



## **Oakdene Primary School**

### Policy for Children who are Looked After by the Local Authority (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

<b>Adopted by:</b>	Oakdene Primary School
<b>Date ratified by governors and adopted:</b>	May 2023
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	M. Weston
<b>Next Review date:</b>	May 2025 (2-yearly basis)

### **Oakdene – Growing and Learning Together**

The above statement is our Mission Statement which is what we are all aiming to achieve at Oakdene. We will try to achieve this through our aims in everything we do at Oakdene.

## Policy Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) on the roll of this school.

**Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA** Martin Weston

**Name of the Designated School Governor for CLA and PLA** Clare Oldham

## Rationale & Aims

At Oakdene Primary School, we are committed to providing a quality education for all of our pupils, enabling them all to reach their full potential.

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked after Children (LAC) and Previously Looked after Children (PLAC) are of real concern. Nationally, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care when compared with their peers, as well as greater risk of exclusion. The academic and social progress of Looked After Children or Previously Looked After Children is likely to be affected by their prior experiences or instability in their home situation. This may (or may not) also leave pupils vulnerable to issues such as low self-esteem, poor attachment to others, and issues linked to behaviour, friendships and emotional development.

Oakdene recognises that pupils who are looked after can experience significant disadvantage in the school setting. We endeavour to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our pupils. At Oakdene, we will create an environment in which looked after children (LAC) and previously looked after children (PLAC) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with the guidance (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*).

With this in mind, we aim to do the following:

- To provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of LAC and PLAC;
- To narrow the gap between the attainment of LAC and PLAC and their peers, ensuring **accelerated** and **rapid** progress;
- That they benefit from school-based interventions, including 1-to-1 tuition, even if they do not meet the criteria for that *intervention (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)* and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact;
- For all LAC to have a minimum of three Personal Education Planning (PEP) meetings in an academic year and for the joint planning to actively impact on each child's learning on a daily basis, to ensure accelerated and rapid progress (*DfE Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*);

- For all adults to provide discreet, sensitive, child-led support, with one key adult identified who will form a strong relationship and take a special interest in daily life at school;
- That school systems facilitate discrete support, as appropriate;
- LAC will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*);
- LAC and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community in recognition of the particular needs of this group (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*).

### **Equality and Diversity Statement**

This policy is intended to be helpful for improvement in the education available for all learners but has a focus on children looked after who, statistically, experience disadvantage in education. The criteria are clear that the expectation is that all learners receive a high-quality, ambitious education; that providers are inclusive of all learners; and that all providers must be meeting their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010 and all protected characteristics therein.

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe (*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022*). In particular, they should ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents, or on an interim or full care order) and the child's contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. They should have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her.

The designated safeguarding lead should have details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child, (*KCSIE, 2022*).

A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group, (*KCSIE 2022*).

This policy operates in conjunction with these other school policies, which can be found on the school website:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Home School Agreement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy

## Definitions

Looked after Children (LAC) are defined as follows:

- 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 are 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 or respite care.

Previously - Looked after Children (PLAC) are defined as follows:

- 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 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).

### Accommodated (Section 20)

*This is a voluntary arrangement, because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.*

### In Care

*A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A care order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority, or shares this with the parents.*

### Remanded/Detained

*A child can be remanded or detained as in the following:*

- *an emergency protection order*
- *removed by police using their powers of protection*
- *remanded by a court following criminal charges*
- *a court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.*

## Children with social workers

Whilst all children should be protected, it is important that governing bodies and proprietors recognise (and reflect in their policies and procedures) some groups of children are potentially at greater risk of harm, (KCSIE 2022)

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs, Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health (KCSIE 2022). These children will have a Child in Need and Child protection plans. All LAC children will

have social workers. This informs decisions about safeguarding and promoting welfare - for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services (KCSIE 2022).

### **Children missing in education**

Children missing from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation. It is important the school or college's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and also helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to a local authority and children's social care and need a social worker (such as on a child in need or child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community, (KCSIE 2022).

