



## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Author:	Governance and Compliance Officer
Approval needed by:	Trust Board
Consultation required	Designated teachers for looked after children across the trust
Adopted (date):	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
Date of next review:	December 2021

## Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked After Children (LAC) and previously-LAC are of real concern. Students who are looked after require special treatment and additional attention in order to improve their situation.

The de Ferrers Trust (the trust) endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our students. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage students to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that students enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for LAC realistically and use resources efficiently to ensure the trust meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help students develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

## Legal Framework

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

Children Act 1989

- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2017) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England'
- DfE (2020) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

The policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Academy Admissions Policy
- Academy Behaviour Policy
- Academy Anti-Bullying Policy
- Trust Equality Policy
- Trust Safeguarding Policy
- Trust SEND Policy
- 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 local authority has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the local authority under an agreement with their parents.

Previously-LAC' are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside 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 trust board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the trust has a coherent policy for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Reviewing the trust's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring that each academy within the trust has a designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC and that they have received the appropriate training.

The trust's leadership team are responsible for:

- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child'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 previously-LAC safe.
- Ensuring LAC and previously-LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Local Governing Bodies are responsible for:
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher for LAC to evaluate the progress of LAC in their academy.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the Principal regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis and report by exception to the trust board.
- 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 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, including those placed out-of-authority.

- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC understand the support available to those students.
- Working with each academy 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 previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- Managing the academy'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 academy settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
  - Inform the Principal and the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC if they have a student on roll who is looked after by the local authority.
  - Ensure social workers, academies, designated teacher for LAC, careers and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a student'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 education achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
  - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and previously LAC.
- Allowing them time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Local Governing Body on an annual basis on the following:
  - The number of LAC and previously-LAC in the academy
  - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other student groups
  - The attendance of LAC and previously-LAC, compared to other student groups
  - The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other student groups
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring PP+ for previously-LAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

The designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC 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 previously-LAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and previously-LAC at the academy; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship 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.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in the academy to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Liaising with the SENCO to ensure all student needs are met.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- 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.
- Working with the Principal to submit an annual report to the local governing body, which details the progress of all LAC and previously-LAC.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- 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.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-LAC.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and previously-LAC 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 previously-LAC.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and previously-LAC.

Personal education plan (PEP)

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 student 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.

Each academy 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 local authority, the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC, and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

The PEP will address the student's full range of education and development needs, including:

Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.

On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.

Suitable education provided by the local authority, where the child is not in the academy because of exclusion.

Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.

Attendance and behaviour support, 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.
- Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

### **Working with agencies and the VSH**

Each academy will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.

Each academy will coordinate their review meetings

Each academy will 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 previously-LAC.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the relevant academy, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC will communicate with the VSH and the child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.

Through the designated teacher for LAC, each academy will work with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor the arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay

The designated teacher for LAC will communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.

PP+ for previously-LAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by our academies.

Each academy will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or previously-LAC, and according to their needs.

If deemed necessary, an academy may allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

The designated teacher for LAC will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.

The trust will look to share their expertise on what works well in supporting the education of LAC and previously-LAC.

## **Training**

The designated teacher for LAC and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and previously-LAC have received the appropriate training, this includes information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- GCSE options
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Attachment awareness and adverse childhood experiences
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

## **Pupil mental health**

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated teachers 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 for LAC will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

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 previously-LAC's

current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

## **Exclusions**

Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behavioural Policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Exclusion will only be used as a last resort, after the school and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the pupil's education in the event of exclusion.

The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

## **Pupils with SEND**

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.

If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC.

## **Information sharing**

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met.

The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and previously LAC 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 the Trust Board in consultation with the designated teachers for LAC.