

Looked After (and previously looked after) Children Policy

Approval Date – November 2019

Review Date – November 2022

Westfield Academy provides a co-ordinated approach for the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Rationale

Looked-after children (LAC) are young people of statutory school age who reside in short- or long-term care (foster care/residential care) and previously looked-after children are those who are no longer looked after because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order. LAC (and previously LAC) have the same access to education as other students which is appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum, including the national curriculum.

Every effort has been made to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience to ensure that the child or young person is fully included within the school setting. Staff at school share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals, but especially with the young person themselves. Adults in school are sensitive to the child's wishes over what is known, and by whom, regarding their looked after child status.

Designated teachers for LAC (and previously LAC) are responsible for planning and meeting the young person's educational and social needs in each school year. The designated teacher for LAC is the Assistant Headteacher/SENCo (Behaviour).

This policy ensures that all staff in our school are clear about the actions necessary with regards to LAC (and previously LAC). Our aim is to raise awareness and ensure effective communication between all staff when teaching or supporting LAC (and previously LAC).

The roles and responsibilities as set out in this policy refer to both looked-after and previously looked-after children with the exception of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and are dependent on families informing the school of previously looked-after status.

Roles and Responsibilities

1.1. The Governing Body will:

- Establish this policy, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, staff and parents, and keep it under regular review (Student Matters Committee).
- Ensure that the policy is non-discriminatory and is communicated clearly to students and parents/carers.
- Review the effectiveness of policy and practice.

1.2. Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for LAC. This responsibility is delegated to the Assistant Headteacher – Behaviour (Mrs J Strange) and the Safeguarding Lead (Mrs J Coles).

1.3. Designated Teacher for Looked After Children – Assistant Headteacher/SENCo (Behaviour)

- Communicate immediately and effectively with the carers, natural parents (as appropriate), and social workers of LAC.
- Develop clear professional relationships with carers, natural parents (as appropriate) and social workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues.
- Ensure that the child or young person has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and that it is regularly reviewed every term.
- Identify any special educational needs and ensure appropriate provision is made. If the child or young person has a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan, then the annual review coincides with a planned LAC review (LAC Reviews).
- To attend case conferences or nominate an appropriate member of staff to attend on his/her behalf (Safeguarding lead or Head of Year).
- Maintain records of case conferences and other sensitive information in a secure confidential file and to disseminate information about the child only on a 'need to know basis'.
- Ensure that educational, care and health information is up to date and fully maintained in the child or young person's school file.
- Ensure that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared within the school, and between the school and outside agencies, so that high educational expectations are maintained.
- Liaise with all teachers within the school and make sure that they are aware of the needs of LAC, actively promoting the child's best interests.
- Keep up to date with current practice by participating in relevant training opportunities.
- For **previously looked-after children**, understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress at school.

1.4 Heads of Year

- Ensure school records are up to date with current names and addresses of carers, natural parents and social workers.
- Be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of the natural parents.
- Oversee records of educational performance and attainment.
- Ensure the young person has the opportunity to participate fully in educational planning and decision making (via completion of the PEP).
- Oversee the day to day welfare of the young person and ensure that they have a trusted adult in school who is able to take time to listen to them.
- Report appropriate statistical information, held by the school, upon request from the designated teacher for LAC.

1.5 Class Teachers and other adults

- Knowledge of who on the school staff has responsibility for LAC – Assistant Headteacher/SENCO (Behaviour) and Safeguarding Lead.
- Immediately discuss an issue or concern relating to LAC with the Designated Teacher or Safeguarding Lead, giving it the highest priority.
- Have high expectations of the young person, encouraging achievement and ambition.
- Inform the Attendance Officer immediately of any absence concerns. Where attendance is a problem, a first day of absence procedure is established by the Attendance Officer.
- Instil confidence, self esteem and a sense of belonging in the student according to ABC (attend, belong, commit to learning) principles.
- Be aware of a variety of issues that may undermine the young person's ability to engage in the learning process including feelings of loss, rejection, isolation, confusion and low self-esteem. Refer concerns directly to Assistant Headteacher/SENCo (Behaviour), Safeguarding Lead or Head of Year.
- Acknowledge possible unresolved feelings the young person may have about their own families and siblings, in addition to insecurity over their current homes and carers.
- Provide a safe haven and a sympathetic ear in a crisis.

Related Documents

Appendices 1. Somerset's Virtual School Completing a PEP (Revised for 2018)

Department for Education: The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. Statutory Guidance on their roles and responsibilities. February 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>

This policy should also be read in conjunction with all other school safeguarding policies, but in particular the **Child Protection Policy and Procedures**.

Monitoring

This policy and its implementation will be monitored by the Assistant Headteacher/SENCo (Behaviour), the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Governors' Student Matters Committee with responsibility for Safeguarding.

Responsible

- Assistant Headteacher (Julie Strange)

Somerset's Virtual School

COMPLETING A PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN FOR SOMERSET'S CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE THE MEETING?