### **The Designated teacher**

Governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies must appoint a designated teacher and should work with local authorities to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are looked after. With the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the Children and Social Worker Act 2017, designated teachers have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements orders or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales. The designated teacher **must** have appropriate training and the relevant qualifications and experience, (KCSIE 2022).

### **Why do looked-after and previously looked-after children need the support of a designated teacher?**

1. Many looked-after and previously looked-after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning. Excellent practice in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children already exists in many schools. The designated teacher role is statutory to help ensure that effective practice becomes universal.
2. Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children shows that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 when compared to non-looked-after children.
3. The support that schools and designated teachers give to children who are looked-after and previously looked-after should not be seen in isolation. All looked-after and previously looked-after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked-after children, parents or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority, the Virtual School Head will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school (DfE Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018).

### **Virtual School Heads**

Virtual School Heads manage pupil premium plus for looked after children; they receive this funding based on the latest published number of children looked after by the local authority. In maintained schools and academies, the designated teacher should work with the virtual school head 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.

The designated teacher should also work with the virtual school head to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children, (KCSIE 2022).

As with designated teachers, following the commencement of sections 4 to 6 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, virtual school heads have responsibilities towards children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside of England or Wales. Their primary role for this group will be the provision of information and advice to relevant parties, (KCSIE 2022).

Statutory guidance on Promoting the Education of Looked After Children contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads, (KCSIE 2022).

In addition to their statutory duties, the role of virtual school heads was extended in June 2021, to include a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker, (KCSIE 2022).

In offering advice and information to workforces that have relationships with children with social workers, virtual school heads should identify and engage with key professionals, helping them to understand the role they have in improving outcomes for children. This should include Designated Safeguarding Leads, social workers, headteachers, governors, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, mental health leads, other local authority officers, including Designated Social Care Officers for SEND, where they exist, (KCSIE 2022).

Non-statutory guidance on Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker contains further information on the roles and responsibilities of virtual school heads, (KCSIE 2022).

The St Helens Virtual school Head is Sarah Platt. Further details for St Helens, Warrington and Knowsley virtual schools can be found at the end of this policy.

### **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

- All LAC must have a care plan; Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are an integral part of this care plan. Care Plans are written by Social Workers and PEPs are written by School.
- 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 school, 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 education and development needs, including:
  - On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with 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, 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.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body of Oakdene is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance, reviewed at least every 2 years.
- Ensuring that all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the school's other policies and procedures in conjunction with the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- Supporting the allocation of resources to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Ensuring the school has a designated teacher for LAC and PLAC who has received the appropriate training and is given time and opportunity to complete their role as described below.
- Reviewing an annual report provided by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC/PLAC in school (see final entry of Designated Teacher responsibility for aspects to be included)
- Supporting the headteacher, designated teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of LAC are met.

The Headteacher of Oakdene is responsible for:

- Identifying a Designated Teacher for Looked after Children, whose role is set out below.
- Ensuring another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensuring the designated teacher is given time and facility to carry out their role as detailed below.
- Ensuring 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.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

The Designated Teacher at Oakdene is responsible for:

- Being an advocate for Looked After Children
- When new to the school, ensuring a smooth and welcome induction for the child and carer, and noting any specific requirements, including care status
- Ensuring that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the child and the carer, in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings, within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least, every 6 months
- Keeping PEPs and other records up to date, particularly in time to inform review meetings
- Ensuring that each LAC (if they wish) has an identified member of staff that they can talk to (this should be based on the child's request, and may not necessarily be the Designated Teacher)

