

Looked After (Previously Looked After) Children Policy

Accepted by: Local Governing Body, June 2019

Approving Body: Local Governing Body

Committee : Local Governing Body

Review Cycle: Two years

Last reviewed: December 2023

Date for next review: December 2025

Vision “To establish a learning culture that enables all pupils to achieve their potential”

Introduction:

Aims and objectives

The Rydal Academy is committed to supporting all children to reach their full potential. We recognise that we have special duty to safeguard and promote the education of looked after (LAC) and previously looked after children (PLAC).

Our key aims are created in accordance with the DfE Guidance documentation:

Promoting the education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children – February 2018.

This can be accessed from this link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

Also relevant is the guidance for Designated Teachers for Looked After and previously Looked After children – February 2018

This can be accessed from this link

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England - March 2015

This can be accessed from this link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413368/Promoting_the_health_and_well-being_of_looked-after_children.pdf

NB – Within this document where the term Looked After Children is used this also refers to previously Looked after Children where appropriate.

Rationale

Looked After Children (LAC) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of LAC have suffered a disrupted childhood and experienced adverse events. It is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational under-achievement when compared to their peers. LAC often achieve poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population. Fewer Looked After Children progress to Higher Education or follow progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being.

Who are Looked After Children?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They include:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (sec. 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (sec. 31) or interim care order (sec. 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sec. 44)

The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' - LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

Our Aims

- To ensure social inclusion of all our looked after children.
- To provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children.
- To bring the educational achievements of our LAC nearer to or equal to those of their peers.
- To accept our role as corporate parents in relation to the education of LAC and to ask the question "Would this be good enough for my child?"

In pursuit of these principles and aims we will:

- Appoint a designated teacher responsible for LAC who will act as their advocate and co-ordinate support for them.
- Ensure high quality Personal Education Plans are completed for each child. Appropriate steps should then be taken to enable each Looked After Child to reach their targets, and ultimately, their educational potential.
- All governors and staff will work in partnership with parents and agencies especially Social Services and Health Department to co-ordinate support for LAC.
- Nominate a specific governor with responsibility for this area of the school's work.
 - a) The name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is: Mrs Katie Turnbull.
 - b) The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Mr Marcus Dickinson.
 - c) Deputy Head Teacher (Target Setting, Tracking and Assessment) is: Mrs Katie Turnbull.

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children:

- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children and that staff understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After Children, and to promote their involvement in the life of the school.
- To act as an advocate for Looked After Children.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals and the Virtual School.
- To monitor the educational progress, attainment and attendance of Looked After Children.

- To include targets on the performance of LAC within the School Development Plan.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual under-achievement, absence from school or internal truancy.
- To celebrate the success of all Looked After Children.

Work with Individual Looked After Children:

- To help ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan and takes an active role in setting the targets (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's social worker from the Authority responsible for them). The PEP sets out appropriate targets and support available.
- Ensure that the Pupil Premium is targeted at improving attainment and achievements. A summary of the impact of the Pupil Premium should be included on the school website.
- To consult with the child or young person and ensure they have an appropriate adult who will attend school events e.g. Parents open evenings, sports, drama events in order to provide support and encouragement.

Liaison with other Partners:

- To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Vulnerable Register, ensuring all LAC in school are safeguarded.
- To support the Independent Reviewing Office (IRO) co-ordinate education and Looked After Children review meetings, so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan.
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Looked After Children at care planning meetings and PEP meetings.
- To be the named contact for colleagues in the Darlington Virtual School and other local authorities as appropriate.
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information and school records between agencies and other schools.
- To ensure the school admits Looked After Children in line with the Admissions Code of Practice; schools should admit all LAC separate to 'In Year Fair Access Protocols'.
- To ensure that the Head Teacher considers a range of strategies before exclusion for a LAC, which should be a last resort.

Training

- To develop a knowledge of Vulnerable Children/Education inclusion procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority and other providers.
- To attend training for Designated Teachers as appropriate.
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

d) The name of a Governor with responsibility for Looked After Children is Jo Thurland.

The role of that Governor:

- The named Governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis (unless it will be easy to identify children whereby work on behalf of all vulnerable groups may be more appropriate):
- A comparison of LAC as a discrete group, compared with the attainment and progress of other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared with other pupils
- The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions.
- Pupil destinations.
- The named Governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that Looked After Pupils have equality of access.

Responsibility for Looked After Children in School

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

It is appropriate for Learning Support Assistants to have knowledge that the young person is being looked after only when they are directly involved in the teaching of the young person or the direct supervision of them during breaks and lunch times.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Headteacher or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

f) Admission Arrangements

On admission, records (including the PEP) will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/social worker. A date will be agreed for a new Personal Education Plan within 10 school days of a new LAC being admitted. An appropriate school admissions meeting will take place. In some cases it may be helpful to provide a mentor from within or external to the school community.

g) Involving the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. It is good practice to consult and share with a young person appropriate records that are held by school and the local authority. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the social worker, and their carer work together to help them achieve in school.

h) Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports e.g. End of year reports should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the Foster Carer or Residential Social Worker. It should be agreed at the PEP meeting what information parents will receive, this needs to be in line with the legal framework. A Social Worker will be able to advise on correspondence with parents and approaches to normalise consent for routine school activities.

i) Assessment, Monitoring and Review

Each looked-after pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the Social Worker takes a lead in developing. This will identify, success, specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The first PEP should be developed within 10 days of a child becoming looked after. The PEP will be updated termly and stored on the Welfare Call ePEP system and circulated to all key parties.

Darlington Local Authority will:

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of Looked After Children.
- Provide targeted support for Looked After Children as part of the Virtual School.
- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for Looked After Children.
- Ensure that the education for this group of pupils is as good as that provided for every other pupil.
- Ensure that Looked After Children receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible.
- Ensure that every Looked After Child has a school to go to within 10 school days of coming into care or of coming to Darlington from another authority.
- Make sure that each Looked After Child has a PEP according to national guidance.
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training.
- Liaise with local Collaborative panels, Enhanced Mainstream Primary Schools and Pupil Referral Service over alternative educational provision.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible.
- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4

- Provide advice and guidance for those LAC and Care Leavers in Further and Higher Education.
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special education needs of Looked After Children and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs.
- Hold events that celebrate the achievement of LAC.
- Consider the views of all LAC through a variety of strategies including the Young Person's Council.

Local Authority contact details for the Education of Looked After Children are:

Virtual School Head: Mr Calvin Kipling

calvin.kipling@darlington.gov.uk