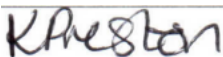


Policy/Procedure Name:	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) POLICY		
Last Update:	August 2024	Next Update Due:	June 2027

Author	Alex Smythe
Signature of Authorised Individual	
Signature of the Director	

The reference to 'Children Looked After' (CLA) in this policy can be read, also, as 'Looked after Children' (LAC).

Purpose of the Policy

- To ensure the promotion of educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and children who have previously been Looked After, Willow Park School will support the Responsible Local Authorities statutory corporate parenting of this vulnerable group, ensuring all required responsibilities are fulfilled.
- To encourage positive liaison between the school and the Virtual School Head.
- To promote the educational achievement and welfare of CLA and children who have previously been 'Looked After' within Willow Park School.

Rationale

CLA are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of CLA have suffered abuse or neglect and for all, becoming looked after is likely to have been a distressing experience. It is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists across this group when compared to their peers.

Aims of the Guidance

'Corporate Parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the whole local authority to achieve good parenting. We recognise that we are an essential partner in this process and as such, we aim to-

- Act as an effective advocate for any child in, or who has been in public care, attending our School.
- Implement the relevant statutory elements of the Guidance.
- Have high expectations of children in public care attending school.
- Develop and implement effective inclusive strategies.
- Intervene early and appropriately to support any child in public care who is experiencing difficulties, liaising promptly with other professionals.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and social workers to gather and share information to plan and monitor achievement.
- Listen to the child or young person and/or closely observe and aim to understand their behaviour and its communicative intent or function, respecting their rights of confidentiality.
- Support the statutory review process by providing reports and attending review meetings.

Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity

We believe that children are or have been in public care are individuals with distinct identities and needs shaped by their racial origins, religious beliefs, their sexual identification and sexuality and, whether or not they are in any way disabled, they all have the right to achieve their potential and an equal right to succeed.

Equality Statement

At Willow Park School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching and our employment practices. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

Inclusion

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations for and of all children.

Definitions

Children Looked After (CLA)

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 under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20).
- Children who are the subjects of a Care Order (section 31) or Interim Care Order (section 38).
- Children who are the subjects 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).

Children In Care

The term 'In Care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order made by the Court 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.

Accommodated Children

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989– they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' (LAC). They may be looked after by one Local Authority but may be living in another authority.

Adopted Children

Once a child has been adopted, while the Local Authority may provide some financial or other support, the child is no longer "In Care" and all of the normal parental responsibilities are the right and responsibility of the adoptive parent(s).

Legislation and Guidance

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' includes previously looked after children as a vulnerable group. Part 2 – The management of Safeguarding states 'A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe.

Under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (November 2005), local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. In order for them to implement this duty successfully, they will need the active co-operation of schools. School governing bodies have a major responsibility for helping children to succeed: they can champion their needs and raise awareness.

Potential Barriers to Success

The Social Exclusion Unit's report 'A Better Education for Children in Care' (SEU 2004) identified five key reasons why looked after children underachieve:

- Their lives are characterised by instability.
- They spend too much time out of school.
- They do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind.
- Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development.
- They have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education, Key Elements of Guidance to Local Authorities and Schools (2005/06).

Requirements

- It is good practice for our school to have a designated teacher to act as an advocate for children in care. At Willow Park School this is the Head teacher (for detailed responsibilities see Appendix 1).
- Every Local Authority must have a Virtual Head Teacher for Looked After Children.
[Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362222/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children-and-previously-looked-after-children.pdf)
- Each looked after child or young person must have a Personal Education Plan.
- Local Authorities must have a protocol for sharing information.
- Care placements are only to be made when education is secured - except in emergency situations
- All children in public care must have educational arrangements in place within 20 days of entering care.

