

Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The School aims to provide equal opportunities for all its students to follow a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, demonstrate their full potential recognising strengths as well as weaknesses, fully participate in all school activities and school life, meet their physical, emotional and intellectual needs and all within a safe and secure environment.
- 1.2. The Aims of the School quite clearly state that children and young people come first and this child centred approach follows through into all aspects of the School so that at all times we must consider what is in the best interest of the child. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of children is everyone's responsibility and we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of those children recognised as more vulnerable which includes Looked After Children (LAC) and previously Looked After Children (pLAC)¹.
- 1.3. A child is looked after² by a Local Authority (LA) if s/he is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This includes:
 - Children who are accommodated by the LA under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
 - Children who are the subject of a care order or interim care order.
 - Children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child.
- 1.4. Children who were previously looked after are defined as:
 - Children no longer looked after by a LA in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.³
 - Children who were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.⁴
- 1.5. This Policy has regard to:

• Children Act 1989 • Children and Young Persons Act 2008 • Children and Families Act 2014	• Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 • Equality Act 2010 • Children and Social Work Act 2017
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- 1.6. And is written in conjunction with:
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
 - Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (2024)
 - Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (2018)
 - The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (2018)
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
 - The School's Policies including, but not limited to, those relating to Safeguarding, Behaviour, Equality and Diversity, Admissions and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

¹ KCSIE 2026

² Children Act 1989

³ Children who return to their birth parent/parents having been in care, are not defined as previously looked after children

⁴ A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of, or were accommodated by, a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society

2. The Corporate Parenting Principles

- 2.1. The LA and the Virtual School Head (VSH) are the corporate parent for LAC; they are not corporate parents of pLAC. Parental responsibility for pLAC rests with the parent/guardian.
- 2.2. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven fundamental needs known collectively as the Corporate Parenting Principles, which guide and direct LA's in their care of LAC and are:
 - To act in the best interest and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of children and young people.
 - To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
 - To take account of the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
 - To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the LA and its relevant partners.
 - To promote and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people.
 - For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
 - To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 2.3. From 2021 the role of VSH was extended to give them strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker and in fulfilling this role they will engage with key professionals, helping them to understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children. This will include appropriate school staff.
- 2.4. As a relevant partner the School supports and adopts these principles in their role as educators, in boarding and in the general well-being of those LAC in their care. The same principles, as far as they are applicable, will be applied in promoting the education and well-being of pLAC.

3. The School's Aims for LAC and pLAC

- 3.1. All children and young people in care, or having been in care, must have access to good quality education, which is both broad and balanced and commensurate with their needs thereby providing them with improved life chances.
- 3.2. The School aims to:
 - Provide a safe, secure and stable environment, which values education and believes in and promotes and encourages the abilities and potential of all students.
 - Promote inclusion and a positive approach to all aspects of school life.
 - Plan support for LAC and pLAC realistically and using the school's resources efficiently so as to meet students' needs.
 - Ensure that LAC and pLAC have the opportunity to:
 - Access high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation;
 - Realise their full potential and reach the highest standards of which they are capable;
 - Make good progress from what they are currently already able to do;
 - Make good progress in relation to their social and emotional development;
 - Become prepared for adulthood and life beyond school and have access to impartial careers advice;
 - Develop their cultural, moral and social understanding, and
 - Where relevant, become fully integrated into the boarding life of the School and its community.

- 3.3. In promoting and supporting the education, welfare and well-being of LAC and pLAC, the School will have strategies for collaboration with relevant agencies and services and work closely with relevant agencies/parents/guardians to improve opportunities for students in the School's care and asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

4. Safeguarding⁵

- 4.1. The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people both within the school environment and outside. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of children is everyone's responsibility and in this school community the Safeguarding Policy applies to all staff, governors, volunteers and others working in the School.
- 4.2. The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. The School recognises that LAC and pLAC may have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACE), such as 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 practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and PLAC as soon as possible. They will have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep LAC and pLAC safe.
- 4.3. Appropriate staff, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL's), will have:
- The information they need in relation to a student's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with students' birth parents or those with parental responsibility, social workers and the VSH in the authority that looks after any LAC and for pLAC.
 - Information about the student's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority/parent/guardian looking after him/her.
- 4.4. 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.
- 4.5. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

5. Admissions

- 5.1. In accordance with Regulation⁶ the School gives highest priority in its oversubscription criteria to LAC and pLAC during the normal admissions round and for admissions in-year and this includes those children who appear to the Governing Body to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted⁷
- 5.2. These children also take precedence over those on a waiting list. Furthermore these children cannot be refused a place because of having challenging behaviour unless their application is for a boarding place and their behaviour makes them unsuitable to board.⁸
- 5.3. The School's induction programmes will be informed where any of the cohort are LAC or pLAC to ensure smooth transition, welcome and inclusion.

