



Caring **A**chieving **R**espectful **E**xciting

Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

School Leader: L Smith

Link Governor: A Repesa

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1. **Statement and Aims**

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after and previously-LAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after require special treatment and additional attention in order to improve their situation.

At Hardwick Primary School, we endeavour to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention, for all our pupils. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their personal, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for LAC realistically and use the school's resources efficiently in order to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.
- Ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.
- Ensure that pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision.

Designated Teacher for LAC and previously-LAC: Laura Smith, Inclusion Manager

Governor with responsibility for LAC and previously-LAC: Adem Repesa

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2023) 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2023) 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Good Behaviour Policy

- Home School Agreement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

2. Who are Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children?

LAC are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, as the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

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. All these groups are said to be '**Looked After Children**' -LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

Previously-LAC are defined as:

- Children no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The **governing board** is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC has received the appropriate training.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child's:
 - Legal status (i.e. whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents of those with parental responsibility.

-Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA.

- Ensuring that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep LAC and previously-LAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst LAC and previously-LAC.
- Ensuring LAC and previously-LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC in the school.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the headteacher and/or designated teacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis.

The **virtual school head (VSH)** is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's LAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC children.
- Working with the school to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- Managing the school's allocation of pupil premium plus (PP+) for LAC.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP.
 - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC.
 - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
 - Ensure the educational achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The **headteacher/Head of School** is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC.

- Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the governing board annually on the following:
 - The number of LAC and previously-LAC in the school
 - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
 - The attendance of LAC and previously-LAC, compared to other pupil groups
 - The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring PP+ for previously-LAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

The **designated teacher** for LAC and previously-LAC is responsible for:

- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and previously-LAC at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for relevant additional support.
- Leading on how the child's personal education plan (PEP) is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Liaising with the SENCO to ensure all pupil needs are met.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding LAC and previously-LAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting these through school safeguarding reporting processes as soon as they arise.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be used to support the child's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Working with the headteacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all LAC and previously-LAC.

The Designated Teacher will know who are all the LAC 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 LAC from other authorities. It is important that the school flags LAC status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

The **DSL** is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and Virtual School Head.
- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and previously-LAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.

- Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

The **SENCO** is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-LAC.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and previously-LAC in their classes and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and previously-LAC.
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and previously-LAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm and reporting any concerns through school safeguarding reporting processes as soon as possible.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and previously-LAC.
- Keeping the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC or previously-LAC's progress.
- Having high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC and previously-LAC.
- Being familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and responding appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaising with the Designated Teacher where a LAC or previously-LAC is experiencing difficulties

4. **Personal education plans (PEPs)**

All LAC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of their care plan. PEPs are not statutory for previously-LAC and the school will consider how to record any necessary additional support.

- The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a pupil to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential.
- The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.
- The school will work with other professionals and the child's carers to use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances.
- All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.
- The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:
 - Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.

- On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
- Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
- Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
 - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
 - Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
 - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

5. **Working with agencies and the VSH**

- The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- The school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, holding ePEP reviews alongside LAC reviews.
- The school will work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues.
- Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.
- The designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.

- Through the designated teacher, the school will work with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.
- The designated teacher will communicate with the VSH and apply for pupil premium plus funding (PP+) where needed to meet specific outcomes (PP+).
- PP+ for previously-LAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school.
- The school will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or previously-LAC, and according to their needs.
- If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.
- The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.
- The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and previously-LAC.

6. **Training**

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and previously-LAC will receive appropriate training, including information about:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive outcomes
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education
- Safeguarding

All training will ensure staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep LAC and previously-LAC safe.

7. **Safeguarding**

The school recognises that many LAC and previously-LAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practised in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and previously-LAC as soon as possible.

Where a LAC or previously-LAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.

When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a LAC or previously-LAC is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the school will collaborate in the multi-agency strategy discussion where appropriate to determine the pupil's welfare and plan rapid further action as necessary. Information and analysis about the pupil and their family will be provided as required.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a looked-after child or previously looked-after child is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

The headteacher/Head of School will implement appropriate pastoral support services throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and previously-LAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy to report any safeguarding concerns they have around LAC and previously-LAC.

8. **Pupil mental health**

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated teachers will

have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and previously-LAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or previously-LAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

To measure the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by LAC and previously-LAC, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire will be used if felt necessary during PEP reviews to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about LAC's emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and previously-LAC, and will always either be a member of, or supporting by the senior leadership team.

The school's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be adhered to when dealing with potential or explicit mental health issues that LAC or previously-LAC may face.

9. Suspension and Exclusion

Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's behavioural policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' and recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides.

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a LAC to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour and improving this behaviour.

As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour

Policy or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

Where a LAC is likely to be subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible. The VSH will work with the designated teacher and other relevant individuals to consider what additional assessment and support need to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the pupil's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion.

The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

10. **Pupils with SEND**

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and previously-LAC with SEND are supported in line with the school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

11. **Information sharing**

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met.

The designated teacher and named contacts from the safeguarding team ensure that information is appropriately and regularly shared with the carers, social workers, virtual school and parents (as appropriate).

Passwords are in place to securely transfer attendance data via Welfare Call (used by the Virtual School in Derby).

The secure online Welfare Call portal for creating electronic PEPs (ePEPs) will be used to securely share information on LAC children's progress, views, needs, challenges and targets with social workers and the virtual school.

School staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.

Staff members will ensure that fear of sharing information does not stand in the way of their responsibility to promote the welfare and safety of LAC and previously-LAC. If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will speak to the DSL.

The school will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

12. **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the designated teacher, Head of School and link governor.