- Talk to the child or young person's Social Worker to check the date of the meeting is correct and that parents/carers/supervising social workers/Virtual School have been invited – whilst it is the SW's responsibility to invite parents/carers, it is always worth checking this has happened – Do you know who is coming?
- If the presence of the Virtual School could help the meeting go smoothly or address a key issue, contact the link Education Advisor with as much notice of the date and time as possible to secure their support.
- Print a hard copy of the last PEP and a hard copy of the PEP document (revised August 2018) as sent by the Virtual School's PEP Co-ordinator.
- Check section A for progress/attainment data, attendance and exclusions figures. If nothing has been pulled from SIMS for you (all out of county and independent settings as well as Somerset schools not submitting academic data will see blanks), complete this using school based data.
- Ensure you have up to date SEND information regarding level and nature of any support and any additional funding, the date of the annual review for an EHCP and a copy of the EHCP if one is in place.
- Meet with the child or young person to ensure they are aware of the meeting if appropriate, to gather their views and find out how they would like to be involved in the meeting (these elements will depend on the age and needs of each individual child or young person and should be led by these).
- Ensure a suitable meeting space is available to comfortably accommodate all attending.
- Alert school office staff/reception staff to the meeting and those attending. Make arrangements for the young person to be collected as necessary.

WHAT DO I NEED TO HAVE READY FOR THE MEETING?

- A copy of the last PEP (especially important if the child or young person has come from another school or setting – if you cannot find this in the pupil's files, contact thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk for a copy – please request in good time).
- Copies of the PEP pro forma to complete during the meeting – this could be managed electronically if meeting space permits.
- A copy of any plan or programme supporting the child or young person e.g. IEP, PSP, Learning Passport, Pupil Profile, EHCP.
- Details of how any SEN funding, Higher Needs Funding or other extra financial support is deployed in school and the amounts allocated to this support.
- Details of how the Pupil Premium allocated through the last PEP was spent and the impact of it on progress/achievement – your evidence base (how you know it has made a difference) would be a helpful resource.
- The last reported assessment data and the key provided to parents/carers to help understand this report, current teacher assessed grades/levels/outcomes and end of KS expectations/targets.
- An answer to the question 'Is this pupil making acceptable progress against their own academic targets?' and a list of the sources of the evidence supporting this view.

- Any record of preparatory meetings with the child or young person to gather their views.
- Access to input from any key members of staff whose view is useful but who cannot attend the meeting in person.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN DURING THE MEETING?

- Agree who is going to complete the form – will this person be chair? If not who is best placed to fulfil this role?
- Work through section A first ensuring any inaccuracies are corrected. Complete the new pro forma as the meeting unfolds don't hope to remember points later.
- Read the headings in each section carefully so as to provide the correct information.
- **Leave no box empty** – if not applicable put N/A. This shows the box has not been overlooked.
- Where issues are raised, include details of how they are being addressed in school, what the impact of the issue and the intervention has been.
- Ensure targets are set out so it is clear what must be achieved by the pupil, what adults are going to do to support achievement and what the intended impact on progress or attainment will be of achievement – this is structured within the target section of the PEP paperwork.
- Where an academic need has been identified that Pupil Premium funding can address set this out in the funding section. Any request that exceeds £500.00 will need to be followed up with a call to the Virtual School. It may be agreed but this should not be assumed. Refer to the Pupil Premium Policy for further information.
- Remember to focus discussion around deployment of Pupil premium funding on these points: What is the identified need? Is this need impacting on learning, progress and achievement in school?
- Remember the PEP provides a summary of the pupil's education story at this point. It should make sense to someone who doesn't know the pupil, and is not familiar with the educational setting. Avoid using initials alone when allocating adult responsibilities but include the role of the person so their part in the plan is clearer.
- Make sure the document is complete and accurate at the end of the meeting. Has the next meeting date been agreed?

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AFTER THE MEETING?

- Ensure the completed PEP is returned to thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk within 10 school days of the meeting.
- Schools should only send copies to the Virtual School – the SW can forward any copies to parents/carers as has been agreed in the PEP meeting once the VS has agreed and circulated the final version.
- If the PEP has specified funding in excess of £500.00 contact the Virtual School Education Advisor linked to your school ASAP to talk about this and see if it may be considered by the Virtual School Head. If you don't know who this is, contact our PEP Co-ordinator for the name and contact details thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk
- Respond promptly to any query relating to the PEP sent by the Virtual School PEP Co-ordinator or your school's Advisory Teacher so the PEP can be filed promptly and the next term's process and funding initiated by the Virtual School.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BETWEEN MEETINGS?

- Alert the Virtual School if there are issues, concerns, exclusions or reasons to celebrate
- Monitor attendance, progress and achievement, reviewing the PEP and any actions within it to address possible issues or concerns.
- Engage with Social Worker and Carer(s) to ensure attendance at parents' evenings and other key events
- Find ways to check in with the pupil to see how things are going
- All the usual things you would do for any pupil at your school who needs a little bit more to get them through.

PEP CHECKLIST

BEFORE	Tick
Check and confirm dates	
Agree who is coming	
Check Virtual School are aware	
Meet YP and gather their views	
Gather all paperwork	
DURING	
Complete the paperwork	
Make sure Section A is accurate	
Leave no blanks	
Ensure the targets are clear and aimed to increase rates of progress, increase engagement or improve academic outcomes	
Identify what is needed to achieve targets and deploy Pupil Premium Grant appropriately	
Ensure the views of the YP are heard throughout	
AFTER	
Send documents to Virtual School and Social Worker	
Ensure actions are completed to timescale agreed	
If changes occur and the PEP need to be revised alert Virtual School and Social Worker – call another PEP if needed	

CONTACTING THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Virtual School Head: Emily Walters EWalters@somerset.gov.uk

PEP Co-ordinators: Jo Lewis/Paul Binding Telephone: 01823 356694

Virtual School email: thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk

Virtual School website: www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk