

Forest Way School

Looked-After Children Policy

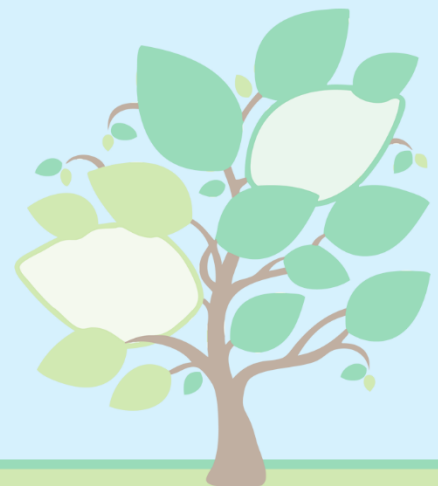
Name: James Shanley

Signature: 

Title: Chair

Date: May 2024

Next Review Date: May 2025



Statutory

Non-Statutory

POLICY FOR LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN (PLAC)

Rationale

Forest Way School recognises that Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) can experience specific and significant disadvantages within a school setting. We are committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We recognise that LAC and PLAC may have faced significant trauma in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) including abuse, neglect, loss and/or rejection. When children are exposed to these adverse and stressful experiences, it can have a long-lasting impact on their learning, as well as on their ability to think and to interact with others.

Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, national progress and attainment data clearly shows that LAC and PLAC are at greater risk of exclusion and are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Forest Way School believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every LAC and PLAC can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

School can be a source of stability for children who may have been subject to emotional distress and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and thrive.

Policy (Legal Framework)

Looked after children (LAC)

The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989: a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if they fall into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

Previously LAC children (PLAC)

PLAC children are those who:

- are no longer LAC 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.

Every local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure that their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged; this officer is called

the Virtual School Head (VSH). The duties of the VSH are defined in the DfE statutory guidance “*Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children*” – February 2018.

The governing body of a maintained school and the proprietor of an academy must ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff, undertakes the responsibilities within the school to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school’s roll; this person is the ‘designated teacher’ (DT). The duties of the DT are defined in the DfE statutory guidance “*The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children*” – February 2018.

Principles

Forest Way School is committed to enhancing the achievement and welfare of LAC and PLAC in the following ways:

- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of LAC and PLAC.
- Providing a climate of acceptance and challenging negative stereotypes.
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education that meets the needs of the individual child.
- Ensuring that (LAC and PLAC) students have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of the school, including the curriculum, careers guidance, extra-curricular activities, work experience.
- Ensuring LAC have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that addresses all aspects of education including health and wellbeing and ensures that appropriate support is in place to promote progress.
- Ensuring that carers/parents, social workers and virtual school staff (where relevant) are kept fully informed of their child’s progress and attainment.
- Ensuring that (LAC and PLAC) students are involved, where practicable, in decisions about their education, including affecting their future provision.
- Maintaining and respecting the child’s confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring an appropriately trained DT is appointed, who will be responsible for all LAC and PLAC.
- Prioritising a reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Ensuring discretion when addressing a child’s care status and ensuring there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially regarding schoolwork on “family”.

Procedures

Admissions

Forest Way School welcomes all LAC.

All LAC and PLAC should have the highest priority within school admission arrangements. The school recognises that LAC and PLAC are an ‘excepted group’ and will be prioritised in our oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

Due to care placement changes, LAC children may enter the Academy mid-term. It is vital that these students are given a positive welcome. If necessary, they may need to be offered additional support and pre-entry visits to help the student settle.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A PEP will be initiated within 20 school days of the LAC starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary (at least termly and within 6 months of the previous PEP). The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns, ensure appropriate support is in place and set Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound targets (SMART). The child should be involved in their PEP by attending the meeting and/or sharing their views or in another way (e.g. gathered by the DT before the meeting).

We will have robust arrangements in place to ensure that any undiagnosed special educational needs are reflected in the PEP and addressed through the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) framework as soon as possible.

Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

PPP for LAC will be delegated to schools by the relevant virtual school. We will allocate the Pupil Premium Plus funding (PPP) to support appropriate provision for individual LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy and the child's PEP. We will work in partnership with the child's Virtual School to ensure that LAC receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve in all aspects of school life.

For PLAC, the PPP funding will go directly to the school's budget if the child is listed as PLAC on the January census. The use of this funding will be identified in consultation with the young person and their parents.

