



Looked After Children Policy (Whole School including EYFS)

Independent Day School

Our Lady of Sion School

Last Reviewed: February 2025

Frequency of Review: Annually

Next Review Due: February 2026

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. However, in general, looked after children are:

- **living with foster parents;**
- **living in a residential children's home; or**
- **living in residential settings such as schools or secure units.**

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home, or turn 18. However, local authorities in all the nations of the UK must support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family. **Once placed with prospective adopters, the child stays a looked after child until an adoption order is granted by the court, which can take some time. Once granted, the child is no longer considered LAC, but we will record them as PLAC (Post Looked After Child)**

Most children in care say that their experiences are good and that it was the right choice for them (Biehal et al., 2014). However, 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 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 also recognise that many children in care live healthy and productive lives. Despite their challenges, most have very good school attendance. The resilience that these young people demonstrate often serves as an inspiration to the adults that work with them.**

Objectives and Responsibilities

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, including:**
 - being healthy,
 - staying safe,
 - enjoying and achieving,
 - making a positive contribution to society, and
 - achieving economic well-being.
3. **We will adhere to The Children Act 2004 and the statutory guidance 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children' (2015, updated 2018), which place a duty on schools to work collaboratively to support LAC.**
 - Our inclusive culture and focus on children being "Known and Nurtured" provide a strong foundation to build their self-esteem and talents.
 - We will review LAC students' progress through the TAP and KAN reviews to ensure the best support is provided daily.
4. **We will actively support the local authority in fulfilling its statutory responsibility under Section 52 of The Children Act 2004.**
5. **As a governing body, we will:**
 - introduce a monitoring procedure to track the progress of looked after children;
 - ensure progress reviews include barriers to learning and the next steps for intervention;
 - monitor progress via the Safeguarding Governor and the Chair of Governors during regular meetings with the Headteacher and DSL.
6. **We will introduce an annual reporting cycle for LAC progress and performance:**
 - Reports will be presented to the full governing body during the autumn term.
 - Regular updates may also be requested to ensure relevant data is accessible.
7. **The Designated Teacher's responsibilities include:**
 - Promoting high aspirations for looked after children.
 - Ensuring all staff are aware of their needs while maintaining confidentiality.
 - Tracking attendance, attainment, and progress.
 - Leading the development of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) within 20 school working days of a child starting on roll.
8. **We will ensure the Designated Teacher:**
 - Ensure that all school staff are informed of the individual needs of looked-after children (LAC), while maintaining confidentiality, and foster high aspirations for these students.
 - Monitor the attendance, academic progress, and overall well-being of looked-after pupils.
 - Collaborate with the child, their carer, and social worker to create and review the Personal Education Plan (PEP) for each LAC.

- Provide consistent, reliable support to the child, offering stability in their school environment, especially during periods of personal or family upheaval.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for all professionals and agencies involved in supporting the LAC students within the school.
- Lead the process of assessing educational targets, preparing PEPs, and coordinating regular reviews, ensuring the PEP is developed within 20 school working days for any new LAC student. Continuously update the plan with relevant data on attendance, progress, and attainment.
- Participate in relevant professional development opportunities to stay informed about the needs of LAC and share updates and best practices with staff.
- Handle personal information sensitively and ensure the child's preferences and wishes are respected in all processes.
- Build and maintain strong working relationships with foster carers, providing timely information about meetings and reviews, and ensuring they are included in the support process.
- Offer support and reassurance to help LAC students settle into school, ensuring they feel safe and know who to approach for help or guidance.
- Oversee the smooth transfer of records when a LAC student moves to a new school.
- Provide written reports and updates to support planning, reviews, and reporting as required.
- Facilitate meetings and referrals to appropriate external agencies when additional support is needed for LAC students.

9. Teaching and Support Staff responsibilities include:

- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality.
- Responding positively to LAC needs.
- Promoting self-esteem and conveying high aspirations for their achievement.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The PEP is a vital document for LAC progress. It identifies strengths, needs, and individualised targets.

- PEPs should include a multi-dimensional view of the pupil, their progress, and barriers to success.
- Targets must address academic progress, wellbeing, and broader aspirations.
- The pupil voice must be incorporated, ensuring meaningful participation in their learning journey.

The Children & Social Care Act 2018 expanded the designated teacher's role to include children who have left care via adoption or Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). **While SGOs do not require PEPs, we will ensure adopted children receive the necessary support to thrive.**

Monitoring and Evaluation

As a governing body, we will:

- Set challenging targets for looked after children.
- Evaluate the school's impact on their progress.
- Monitor data, including:

- Attendance statistics.
- Exclusions.
- Participation in extracurricular activities.
- Progress in core subjects and attainment relative to targets.
- The quality of PEP targets and updates.

Our appointed Designated Teacher is Mr Steven Jeffery and our SENCO is Sharòn Bruwer.

Safeguarding and Support

At Our Lady of Sion School, we recognise the vulnerability of LAC and are committed to their safety and security.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor LAC welfare and liaise with the SENCO and Senior Leaders, supporting the needs identified in their PEP.
- The majority of LAC have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and our SENCO will work closely with them to provide tailored support.

Our appointed LAC Safeguarding Governor is Dr Sue Coldwell.