Staff Responsibilities

Designated Teacher (DT)

- This teacher must understand about care and its impact on education;
- They are a senior member of staff who will act as an advocate for looked after children, and who will be critical to tackling underachievement.
- They should ensure that the school contributes effectively to the statutory review process. The designated teacher at Willow Park School is the Principal.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

It is a statutory requirement that every looked after child has a Personal Education Plan, this forms part of their statutory Care Plan. The child's Social Worker should initiate the PEP working with relevant teachers/education professionals. It is a record of what needs to happen for the child to enable him/her to fulfil their potential and it should reflect their existing education plans, such as a their EHCP. The child should be involved in this process and the PEP should be reviewed regularly.

The Personal Education Plan should be completed within 20 school days of a child coming into care.

The Virtual School Worker should:

- Contact the Designated Teacher at school and the Social Worker to arrange a meeting for the Personal Education Plan.
- Ensure school has access to any online ePEP document where the PEP is recorded.

The Social Worker should:

- Ensure that the young person and carer are invited.

Others that may be invited could be the class teacher or learning support, relevant health professionals, any other agencies involved with the child.

Before the meeting:

- The DT should meet with the child to ensure they are aware of the purpose of the meeting and to help with their contribution to the PEP.
- The DT should complete the education section of the PEP. This includes attendance, attainment/achievement, any additional needs and support, health and emotional well-being and any other relevant information.
- The Social Worker should make sure all relevant parts such as the legal status etc. are filled in prior to the meeting.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting:

- Check all the details and contacts are correct.
- All parties should discuss the Plan and contribute to it.
- All parties should be clear what the targets are and take into account the child's EHCP.
- All parties should be clear how the Plan will contribute to the child's educational well-being and what their role will be.
- All parties should be clear how additional resources (Pupil Premium) are to be utilised to meet targets.
- Set a time and date for the next PEP meeting.

PEPs should be reviewed every term to inform the statutory review on educational progress. These can be either face to face meetings or an online/phone call PEP. The PEP documents can be viewed and updated

by the DT, The Virtual School and Social Worker at any time. Copies of the PEP should be sent to the carers, parents, agencies and other professionals as requested.

Attendance

The school will ensure that all pupils attend regularly; continuity and stability are known to promote educational success for children in public care.

Often, school can be a lifeline when care placements are changing. However, where non-attendance is identified, early intervention is essential. Working in partnership with the Social Workers, Foster Carers, residential placements, Education Welfare Officers, and/or ECPC, the school will take positive action quickly to avoid unauthorised absences.

Raising Achievement

The school sets challenging targets for children looked after and has high expectations of them, both with regard to attainment and also participation in broader school activities. It recognizes, however, that there are often additional hurdles for them to surmount because of their early life experiences; support will be offered at all times to help them achieve their potential. Teachers recognise that sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum which deal with family values and experiences which are likely to either rekindle distressing memories or put the spotlight on the child.

Links with other School Policies and Legislation

These guidelines are translated into action through other policies and procedures, e.g.

- Behaviour policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- PSHE Policy
- SMSC Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Admissions policy

Appendix 1

The role of the designated teacher (DT) for Children in Public Care (LAC, CLA), who for Willow Park School is the Principal, Alex Smythe, is:

- To maintain a register of children in public care
- To act as an advocate for the children within school
- To attend any relevant training on children in public care and their needs, and passes on key messages to other school staff
- To ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan which links with their EHCP
- To encourage colleagues to have high expectations of the children, while also being aware of possible obstacles to achievement
- To ensure good liaison with Social Care, the Virtual School Head and other agencies
- To ensure there is an induction meeting for every child, in order to support their transition
- To ensure that the school provides appropriate reports for statutory reviews and staff with a good knowledge of the child attend the meeting when invited.
- To ensure educational information is passed on promptly between schools/agencies with relevant personal information being shared sensitively and with the child's knowledge
- To promote good communication between teachers and carers
- To promote sensitivity in choice of curricular topics and approaches for children not living with their birth families
- To ensure that the child is encouraged and supported to access the full range of activities in an outside school that are appropriate to his or her needs
- To ensure that the child has a member of staff with whom they can communicate their needs, e.g. their key worker

Further information on the role of the Designated Teacher can be found in the statutory guidance on the role and responsibility of The Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children February 2018.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf