



Looked After Children Policy (Whole School including EYFS)

Independent Day School

Our Lady of Sion School

Last Reviewed: February 2024

Frequency of Review: Annually

Next Review Due: February 2025

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer.

Each UK nation has a slightly different definition of a looked after child and follows its own legislation, policy and guidance. But, in general, looked after children are:

- living with foster parents
- living in a residential children's home, or
- living in residential settings like schools or secure units.

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Most children in care say that their experiences are good and that it was the right choice for them (Biehal et al, 2014). But more needs to be done to ensure that all looked after children are healthy and safe, have the same opportunities as their peers and can move successfully into adulthood.

Looked after children come from a range of different backgrounds and have varied experiences of care. Each child has their own different and specific sets of needs.

Our Lady of Sion School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to wholly share in this commitment.

Specific support for looked after children is essential if they are to thrive

The barriers faced by children in care, or looked after children (LAC), are manifold and well-documented.

Despite their best efforts, the care system is always under strain and frequent changes of carer or social worker can erode these children's – already fragile – trust.

In comparison to their peers, LAC are statistically more likely to have complex social or emotional needs as a result of the trauma, abuse or neglect they may have experienced.

We must remember that most children in care live healthy and productive lives. Despite their many challenges, the majority have very good school attendance. Indeed, the resilience that many of these young people demonstrate is often an inspiration to the adults that work with them.

1. As governors and teachers of Our Lady of Sion School, we aim to:
 - make a real difference in helping to provide the best possible education for looked after children as much as any other;
 - seek to give our young people in care professional help, encouragement and support, so they find our school a welcoming and friendly place;
 - be fully inclusive, challenging negative views and stereotypes;

- offer support to and work with their foster carers on how to assist the young person's learning and enhance educational opportunities.
2. We will support the Government's agenda for giving all looked after children the same life chances as any other child, in that we want them to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society, and achieve economic well-being.
 3. The Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children 2015, (updated 2018) place duty on us to work together to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. We recognise that schools and teachers are at the very heart of this process so that we can provide a good education in order to unlock a bright future and so increase life chances of this vulnerable group. We are highly ambitious for these young people, knowing that securing the best possible progress for them will greatly enhance their life chances. Our inclusive culture and our desire for all children to be Known and Nurtured will provide a strong foundation on which these young people can build self-esteem, skills and talents and achieve outcomes that make them proud of themselves. Our monitoring of progress through the TAP and KAN reviews will always ensure that those students under the LAC umbrella are reviewed in detail with subsequent interventions agreed to ensure the very best support each day.
 4. We recognise our responsibilities as governors and teachers and we actively want to support the local authority in undertaking its statutory responsibility, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004. This is to help this vulnerable group to succeed in education, champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative assumptions at all levels.
 5. As school governors and teachers, we are aware we can make a significant difference. We recognise that we have a key role and major influence to ensure that the needs of looked after children are considered at the improvement planning and policy level through to monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes.
 6. As a governing body we will introduce a monitoring procedure where we will look closely at the progress that looked after children are making in our school and identify if there are barriers to their next steps of learning and progress. This progress will be reviewed by the Governor Education Committee and will form part of the monitoring by the Safeguarding Governor and the Chair of Governors when meeting with the Headteacher and the DSL for regular review of safeguarding management and supervision.
 7. We will introduce an annual reporting cycle on the progress and performance of looked after children, to be presented to the full governing body by our appointed Designated Teacher during the autumn term of each academic year as a standing agenda item. However, more regular updates may well be requested and the regular monitoring of attainment, effort and behaviour across all cohorts means that relevant data/information is always accessible.
 8. As a governing body we will require our Designated Teacher to carry out the specific duties below in relation to the looked after children attending this school.
 9. We will require our appointed Designated Teacher to undertake the recommendations set down in the statutory guidance entitled **The Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children**. Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities **Feb 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

The Designated Teacher will usually be the Designated Safeguarding Lead of the school or one of the Deputy Designated Leads. We have not named the person in this policy, as we believe that it

is important to choose the right person for the child. We note that The Designated Teacher should have sufficient seniority to influence policy and practice where necessary, and to promote a positive and supportive ethos throughout the whole school. Given the nuances alluded to in the points above, it is also clear that they will need the right blend of experience, skills and personal qualities to make it work. There is a requirement here for both strength and subtlety.

Designated teachers obviously need to establish very strong and well-organised channels of communication, both internally and with external agencies. They will have a role in ensuring, therefore, that their school's data-sharing protocols are robust and fit-for-purpose. They will need to know what to share, what not to share, and how to communicate it safely and securely. By ensuring that looked after pupils have a high-quality education plan, for example, the designated teacher is not only helping to keep them on track, they are building a comprehensive source of pupil-level data. If the child does move schools unexpectedly, this information can be invaluable to their new setting.

There is a statutory requirement for designated teachers to keep up-to-date with appropriate training and they will need ongoing support and supervision to help them manage the challenges of the role.

The Children & Young Persons Act 2008 places a duty on school governing bodies "to designate member of staff (the designated teacher) as having the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of LAC, including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at the school".