- Co-ordinating other support for the child in the school (e.g. pastoral lead and SENCO) and liaising with other professionals and carers as necessary
- Ensuring all staff receive relevant information and training and act as an advisor to staff and governors
- Ensuring confidentiality for individual children and only sharing personal information on a need-to-know basis, including updating necessary information on CPOMS
- Setting up meetings with relevant parties when children are experiencing difficulties in school or are at risk of exclusion
- Prioritising CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)
- Promoting inclusion of all areas of school life, such as attending after-school clubs and extra-curricular opportunities
- Ensuring strong and rapid transfer of information when a pupil transfers to a new school or transitions to high school
- Monitoring attendance of LAC/PLAC
- Keeping up-to-date with relevant training linked to the role
- Ensuring staff are briefed and trained as necessary in relation to the expectations set out in this policy
- Submitting an annual review to governors on the progress of LAC/PLAC, setting out the following: Number of LAC on roll; Attendance as a discrete group compared to other pupils; Teacher assessment as a discrete group compared to other pupils; Information on exclusions (if any); Destinations of LAC/PLAC leaving the school

The designated teacher at Oakdene is currently Martin Weston (Deputy Head Teacher).

All staff are responsible for:

- Having high aspirations for all LAC and PLAC in terms of their educational and personal achievement, as for all pupils in school
- 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
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and PLAC
- Responding promptly to any requests for information from the designated teacher

### **Confidentiality**

- Information on looked after children will be shared with school staff on a 'need-to-know basis'
- The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

### **Attendance**

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of LAC and PLAC to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school contacts the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in the attendance policy.



## **Admissions/ Transitions:**

School procedures to support LAC during admission and transition include:

- Prioritising LAC and PLAC at the point of admission;
- The swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school;
- Early identification of staff mentor and peer support buddy;
- Additional support and planning for LAC and PLAC at times of transition;
- Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss.

## **Additional Educational Needs**

All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for LAC and PLAC with additional educational needs by:

- Having high expectations
- Ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria (*in line with the DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*)
- Ensuring that planning is coordinated, and appropriate interventions identified; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight (*in line with the Lamb Report, Dec 2009*)
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the expectation of progress each academic year, as agreed in the PEP.

## **Special Educational Needs**

All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for LAC who have special educational needs:

- Having high expectation of minimum levels of progress each academic year (in line with the expectation set out in the PEP)
- Ensuring that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision (in line with the SEN Code of Practice)
- Ensuring that all plans are co-ordinated and appropriate interventions identified
- Ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEN Code of Practice
- Ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight.

## Safeguarding

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by familiarising themselves with the 'School Policy Guidance for Children in Care' and following the school's child protection policy and the 'DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2022.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1101454/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf)

If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately. If staff have a concern, they should follow the school's child protection policy and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy.

## Alternative Provision

**We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision alternative to daily attendance at school will be:**

- A plan that will retain the LAC on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+
- An agreed part of the overall PEP for the student
- Full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- Meet the educational needs of the LAC or PLAC
- Will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting
- Will be monitored regularly and that ePEPs will include the school and the alternative provider.

## Exclusion

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy in line with the statutory guidance published in February 2018 (*DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018*).

We will make every effort to avoid excluding a LAC, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of LAC and PLAC. LAC and PLAC with special educational needs should have exclusion as a behaviour management action as a last possible resort (*Regulation 4(1) (c) of the Equalities Act 2010* which means that a head teacher could only lawfully exclude a child for a reason relating to their disability, even a disability that results in the child having a tendency to physical abuse, if reasonable adjustments have been made).

## **Multi-Agency Working**

School staff will make every effort to engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of CLA and PLA.

### St Helens Virtual School

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/article/4931/Contact-the-virtual-school-team>

Headteacher: Sarah Platt

Principal Education Officer: Janette Connolly

Personal Education Plan Co-ordinator: Nora Arnold

Administration Assistant: Sandra Black

For more information, call 01744 671092.

### Knowsley Virtual School

<https://knowsleyvirtualschool.org.uk/>

Headteacher – Alex Roper

### Warrington Virtual School

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/education-children-care-virtual-school>

Headteacher – Simon Lennox