child's lack of progress;
- Ensure that looked after children are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision;
- Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to support the needs of looked after children.

Who are Looked After Children?

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

- Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subject of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

The term “in care” refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989. They may live with foster carers, in a Children’s home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are “accommodated” by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act. They may live in foster care, in a Children’s home or in a residential school or they may be fostered with family members. All these groups are said to be “Looked After Children” – LAC. They may be looked after by Stockton on Tees local authority or may be in the care of another authority, but living in Stockton on Tees

Admissions

The Governing Body endorses Stockton Borough Council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against looked after children. Due to care placement changes, looked after children may enter school mid-term. It is vital that as a school we ensure that they are given a positive welcome in order that they feel secure. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupils settle.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our looked after children Policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all looked after children and will be kept up to date via reports from the designated teacher / governor.

Allocation of resources

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for looked after children, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. The Governing Body will hold the school to account for the progress and attainment of looked after children.

Monitoring the progress of Looked After Children

The social worker for the looked after child should initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP) – within 20 days of the pupil joining the school, or of entering care. Wherever possible the looked after child should be actively involved in determining their plan. It is vital that the school assesses each looked after child’s attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning and progression.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all looked after children at regular intervals and will provide the Local Authority with termly information in line with the Virtual School pupil tracking system. The school will put in place intervention strategies to support underachievement and provide appropriate challenge for gifted and talented pupils in order that pupils are helped to fulfil their potential.

The school will inform the Attendance and Exclusion Service of any concerns regarding attendance and, if necessary, liaise with the service regarding all matters relating to fixed term exclusions.

Looked after children will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or social worker, and the young person’s views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

The PEP will be placed on line as part of the Virtual School monitoring and communication system.

Transition

The school will ensure that all stakeholders are provided with the appropriate information, advice and guidance to support the smooth and effective transition of looked after children and young people at all key stages.

Record Keeping

The designated teacher will know the names of all the looked after children in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The designated teacher will also know about any looked after children from other authorities who are attending the school. It is important that the school indicates looked after children status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required. Information regarding looked after children will be stored securely.

Staff Development

Staff will be enabled to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support looked after children and disseminate this professional development to all relevant staff. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to be the focal point in the school for all issues associated with looked after children.

Partnership with parents/carers and care workers.

As a school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable looked after children to achieve their potential. Review meetings, which take place at least every six months, are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

Links with external agencies/organisations

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting looked after children. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual looked after children:

- Looked After Children Education Team (LACE);
- Educational Psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- SEND
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Attendance and Inclusion Service
- Social care worker/Community care worker/Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service

Reporting to the Governing Body

In line with the statutory guidance (**The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children- Statutory guidance for governing bodies**), the designated teacher will provide the governing body, as a minimum, with an annual report on the progress of looked after children and young people.

Review and Evaluation of LACYP Policy

We consider the Looked After Children Policy to be important and we will undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice with key stakeholders every two years or earlier if necessary.

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Helen Gregory, Deputy Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Elaine Barrett, Governor with responsibility for Looked After Children: Mrs C Robinson

APPENDIX 1

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES The

Designated Teacher

- Be an advocate for looked after children and young people within school;
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for looked after children on both the child and the rest of the school community;
- Know the names of all the looked after children in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required;
- Attend relevant training about looked after children and disseminate to all relevant and appropriate staff;
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to looked after children, seeking advice from the Looked After Children Education Team (LACE) where appropriate;
- Ensure that looked after children receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle. Ensure that clear procedures for the induction of looked after children are communicated to all staff;
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within school;
- Ensure that all looked children have an appropriate PEP in partnership with the social worker that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan wherever possible;
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals;
- Provide assessment data on a termly basis to ensure the Headteacher of the Virtual School and LACE team can monitor and evaluate pupil progress;
- Provide weekly attendance data to the LA Attendance and Exclusion Service and inform them of any concerns regarding attendance or punctuality.
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a looked after child is experiencing difficulties or is at risk or exclusion;
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil;
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to looked after children;
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events;
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extracurricular activities for looked after children;
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and school work, where appropriate, when a looked after child transfers to another educational placement;
- Contribute information to Looked After Reviews when required;
- Report to the governing body on looked after children in the school and inform them of relevant policy and practice development;
- Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc;
- Prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include at least:
 - The number of looked after children on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP);
 - The attendance of LAC compared to other pupils;
 - The attainment of LAC at end of key stages EYFSP and end of Key Stage One and Two reporting arrangements compared to other pupils;
 - The achievement (progress) of LAC compared to other pupils;
 - The number, if any, of fixed term exclusions for LAC pupils;
 - The destinations of LAC pupils who leave the school;
- Attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and fixed term exclusion of looked after children;
- Arrange a mentor (adult and /or pupil) to whom the child/young person can talk to;

- Ensure that any identified Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN.

Good practice suggests that all school staff will:

- Follow school procedures;
- Track the progress of looked after children and put intervention strategies in place when a looked after child is identified as underperforming;
- Keep the designated teacher informed about the progress of all looked after children;
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of looked after children;
- Positively promote the raising of a looked after child's self-esteem;
- Ensure any looked after child is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on looked after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings;
- Liaise with the designated teacher where a looked after child is experiencing difficulties;
- Be aware that the LA has a policy of no permanent exclusion for looked after children. If fixed term exclusion is unavoidable, the inclusion team must be contacted and first day provision put in place. Staff should be mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement;
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times;
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/parents/carers/pupil as appropriate;
- Make extra copies of reports available when required.

Good practice suggests that the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritise looked after children, according to the DfE Admissions Code of Practice;
- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for looked after children;
- Ensure there is a designated teacher for looked after children;
- Liaise with the Headteacher, designated teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of looked after children are met;
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for looked after children who links with the designated teacher;
- Receive regular reports from the designated teacher;
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give looked after children equal access in respect of:
 - Admission to school;
 - National Curriculum
 - Out of school learning and extra-curricular activities;
- Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for looked after children;
- Ensure that the designated teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings of looked after children if they arise.

Changes made to policy

January 2024- added "The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities"- February 2018.