The designated teacher really is a key role in schools, on which the Department for Education (DfE) published updated statutory guidance in February this year. Here are a few of their key responsibilities:

- Helping to ensure that other school staff are aware of the individual needs of looked-after pupils (while maintaining appropriate confidentiality) and promoting high aspirations.
- Tracking the attendance, attainment and progress of their looked-after pupils.
- Putting together the PEP that all LAC should have, in partnership with the child, their carer and their social worker.
- Providing a consistent source of support to the child. That consistency alone can be invaluable. If things turn chaotic for the child, and other key adults in their life do change, school can provide the lifeline of a regular, reassuring voice.
- become the central point of contact at this school for all professionals and agencies working with and supporting the individual looked after children we have on roll;
- take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Personal Education Plan. The PEP should be established within twenty school working days for any looked after child starting on roll. This to include the gradual addition and updating of further information over time, eg, attendance, attainment and progress results;
- attend relevant update training and cascade information for staff development and updating regarding looked after children;
- ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account;

- establish good working relationships and communications with Foster Carers, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend meetings and reviews;
- provide support and sanctuary to help settle a looked after child into the school, and at other times; ensure that the looked after child feels safe, knows who to trust and who to go to if they feel the need for support;
- ensure the transfer of records if a looked after child moves school;
- provide written information to assist planning, reviews and reporting as required;
- seek and prioritise meetings with, and referrals to, appropriate external agencies in situations that require external support.

10. In addition, we will require our school Teaching and Support Staff to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after children by requiring all staff to:

- ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained;
- be familiar with, and respond appropriately to, requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews;
- respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with;
- ensure that no child in care becomes the victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and eradicated;
- positively promote the self-esteem of looked after children;
- convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

The Personal Education Plan

All LAC should have a PEP, which sets out their progress to date, identifies their strengths and needs, and sets individualised learning targets for them. Formed in a dedicated meeting, this key document also identifies the support they will need to help them to achieve those goals, and exactly how that support will be administered.

In Our Lady of Sion School, the PEP should start with a multi-dimensional view of the pupil in question – their progress, barriers, needs and strengths, as well as current and prior attainment. If that detail is missing, it usually translates into vague or woolly targets such as “attend school regularly” or “work hard in class”.

Prior attainment data might also indicate that the student has the potential to aim much higher than the level that they appear to be at currently, if they are given the right support to help them re-engage or catch up on what they have missed.

Targets should involve a pupil’s wider progress and wellbeing, as well as purely academic achievement. The PEP should set out exactly what success will look like (to the pupil as well as to professionals), how it will be supported and monitored, and when and by whom.

The pupil voice is an important part of any programme of support for vulnerable children, as they often struggle with feelings of helplessness or lack of control. They may feel that things are always being done to them, or for them; at Our Lady of Sion School, we will enable these pupils by doing things with them.

The PEP represents an opportunity to capture pupil’s views and aspirations, and they should be encouraged to contribute. If they don’t want to attend the actual meeting, then the PEP format should

allow an opportunity to record their comments beforehand. By considering those views and using them to inform learning targets and long-term goals, we are conducting meaningful – rather than tokenistic – participation.

The Children & Social Care Act 2018 is extending the designated teacher role to include children who have left care via an adoption or Special Guardianship Order (SGO) – though these won't require a PEP. This significant development came into force in September 2018. Considering that adopted children are “up to 20 times” more likely to be excluded (Adoption UK), it is clear this cohort is in urgent need of a greater and/or different level of support. We shall remain mindful of this when working with adopted children here at Our Lady of Sion School.

11. As a Governing Body we will endeavour to raise expectations for achievement of looked after children and encourage them to do well by combining high expectation and standards with inclusion.
12. We will consider and set appropriately challenging targets and in so doing facilitate the appropriate resources in order to support the child to reach those targets.
13. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of our school provision, teaching and learning and support for looked after children. The annual reporting cycle informs on the following key aspects of provision:
 - the number of looked after children on roll;
 - attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence;
 - the frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded exclusion;
 - how they are performing in core subjects, their progress and any value-added measure when compared against initial baseline assessment;
 - the frequency of them taking part in extra-curricular activities;
 - the attainment relative to the targets set in core and foundation subjects;
 - the provision arrangements for additional support identified to include 1:1 tuition at school and any externally added booster work provided in the care home;
 - the quality and updating of the educational targets recorded in the PEP.
14. We are aware that ISI will consider the provisions that we, as a whole school, have put in place to support looked after children. We understand that a judgement will be made within the ISI inspection framework in terms of how far this school is able to support looked after young people. The formal report will include comments about the progress and support provided to these vulnerable young people.
15. At Our Lady of Sion School, the designated safeguarding lead will nearly always be the designated teacher for looked after children. This group is extremely vulnerable; the most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect and the school is aware of the need to monitor the welfare and ensure the support of children in this category.
16. The designated safeguarding lead has details of the of the legal status of each individual looked after child's care arrangements and what the contact arrangements are with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. They will also know the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her/them.
17. The designated teacher will work with the SENCO and Senior Leaders (Pastoral and Academic) and the child's social worker to discuss how funding (where available) can be best used to support the

progress of looked after children in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan and to ensure their safety and security.

18. As the majority of children looked after have special educational needs and/or disabilities, our SENCO will be closely involved with the provision for this group.

The name of our appointed Designated Governor is: Mrs Sue Coldwell (Safeguarding Governor)

The name of our school's Designated Teacher is: Mr Anthony Faulkner

The name of our SENCO is: Sharôn Bruwer

Approved by Board of Governors February 2024