⁵ KCSIE 2026 Paragraphs 133-244

⁶ School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and School Admissions Code May 2021; paragraphs 1.7 and 1.41

⁷ A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of, or were accommodated by, a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society

⁸ School Admissions Code May 2021 paragraph 1.40 [... A maintained boarding school can interview applicants to assess suitability for boarding, but such interviews must only consider whether a child presents a serious health and safety hazard to other boarders or whether they would be able to cope with and benefit from a boarding environment]

6. Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- 6.1. All LAC must have a care plan, drawn up by the LA responsible for the student, of which the PEP is an integral part. This provision does not apply to pLAC.
- 6.2. The PEP is a personalised 'live' record of what needs to happen for the LAC to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential and is part of the student's official school record and is required to be reviewed at least every 6 months.
- 6.3. The designated teacher for LAC and pLAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP and work with them 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.
- 6.4. The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the LA and the School and should involve the student at all stages.
- 6.5. In developing the PEP the Designated Teacher will work closely with other teachers to assess the specific educational needs of the LAC, identifying strengths, weaknesses and any barriers to learning to make sure it is effective in supporting everyone to help the student to make good educational progress.
- 6.6. Where a LAC also has SEND needs, any EHCP should work in harmony with the student's PEP. Where a LAC student has needs but does not have an EHCP, their needs should come within the PEP.
- 6.7. Additional to educational need and development the PEP should set out information on what will happen, or is already happening, to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the student's education, their longer term goals and their aspirations and how these, and their confidence and self-esteem are being nurtured.

7. Mental Health and Well-being

- 7.1. Schools and all staff need to be aware of general mental health and well-being issues for all students and in this school mental health is a whole school initiative and one of the School's equality objectives however LAC and pLAC are more likely to experience the challenges of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers⁹ and this can impact on their behaviour and their education.
- 7.2. Designated teachers should have a greater awareness of mental health concerns and the training and skills needed so as to help and support both LAC and pLAC, and also their colleagues in supporting these students and managing their behaviour, drawing on relevant specialist services where appropriate and working closely with the VSH and those with parental responsibility.
- 7.3. Involvement of the student and listening to and taking on board their views and concerns is key to successfully understanding and meeting their needs and to securing their well-being and all staff must be aware of this.

8. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

- 8.1. Because of the significant barriers faced by LAC and pLAC they are eligible for additional funding that can be used to improve their attainment and help close the attainment gap between this group and their peers.
- 8.2. For LAC - PP+ funding is managed by the VSH for the purpose of supporting their educational achievement. The VSH and the School will work together to agree how this funding can most effectively be used to improve LAC's attainment.

⁹ Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years paragraph 5.32

- 8.3. For pLAC - PP+ funding is managed by the School.
- 8.4. Neither source of PP+ funding is personal to the student; it will be managed to the benefit of the School's cohort of LAC and pLAC.

9. Children Moving Out of Care

Where a child moves out of care they will most likely still need particular attention during the transition phase and may retain many of the educational entitlements they had whilst they were in care. The School will continue to closely monitor students moving out of care, liaising with the VSH for advice, to ensure they receive all of the support they are entitled to and the ongoing support they need as a pLAC. This includes liaison with the LA personal advisor appointed to guide and support the care leaver regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

10. School Suspensions and Exclusions

- 10.1. Past experiences of LAC and pLAC can impact upon their behaviour and the School will take this into account in managing behaviours, identifying means of support and in the sanctions imposed.
- 10.2. The School will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance¹⁰ and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC or pLAC.
- 10.3. 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 strategies for improving this behaviour.
- 10.4. Suspension or exclusion will only be considered as a last resort. Where suspension or exclusion is considered, the School will work with the VSH or those with parental responsibility, to consider what additional support can be provided to prevent this happening, and any additional arrangements that can be made to support the student's education in the event of suspension or permanent exclusion.

