

Parkfield Community School's

Policy for Looked after and Previously Looked After Children



[Rights Respecting Schools' Article/s](#)

A3: The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

A9: Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

A12: When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

A20: Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.

Rationale

Schools are key 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.

Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis. The term “Previously looked after” refers to those children who are no longer looked after by a Local Authority (in England and Wales) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order. Alternatively, they may have been adopted from ‘state care’ outside of England and Wales.

Legal Framework

Legislation and guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children. Guidance has been sought from the DfE in their publication,

Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children Statutory guidance for local authorities, DfE, February 2018

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly-based education to all looked after children;
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked after children;
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked after children;
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children;
- Develop systems of communications and protocols;
- Promote the attendance of looked after children.

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after/previously looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place – we use ePep at Parkfield;
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes;
- Ensure all children who are looked after or have been previously looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities;
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child’s care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after or have been previously looked, especially surrounding work on family;
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate;

- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education/ Department of Health guidance on promoting the education of looked after children;
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies;
- Endeavour to support all looked after children or previously looked after children so receive a high quality education and all adults have high aspirations so that they reach their fullest possible academic potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

Many looked after or previously looked children do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However, we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated Teachers as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after and previously looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teachers also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children.

The named Governor should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after/previously looked after children which is reviewed regularly;
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and DfE guidelines;
- the designated teacher(s) has received appropriate training;
- looked after children and previously 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(s);
- ensure that the designated teacher(s) has received appropriate training;
- oversee the development of the policy on looked after and previously looked after children;
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after children and previously looked after children;
- report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after and previously looked after children in the school;
 - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other children;
 - the attendance of looked after and previously looked after children compared to other children;
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other children;
 - the number of complaints.

The Designated Teacher(s)

The designated teacher(s) will serve as the contact for Children's services and the Birmingham Virtual School and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support looked after and previously looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all looked after and previously looked after children in the school.

The Designated Teacher(s) at Parkfield Community School is Mrs. Louise Evans.



The designated teacher(s) will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after and previously looked after children of the school by:

- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all looked after and previously looked after children and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis;
- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by looked after children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high aspirations for all their achievements;
- liaising with the relevant Virtual School termly with regard to the performance, attendance and attainment of Children in Care;
- acting as an advocate for looked after and previously looked after children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.

The designated teacher(s) will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all looked after children. S/he will:

- have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after and previously looked after;
- maintain records regarding all looked after children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- monitor the educational progress of all looked after and previously looked after children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern.

The designated teacher(s) will facilitate effective communication by:

- ensuring a smooth and welcome induction for the child and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status, when new to the school;
- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue;
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) through the online ePep system;
- playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of looked after and previously looked after children;
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings;
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in children's services and education;
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties;
- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP) – this can be done via ePep;
- seeking urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded.

The designated teacher(s) will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- by meeting with the looked after and previously looked after children to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role;
- by ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues by ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan;

- by requesting support from outside agencies, including the Education of children Looked After Service, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support;
- ensure all looked after and previously looked after children with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning;
- by having a strategy for new school transitions;
- by ensuring all looked after and previously looked after children are made to feel a part of the school environment;
- by using Pupil Premium Plus funding in an effective way to increase self-esteem, well-being, the development of positive relationships, and to raise attainment.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF WORKING WITH LOOKED AFTER OR PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- Ensure that any looked after and previously looked after children are supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with the Guidance on looked after and previously looked after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- respond positively to looked after and previously looked after children's requests to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary;
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
- as with all children, ensure that no looked after and previously looked after children are stigmatised in any way;
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of looked after and previously looked after children;
- positively promote the self-esteem of looked after and previously looked after children.

All governors and staff will:

- Support the local authority in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children.

Personal Education Plans

- Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which the school will take the lead in developing in consultation with the social worker. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate;
- The PEP must include appropriate targets and above information. This must be compatible with the child's/young person's Care Plan and where applicable include any other school plan, e.g. EHCP and associated plans, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and areas for development;
- interests, both in and out of school;
- developmental, educational and pastoral needs including attendance;
- future plans, and how these can be supported;
- issues arising for the child.

It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next ePEP meeting.



Admission/Induction Arrangements

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

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher(s) 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.

In the first ePEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances).

Complaints

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher(s), who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond, usually within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head teacher's response.

This policy will be monitored regularly and evaluated so that it remains responsive to current issues. This will be coordinated by the Designated Teacher(s).

Approved: April 2019
Next Review April 2020

Headteacher: D. Williams