Exclusions

Forest Way School recognises that LAC and PLAC are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a LAC/PLAC is at risk of exclusion, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. Consultation with social workers, the Virtual School and other relevant parties will be important in identifying strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

If an exclusion is unavoidable, the reintegration meeting should consider all possible measures and resources that provide support and prevent further exclusions.

Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy which reflects the support needed for LAC and PLAC.

Confidentiality

Many LAC do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel different. We will maintain and respect the child's confidentiality in consultation with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties. Once this has been agreed, complete confidentiality is to be maintained and information on LAC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis.

All staff will do their utmost to maintain the child's confidentiality e.g. avoiding reference to their care status/PEP meetings in front of their peers.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with LAC and PLAC, such as Social Care teams; virtual schools, Educational Psychology, health services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Responsibilities

Governing Body

All Trustees should be fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC and PLAC.

The governing body will appoint a named governor for LAC and PLAC. The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and DT as the named staff responsible for implementing this policy.

The named Trustee should:

- ensure the school has a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC that is regularly reviewed in light of the relevant statutory guidance and that other school policies support their needs.
- ensure that the school has a DT, and that the DT has the necessary time, resources and training to be able to carry out his or her responsibilities.
- ensure LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC

The governing body should receive an annual report setting out:

- The number of LAC and PLAC students on the school's roll.
- Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
- Their progress and attainment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions.
- The destinations of LAC pupils who leave the school.

The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned

Head Teacher

The responsibilities of the Head Teacher are:

- To identify a DT for LAC and PLAC. NB it is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the DT leave the school or be absent.
- To support the DT in carrying out his/her role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training on LAC.
- To ensure that the DT has received appropriate training and has the necessary time and resources to carry out the role.

- To ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of LAC and ensure strategies are in place to address any concerns in these areas.
- To report on the progress, attendance and behaviour of LAC to all parties involved.
- To ensure that all staff receive relevant training about the needs of LAC and PLAC and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- To ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used effectively to support appropriate provision for individual LAC.

Designated Teacher

Government Guidance says that the DT should be “*someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, who should be an advocate for LAC and PLAC, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy shares and supports high expectations for them.*”

Our Designated Teacher will:

- Understand the role of carers, social workers and other relevant parties, be the named contact for them and maintain regular communication with them.
- Understand the role of virtual schools and respond promptly to requests for information.
- Act as an advocate for LAC and PLAC in order to maintain high aspirations, allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances
- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the PEP to plan for that transition in consultation with the child’s social worker.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition to a new school or phase of education and ensure the speedy transfer of information.
- Be responsible for the implementation of the child’s PEP and lead in promoting their educational achievement. This includes monitoring academic progress and attendance, and ensuring the necessary support is in place to meet the child’s learning, social and emotional needs. This may involve working closely with other key members of staff e.g. the SENCO
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how LAC and PLAC children learn and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
- Ensure that each LAC and PLAC has an identified key adult that they can talk to at school.
- Ensure that children are able to discuss their progress and are involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- DRAFS set up timely meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- Maintain an up-to-date record of the LAC in school, ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required on a strictly ‘need to know’ basis and reporting annually to trustees, maintaining confidentiality of all LAC and PLAC.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage LAC to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
- Be aware that many LAC and PLAC say they are bullied, so actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school’s anti-bullying policy.
- Attend training as required and keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding LAC.

All Staff

All staff should:

- Be aware of the impact of trauma (including abuse, neglect, loss and separation) on children’s development and their ability to build relationships, and how this might affect their behaviour.
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC and PLAC, as for all students and work to ensure they achieve stability and success at school.
- Understand how important it is to see LAC and previously LAC children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their LAC or previously LAC status.
- Use effective classroom strategies to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC and be aware that some curriculum content may trigger difficult emotions, such as schoolwork on “family”.
- Keep the DT informed about LAC and previously LAC children’s progress, respond promptly to requests for information and discuss any concerns about barriers to learning (including bullying).

- Appreciate the central importance of the LAC child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported.
- Engage with relevant training that is offered to enable them to work effectively with LAC and PLAC.

Links to other policies

The needs of LAC and PLAC should be kept in mind in all other policies including:

- Pupil Premium Policy (Differentiation between Pupil Premium for FSM, Forces' children, PLAC, and LAC)
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions policy
- Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement
- Accessibility Policy