

Looked After Children Policy

Reviewed and updated September 2022

Definitions

Who are Looked After Children?

The term 'looked after' originates from the Children Act 1989 and is the legal term for children in care. It is a term that refers to children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility.

When is a child 'looked after'?

A child is looked after under the following circumstances:

- The child is in accommodation commissioned and provided by the Local Authority for more than 24 hours.
- The child is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or Care Order either living at home or placed away from home with relatives, friends or local authority carers.
- The child is remanded to Local Authority Care.
- The child is subject to a Secure Order under the Children Act 1989.
- The child is placed for adoption but the adoption order has not been made.
- The child is an unaccompanied minor.

Rationale

Noel-Baker Academy is committed in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this. We expect all staff and volunteers to share our commitment.

Objectives

1. As Governors and teachers at Noel-Baker Academy, 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 and we will challenge 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. 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.

4. As school Governors 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. We have an annual reporting cycle on the progress and performance of looked after children during the autumn term of each academic year.

Roles and Responsibilities

The named Governor should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after children
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- the Governing body receives an annual report.

The Head Teacher will:

- appoint the designated teacher
- oversee the development of the policy on looked after children
- ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of LAC and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations
- report on the progress, attendance and conduct of LAC to all parties involved
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after children.

The named Designated Teacher will:

- become the central point of contact at the Academy 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 e.g. 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.

Teaching and Support Staff will:

- 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.

Monitoring and evaluation

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.

Safeguarding

At Noel-Baker Academy, the lead teacher for looked after children works closely with the designated safeguarding lead. 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.

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.

The designated teacher will work with the virtual school head and the child's social worker to discuss how funding 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.

Special Educational Needs

As a number of children looked after have special educational needs and/ or disabilities our lead teacher for looked after children is also the Senior SENCo and will be closely involved with the provision for this group.

External agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked After Child or Young Person including Social Care teams; Educational Psychologist; Health Services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Looked after children are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LEA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school.

Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

The name of our school's Designated Teacher is:

Clare Pedlar, Assistant Headteacher.