

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



LAC Policy

Looked after Children Policy
(Children in Care)

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Agreed: Raising Standards
Committee

Policy Lead: Designated LAC Teacher

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Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked after Children and previously-Looked After Children are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation. Nationally, looked-after children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion and becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), compared with their peers. Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft Academy recognise that they have a major part to play in ensuring students within their care are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, achieve, and make a positive contribution to society, as well as to achieve economic wellbeing.

Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft Academy endeavour to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our pupils. With this in mind, we aim to:

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

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant 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 (2023) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England'
- DfE (2023) 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

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

- Admissions and Appeals Policy
- Behaviour and Pupil Discipline Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

2. 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.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

“Previously-LAC (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 or child arrangements order (which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them).
- 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).

3. Roles and responsibilities

Equitas Academies Trust is responsible for:

- Ensuring there is a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the Trust's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teachers for LAC and PLAC have received the appropriate training.
- 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 PLAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or 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 necessary.
- Reviewing the **annual** report produced by the designated teachers to evaluate the progress of LAC in the school and to include information about how funds are spent.
- Ensure there is a governor with responsibility for LAC who visits school at least once a year.

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 teachers understand the support available to LAC and PLAC.
- Working with the school to ensure all LAC are 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/carers 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 and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers 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 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 school attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The headteachers are responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC.
- Allowing the designated teachers the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Ensure procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of looked-after children and previously looked-after children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Trust **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, receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities within this policy document
- Ensuring PP+ for PLAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

The designated teachers for LAC and PLAC are responsible for:

- Acting as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving LAC and PLAC
- 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 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.
- Working directly with LAC and PLAC and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of LAC and PLAC
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations, where LAC and PLAC are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC. Ensuring teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of LAC and PLAC in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and other forms of support as required.
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and implemented used in school (alongside the child's social worker and VSH) to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Liaising with the SENCO to ensure all pupil special educational needs are met.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting these to the DSL as soon as they arise.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP. (included above)
- 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 headteacher to submit an **annual** report to the Trust, which details the progress of all LAC and PLAC.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's) are responsible for:

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

The SENCOs are responsible for:

- Being aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of LAC and PLAC, and making sure teachers also have an awareness and understanding of this.
- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and PLAC.
- Liaising with the class teachers, designated teachers, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Making sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensuring that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensuring that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understanding where the school can draw on specialist services

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 or child on child abuse 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 immediately.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and PLAC.

4. 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 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.

Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft Academy with other professionals and the child's parents/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 parents/carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages. Where possible, the class teacher at Chilwell Croft Academy should attend the PEP meeting.

The PEP will address the pupil's full range of educational and developmental needs, including:

- Chilwell Croft Academy - 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 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 focuses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
 - 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 detailing 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.

See Pupil Premium Plus Policy for Birmingham Children in Care – Birmingham virtual and guidance from other school authorities when relevant.

5. Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)

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

Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft Academy will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of LAC with their statutory care review.

Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft 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 PLAC.

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

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

Through the designated teacher, the school will 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. The designated teacher 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 PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. The school will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or PLAC, and according to their needs. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

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

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and PLAC.

6. Training

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC will receive the appropriate and relevant training including training in Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

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

The designated teacher for LAC will:

- Attend LA network meetings when available.
- Undertake training specific to the role as required

7. Safeguarding

The school recognises that many LAC and PLAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and 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 practised 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 in place 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 or child on child abuse 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.

8. Pupil mental health

LAC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher 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 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 PLAC, and know how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems 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 previously-LAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and previously-LAC, and will always either be a member of, or be supported by the senior leadership team and could be the pastoral lead, SENCO, or DSL.

The designated teacher will work with other professionals supporting the child to make referrals to outside agencies as required, where concerns are significant for example to TESS, FTB etc.

9. Exclusions

Past experiences of LAC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour and Pupil Discipline Policy.

Aston Manor Academy and Chilwell Croft Academy will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' 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. As far as possible, the school 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. 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.

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.

10. 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 PLAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure 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.

11. 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.

12. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an **annual** basis by the designated teacher and the headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is March 2025.

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Role	Aston Manor Academy	Chilwell Croft Academy
Lead Designated Safeguarding	Philippa Jones	Nanette Wragg
Deputy DSL's	Emma Smith Jill Sweeney Neil Turner Stacey Lander Daniel Preston James Forbes Shagufta Hussain Harjinder Kaur	Ruksana Fazil Andrea Welter Eve Chappell Ross Giblen
Data Protection Officer	Donna Lewis	Donna Lewis
Operation Encompass Lead	Philippa Jones	Nanette Wragg
Rights Respecting link	N/A	Andrea Welters
Designated Teacher for looked after children and previously looked after children	Philippa Jones	Ruksana Fazil
Mental Health Lead	Harjinder Kaur	Nanette Wragg
Safeguarding & LAC governor	Jane Gotschel	Jane Gotschel
Safer Recruitment training (School staff)	Jill Sweeney Neil Turner James Forbes Tayler Lee Karolina Kalsi	Nanette Wragg Andrea Welter Eve Chapell Ruksana Fazil Alex Lofthouse

	Alex Lofthouse	Tayler Lee Karolina Kalsi
Safer Recruitment (Trustees)	Conor Hickey Jane Gotschel	Conor Hickey Jane Gotschel
Specialist online monitoring software	Smoothwall	Smoothwall
SENCO	Bhupinder Oubhie	Ruksana Fazil