



# Looked After Children Policy

## December 2020

Ratified by Governors	December 2020
Signed – Headteacher	
Signed – Governor	
Next Review Date	December 2023

## Looked After Children Policy

### Rationale

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances for looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, or disruption. Schools can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and free to be themselves. Raising levels of attainment has been clearly linked to improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

### Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced within the Children Act, 1989. The term 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 live with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full-time basis.

### Legal Framework

Current legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children.

Schools must:

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

### Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has an up-to-date plan in place;
- Promote a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes;
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, extra-curricular activities and enjoy the school experience;
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child’s care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, 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 and update all school policies regularly;
- Ensure that a clear protocol for the sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies;
- Endeavour to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve their academic potential.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Many looked after 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 Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities, in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and working with looked after children.

The named Governor will ensure that:

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after children;
- the school’s policies and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly;
- looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum;
- the Governing body receives an annual report, when necessary.

The Head Teacher will:

- appoint the Designated teacher;
- ensure that the Designated teacher has received appropriate training;
- oversee the development of the policy on looked after children;
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after children;
- report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
  - 1) the number of looked after pupils in the school;
  - 2) an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils;
  - 3) the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils;
  - 4) the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils;
  - 5) the number of complaints.

The Designated Teacher

The Designated teacher will serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all looked after children in the school. The Designated teacher will help to establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after children of the school by:

- Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all 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 expectations for their educational achievements;
- Acting as an advocate for looked after children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support them with important decisions affecting future life chances.

The Designated teacher will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all looked after children. She will:

- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are 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 children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement or absence from school etc.

The Designated teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue;
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP;
- 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 for looked after children;
- helping to co-ordinate education and PEP meetings;
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social 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).

The Designated teacher will monitor each child's attainment and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- by meeting with the looked after child 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 (likely to be the class teacher);
- by ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan;
- by requesting support from outside agencies, including the Education of Looked After Children Service, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support;
- by ensuring all looked after children with special educational needs are regularly assessed and get appropriate resources to support their learning;
- by ensuring all looked after children are made to feel a part of the school community.

The Designated Teacher at Beckley C of E Primary School is Mrs Laura Cockhill.

## Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate. The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and areas for development;
- the child's interests, both in and out of school;
- the developmental, educational and pastoral need of the child;
- future plans, and how these can be supported;
- issues arising for the child and targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.