



St Leonard's CE(A) First School Looked after children Policy



'Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'

Matthew 5:16

Adopted by the Governing Board:

May 2023

Date for review: May 2024

Date of last policy reviewed	Changes made
May 2023	No changes

INTRODUCTION

The governing board of St Leonard’s First School is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes.

This governing board recognises that, nationally, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in “Guidance on the Education of Looked After Children” (May 2000) and Section 52 of the Children Act 2004.

Children who are “looked after” may be “Accommodated” “In Care” or “remanded/detained” as follows:

Accommodated (Section 20) This is a voluntary arrangement, because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.

In Care A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A care order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority, or shares this with the parents.

Remanded/Detained A child can be remanded or detained as in the following:

- an emergency protection order

- removed by police using their powers of protection
- remanded by a court following criminal charges
- a court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.

Mental Health

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change.

This can impact on their behaviour and education. At St Leonard's we ensure that our designated teachers have awareness, training and skills regarding these children's needs and how to support them, particularly in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

Looked After Children may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others.
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues.
- poor attachments to others.
- have a need to be very private. This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances.

It is highly likely that children who are who have been looked after will be affected by the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Research shows that if a child is exposed to a range of traumatic or stressful experiences that can have a huge impact on children at the time and throughout their lives. The most widely recognised ACEs are: physical or verbal abuse; sexual abuse, emotional or physical neglect, living in a household where there is domestic abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, mental ill health, adults in prison, bereavement, bullying, poverty and community adversities such as living in a deprived area, neighbourhood violence etc which can lead to toxic stress. If a child is exposed to 4 or more of these factors it has a lifelong detrimental impact on their development, ability to learn health and mental health. Some of the other things that exposure to ACEs can impact, are:

- The ability to recognise and manage different emotions.
- The capacity to make and keep healthy friendships and other relationships.
- The ability to manage behaviour in school settings.
- Difficulties coping with emotions safely without causing harm to self or others.

Carefully planned interventions are needed to mitigate the impact of ACES.

The governing board of St Leonard's First School, is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children
- Personal Education Plans for all Looked After Children.
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect looked after children.
- effective strategies that supports the education of this vulnerable group.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for Looked After Children;
- when new to the school, ensure a smooth and welcome induction for the child and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status;
- ensure that a Personal Education Plan(PEP) is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the child and the carer, in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings, within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least, every 6 months; A flow chart showing PEP completion is found at the end of this policy
- keep PEPs and other records up to date, particularly in time to inform review meetings;
- ensure that each child in public care (if they wish) has an identified member of staff that they can talk to (this should be based on the child's request, and may not necessarily be the Designated Teacher);
- co-ordinate support for the child in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary;
- ensure staff receive relevant information and training and act as an advisor to staff and governors;
- ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis;

- provide written information to assist planning/review meetings and ensure attendance as far as possible;
 - ensure that the child and carer(s) receive early notification of meetings, parents evenings and other events and that communication remains regular and positive.
 - encourage Looked After Children to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible;
 - ensure speedy transfer of information between individuals and other relevant agencies and to a new school if and when the child transfers;
 - seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded.
 - ensure that any returns on looked after children are completed – as requested by the LA
- ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF**
- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
 - be familiar with the and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
 - respond positively to a child in public care’s request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary;
 - contribute to the Designated Teacher’s requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
 - as with all children, ensure that no child in public care is stigmatised in any way;
 - provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
 - as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children
 - positively promote the self-esteem of Looked After Children

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

The governing body of this school will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Looked After Children;

- be aware of whether the school has Looked After Children and how many (no names);
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Looked After Children;
- liaise with the Head Teacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children;
- support the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body (These reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons)
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually
- review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- information on looked after children will be shared with school staff on a “need to know basis”
- the Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

TRAINING

The Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN (PEP) COMPLETION

- Social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after (or a looked after children entering the school)
- Date is set for the completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- A copy of the form is sent to the school to enable completion of educational data PEP meeting takes place within 20 days, involving the social worker designated teacher (or other appropriate staff), carer and young person if appropriate.

- A date is set for the next pep meeting Personal Education Plan is taken to the child's statutory review and discussed within the wider context of the child's life.
- PEP sent by SW to the LAC team.

Previously looked-after children

Previously looked-after children are those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of previously looked-after children in their area by providing information and advice to designated teachers for previously looked-after children in maintained schools.

For previously looked-after children at St Leonard's we ensure that:

- we have high expectations for previously looked-after children to achieve their full potential in education.
- We build excellent partnerships with parents which allow pupils to achieve their potential with regular meetings to discuss progress.
- we build relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners to understand the support available to previously looked-after children (e.g. mental health services), and liaise effectively with service providers and signpost parents to those services.
- we share expertise on what works in supporting previously looked-after children's education.