



Lumen Learning Trust

Learning together for a brighter future

Designated teacher (looked-after & previously looked-after children) Policy

DATE APPROVED BY LUMEN LEARNING TRUST	12 th March 2024		
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SIGNED EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL	Mary Ellen McCarthy 	DATE	12/03/2024
SIGNED CHAIR OF DIRECTORS	Ray Vango 	DATE	12/03/2024

Introduction

The Lumen Learning Trust puts the children's needs at the heart of its provision. Our whole school community is committed to enabling the children to become successful lifelong learners and happy, fulfilled adults who can make positive choices about their future.

1. Aims

Lumen Learning Trust aims to ensure that each school within the Trust:

- Has a suitable member of staff appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Has a designated teacher who promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this too;
- Has staff, parents, carers and guardians who are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

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) '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 2023'

3. Definitions

Looked-after children (LAC) are registered pupils that 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.

Previously looked-after children (PLAC) are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
 - A child arrangement order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them;
 - A special guardianship order;
 - An adoption order.
- They appear to the governing board to have:
 - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
 - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted.

- 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).

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

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 PEP will be reviewed termly.

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.

Virtual school head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Identity of our designated teacher

Each school in the Lumen Learning Trust has a designated teacher. The designated teacher name and contact details can be obtained by contacting the relevant school office.

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

As well as our designated teacher each school has in place a pastoral team comprising of Home School Link Worker (HSLW) and Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) who support the emotional needs of looked after and previously looked after children to build their and strengthen their capacity to learn and thrive.

The Lumen Learning Trust Pastoral Co-ordinator supports each school pastoral team and works in conjunction with the designated teacher.

5. Role of the designated teacher & pastoral team

The following is based on the responsibilities listed in the DfE's statutory guidance. Although the designated teacher must always have lead responsibility, school pastoral teams have delegated responsibilities to ensure 360 degree support is in place for each child.

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
 - Working with VSHs
 - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
 - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
 - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children;

- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities;
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations;
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs;
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to;
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education.

The Pastoral team will:

- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities;
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations;
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.

5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs;
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs;
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs;
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them, their carers, parents and Inclusion Lead, in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP;
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place;
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils;
- 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.
- Ensure that:
 - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered;
 - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced;
 - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan.
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version.

The Pastoral team will:

- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with their carers and parents, in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.

5.3 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding;
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment;
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children;
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children;
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use;
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning;
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this;
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have;
- Ensure 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;
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services;
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children;

The Pastoral team:

- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed;
- Put in place robust arrangements using the child's voice to inform PEP decision making before a plan is set and implemented.
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children;
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services;
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children.

5.4 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom;
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education;
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments;
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
 - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans;
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action;
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption;

- Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process.
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians;
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
 - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress;
 - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents;
 - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips.
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
 - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary;
 - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour.
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

The Pastoral team will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom;
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education;
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments;
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action;
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption.

6. 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 practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and PLAC as soon as possible.

Where a looked-after child or previously looked-after child has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services 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.

When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a LAC or PLAC is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the school will collaborate in the multi-agency strategy discussion where appropriate to determine the pupil's welfare and plan rapid further action as necessary. The school's representative at any strategy discussion meetings will be sufficiently senior, skilled and experienced, and authorised to make decisions on the school's behalf. Information and analysis about the pupil and their family will be provided as required.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a looked-after child or previously looked-after child is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

7. Suspension and Exclusion

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

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance '[Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement](#)' and recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

Where the school has concerns about a LAC'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.

As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort. 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.

Where a looked-after child is at risk of being suspended or permanently excluded, the school will engage with the designated teacher and the pupil's parents, or other individuals involved in the pupil's care. The designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible to work together, and with other relevant individuals, to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the school address the factors affecting the pupil's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion.

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

Where a looked-after child is excluded, the school will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP.

8. 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 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.

9 Information Sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data will be put 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.

School staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.

Staff members will ensure that fear of sharing information does not stand in the way of their responsibility to promote the welfare and safety of LAC and PLAC. If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will speak to the DSL.

The school will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed biannually by the Trust Central Team and approved by the Trust Executive Principal and Chair of Directors.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Child protection and safeguarding Policy
- Equality Policy
- Home School Agreement
- SEND Policy
- Supporting pupils with medical needs.