11. All Staff

- 11.1. All staff are responsible for being aware of LAC and pLAC in their classes and providing them with support, encouragement and promoting self-esteem.
- 11.2. They should see each student as an individual, have high expectations of LAC and pLAC learning and, where appropriate, set targets to accelerate educational progress.
- 11.3. Staff must:
 - Appreciate the central importance of the LAC's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and the student's own understanding of how they are being supported.
 - Closely monitor progress and attainment and work with the Designated Teacher and other staff, such as the SENCO, who may have responsibilities for the education and development of both LAC and pLAC.
- 11.4. They must be vigilant at all times for any signs of bullying towards LAC or pLAC students or for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and pLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm. Any concerns should be reported to the DSL as soon as possible.
- 11.5. Staff should:
 - Develop good relationships and channels of communication with carers/parents/guardians and have accurate and up-to-date information so that they know who should receive

¹⁰ Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement

information between school and home.

- Be aware of the importance of listening to the voice of LAC and pLAC as part of successfully understanding and meeting their needs.
- Be understanding of, and sensitive to, the students' experience of being looked after and past experiences that may affect their emotional, psychological, social and other behaviours.
- Understand the link between emotional well-being and being able to make educational progress.
- Be aware of potential signs of mental health problems and know who to report this to so that appropriate further assessment can be considered.

11.6. They must be aware of and follow the guidelines for sharing sensitive information about individual LAC and pLAC and preserve confidentiality where appropriate.

12. Designated Teacher for LAC and pLAC

12.1. The School will nominate a Designated Teacher for LAC and pLAC¹¹. Their primary duty in this role will be to promote the educational progress and attainment of LAC and pLAC at the school and secure their general well-being.

12.2. The School's Designated Teacher for LAC and pLAC is Andrew Coalter, Deputy Headmaster. His contact details are:

Address Old Swinford Hospital, Heath Lane, Stourbridge, DY8 1QX

Telephone: 01384 815312/817300 or 07871 212109

Email: accoalter@oshsch.com

12.3. In his absence the DSL, Jon Adey, can be contacted at the same address, by email on jadey@oshsch.com and by telephone on 01384 815019/817300 or 07714 006524.

12.4. The Designated Teacher will:

- Be a qualified teacher who is working as a teacher at the School or be a headteacher or acting headteacher of the School.
- Have undertaken relevant and appropriate training and keep this up to date as needed.¹²
- Be of sufficient seniority and professional experience to be able to assess the teaching and learning needs and the general well-being of LAC and pLAC and be able to influence decisions about the teaching, learning and the well-being of the students.
- Have regard to the DfE guidance 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (February 2018)' as a whole and in developing effective practice.

12.5. The School will ensure that the Designated Teacher has sufficient time and, as far as reasonable and practicable, resources to carry out their function.

12.6. The Designated Teacher will:

General:

- Act as advocate for LAC and pLAC and co-ordinate support for them in school.
- For pLAC liaise with the parents for evidence of their previously looked after status.
- Ensure the School's compliance with the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) Strategy and National Government Agenda for the Education of LAC.
- Be the central point for initial contact within the school for all matters relating to LAC and pLAC.

¹¹ Children and Young Persons Act 2008, section 20 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017

¹² Children and Young Persons Act 2008, section 20(2)

- Maintain the required information about each LAC and each pLAC relative to their status and ensure that this is appropriately shared in the interests of ensuring:
 - Compliance with reporting and monitoring requirements;
 - The provision of good quality and appropriate education;
 - Inclusion in all aspects of school life;
 - Securing PP+ and any other relevant funding;
 - Monitoring attendance, and
 - Welfare, well-being and safeguarding.
- Maintain and monitor information sharing arrangements and confidentiality.
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that the needs of LAC and pLAC, their learning and their welfare, are included and not overlooked.

Relationships with carers/parents/guardians and relevant professionals

- Build relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to LAC and act as the main contact for social services and the education department.
- Know the family arrangements and relationships beyond school, how the School should engage with them and proactively engage with these partners to enable the School to respond effectively to LAC and pLAC needs.
- Be open and accessible so that those with parental responsibility feel able to approach the Designated Teacher to discuss the support needs of their child.
- Keep under review how the School works with others outside of the School to maximise the stability of education for LAC and pLAC.

Safeguarding:

- Work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding LAC and pLAC are quickly and effectively responded to.

