



# West View Primary School

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## **Looked After Children Policy**

Policy approved by Local Academy Committee: October 2023

Date for Review: October 2024

## **Statement of Intent**

*Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked After Children (LAC) and previously Looked After Children (PLAC) are of real concern. Pupils who are LAC or PLAC often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.*

Throughout this policy, the abbreviations of LAC and PLAC will be used to refer to Looked After and Previously Looked After children. However, it should be noted that in Hartlepool, children who are LAC are referred to as 'Children in our Care' (CIOC).

Further details of arrangements for LAC and PLAC in Hartlepool can be found here:  
[Arrangements for Looked After Children placed in Hartlepool | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)

## **Aims**

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

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their academic, social, emotional and mental health development.
- Ensure that pupils enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation and statutory guidance.
- Plan support for LAC and PLAC realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure that we meet their individual needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding.

## **Legal Framework**

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

- [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children and Young Persons Act 2008 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Attendance and Punctuality

- Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Home School Agreement
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Transition

### **Definitions**

**‘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, where 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.

**‘Previously Looked After Children’ (PLAC)** are defined as:

- Children who are 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 Order (SGO) or Child Arrangements Order (CAO).
- Children who have been adopted outside of 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).

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The Local Academy Committee is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the school has a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the school’s policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the Headteacher regarding the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis.
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC has received the appropriate training.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each LAC’s/PLAC’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 or 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 PLAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns amongst LAC and PLAC.

- Ensuring LAC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if and where necessary.

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 Orders 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 and PLAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so that they and the Designated Teachers understand the support available to LAC and PLAC.
- 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 PLAC 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/Designated Teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
  - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers and independent reviewing officers 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 Virtual School Headteacher for Hartlepool is: Emma Rutherford.**

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Further information regarding Corporate Parenting in Hartlepool can be found here: [Children Looked After & Corporate Parenting | Children Looked After & Corporate Parenting | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Local Academy Committee at least annually on the following:
  - The number of LAC and PLAC in the school
  - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
  - The attendance of LAC and PLAC, 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 PLAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

**At West View Primary School, Miss Furness is the Headteacher and the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC. She is supported in the day-to-day provision and support for LAC and PLAC by the Social Inclusion Manager, Ms Clarke. Ms Clarke is also a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and the school's Senior Mental Health Lead.**

The Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC 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 PLAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders 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 and prioritising them for one-to-one tuition and support (as appropriate to their individual needs) - **this will be done in partnership with the school's SENDCO - Mrs Boagey.**
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP - **this will be done in partnership with the school's Social Inclusion Manager/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead - Ms Clarke.**
- 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.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH - *this can be found on the school safeguarding list which is regularly updated and shared with all staff.*
- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and PLAC 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.

**At West View Primary School, Miss Furness is the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead). She is supported by the wider Safeguarding Team of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs): Ms Clarke, Mrs Boagey, Mr McGuinness and Miss Tailford.**

The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and PLAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, Designated Teacher, specialists and parents/carers when considering interventions to support the progress of LAC and PLAC. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for PLAC.
- Ensuring that LAC and PLAC with SEND are supported in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for LAC, e.g. where LAC are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident.

**At West View Primary School, Mrs Boagey is the SENDCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). She is supported in this role by Mrs Jones who also holds the National Award for SEN Co-ordination.**

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and PLAC 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 PLAC.
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and PLAC.

### **Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

All LAC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.

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 PEP will be reviewed termly.

West View Primary School, along with other professionals and the child's carers, will 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 educational and developmental needs, including:

- Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
- Ongoing catch-up support, which will be made available for children who may have fallen behind with their academic 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, if and 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.
  - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the Designated Teacher will ensure that information is included within a LAC or PLAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the pupil.

### **Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)**

West View Primary School will:

- Ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- Coordinate review meetings; for example, hold the annual review of LAC with their statutory care review.
- Work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard LAC and PLAC.
- Agree behaviour management strategies with the VSH to ensure that challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for the individual child.
- Communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.
- 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.
- Work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of a cohort of LAC, or PLAC, according to their needs. If deemed necessary, we will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.
- Ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.
- Share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and PLAC.

## **Training**

The Designated Teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:

- School admissions
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

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

## **Safeguarding**

As a school, we recognise that many LAC and PLAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care and as such, 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.

Where a LAC or PLAC 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.

The Headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and PLAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or PLAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the Designated Teacher if they believe a LAC or PLAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

## **Mental Health**

LAC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties which can impact their behaviour and education. The Designated Teacher and the Senior Mental Health Lead 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 and/or Senior Mental Health Lead will work with the VSH to ensure that the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health difficulties, understand the impact that these difficulties can have on LAC and PLAC, and how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.



As a school, we understand that the increased frequency of mental health difficulties amongst LAC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health difficulties 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 PLAC, are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be used on a termly basis to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about LAC and PLAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

All school staff will work together to promote the mental health and wellbeing of LAC and PLAC.

The school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health Policy will be adhered to when dealing with all potential or explicit mental health issues that LAC or PLAC may face.

### **Suspensions and Exclusions**

Past experiences of LAC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy. We will have due regard to the DfE's statutory guidance - [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) and recognise that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The Headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

Where the school has concerns about a LAC's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, we 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 Headteacher/Designated Teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible. The VSH will work with the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

### **Information sharing**

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and PLAC and how data will remain secure.

- How pupils and parents 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 pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by Miss Furness (Designated Teacher and the Headteacher) with support from the wider Safeguarding Team, which includes the Senior Mental Health Lead and SENCO.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is October 2024.

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders following approval by the Local Academy Committee.