Developing and supporting educational provision:

- Ensure LAC and pLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary, and that additional support is available if needed.
- Lead on how the PEP for each LAC is developed and used in school to make sure student's progress towards educational targets are monitored.
- Liaise with the SENCO for any special needs and/or disabilities forming an EHCP, dovetailing these needs in with the PEP. Where a LAC has needs but does not have an EHCP liaise with the SENCO to ensure the PEP reflects the appropriate measures and plans. Where a pLAC has needs but does not have an EHCP liaise with the SENCO to ensure appropriate school action is put in place.
- Be a source of advice for teachers about teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are LAC or pLAC so they understand where each student has learning gaps, where they need to go, and how to get there.
- Advise/decide on how to use PP+ funding for the LAC and pLAC cohort. In doing this:
 - Liaise with the VHS for LAC, and
 - Liaise with the Bursar and other relevant staff for pLAC.

Monitoring progress:

- Work closely with other staff in school to make sure students' progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated and ensure there are effective intervention strategies for each LAC or pLAC that needs them.
- Put processes in place for how the School works in partnership with the carers/parents and

other professionals, such as the student's social worker, in order to review and develop the educational progress and how each person will contribute to driving up educational achievement.

- Attend review meetings and so that there can be an informed discussion about the student's progress in school and:
 - Review the PEP before the statutory review of the care plan to ensure it is up-to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered;
 - Ensure the PEP is clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the student and from where these may be sourced, and
 - Share the updated PEP with the student's social worker and VSH ahead of the review.

Pastoral & inclusion:

- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations where LAC and pLAC:
 - Can be involved in setting their own targets, discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
 - Are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from intervention and support;
 - Are encouraged to participate in activities and in decision making within the school and the care system;
 - Believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs, and
 - Can discuss difficult issues, such as SEN, bullying and attendance, in a frank manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult.

Emotional & mental health:

- Consider the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by LAC and pLAC and be able to identify the potential signs of mental health issues.
- Understand the impact mental health issues can have on LAC and pLAC and know how to act and/or make the appropriate referrals to access further assessment and support where necessary.
- Ensure LAC and pLAC are listened to and have access to support and counselling in school.

Behaviour:

- Ensure support is provided for improving behaviour if necessary and, should a LAC or pLAC be identified as at risk of suspension or exclusion, ensure contact is made with the Local Authority Inclusion Officer and the VSH to enable, if possible, early intervention/preventative strategies to be put in place.
- Enable consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation, referring any attendance concerns to the VSH/those with parental responsibility and supply attendance data as required.

Moving on:

- Closely monitor students moving out of care, liaising with the VSH for advice to ensure that these students receive all of the support they are entitled to and the ongoing support they need as a pLAC.
- Engage regarding any decision about changes in care placements for LAC which will disrupt the student's education and provide advice about the likely impact of disrupting their education and what the LA should do in order to minimise the disruption if a move in educational placement cannot be avoided.
- Support the transition process by providing any information the new school might need.

- Ensure that on admission or transfer all relevant information is requested at the outset and that transitional support is factored into the PEP.

Training:

- Have the training and skills so as to both help and support LAC and pLAC and help and support colleagues in supporting these students and managing their behaviour.
- Take the lead for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how LAC and pLAC learn and achieve and how the whole school needs to support the educational achievement of these students.
- Keep all relevant personal training up to date, advise on the training of other staff, share relevant CPD and keep abreast of statutory guidance and with what is good practice and how this is to be implemented in school.

13. Information sharing and confidentiality

13.1. The School will ensure that appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing data are in place so that the education needs of LAC and pLAC are understood and met.

13.2. The arrangements should set out:

- Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured.
- How students and carers/parents/guardians are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the School and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual students is passed between authorities, departments and the school when students move.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

14.1. Governors will work with the Headmaster to determine the strategic development of LAC/pLAC policy and provision in the School.

14.2. The Headmaster is responsible for overseeing the education of LAC and pLAC and the implementation of this Policy.

14.3. The Designated Teacher will prepare a report for discussion with Governors each term on:

- Progress, attainment and other achievements of the School's LAC and pLAC and how this compares with other student groups.
- Attendance, behaviour and well-being.
- Any interventions or matters of concern.
- The use and impact of any PP+.

14.4. Complaints concerning the application of this Policy will be dealt with through the general school procedures for dealing with parental complaints.