



# **Meadowhead School Academy Trust**

## **Looked After Children (LAC) Policy**



**This is a policy of Meadowhead School Academy Trust.  
Meadowhead School is a Foundation School  
and a member of the  
Meadowhead Community Learning Trust**

**Staff Responsible:** Helen Weeks

**Reviewed:** November 2021

**Approved:** 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

## Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

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Meadowhead School aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care.

**Designated Teacher (DT) for LAC: Mrs Helen Weeks**

**Designated Teacher for LAC Support: Mrs Debbie Dixon & Miss Rebecca Young**

**Governor with responsibility for LAC: Mrs Lynda Taylor**

The governing body is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in “Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004” (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of LAC. We aim to contribute towards achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters, which is the Government’s aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances:

- **Stay safe**
- **Be healthy**
- **Enjoy and achieve**
- **Make a positive contribution**
- **Achieve economic well being**

**The aims of the school are to:**

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children
- ensure that all LAC have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual’s needs and ability
- ensure that LAC pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of their child’s progress and attainment
- ensure that LAC pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision.

**Who are Looked After Children?**

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked-after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours,[Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

It is possible that a placement order is made without a care order or interim care order being made, or the child not being subject to section 20 of the 1989 Act. For example, the local authority working with a family and believing that the child should be removed and be placed for adoption.

The local authority does not have to apply for a care order first (though this would be the usual situation) and then a placement order; it could apply simply for a placement order.

Local authorities can provide children with accommodation under a wide range of circumstances, for example:

- as the result of an agreement between the local authority and the child's parents or guardians that being accommodated would be in the child's best interest
- the child having been remanded to the care of a local authority by a criminal court
- because the child is helping the police with their enquiries
- the child has been placed for adoption, and the local authority is acting as the adoption agency
- the child is subject to a police protection order.

In all these examples, the child will be subject to a different legal status, and the circumstances will be very different. However, in every case, the child is being looked after under the terms of the act because he/she is being accommodated.

Section 22 of the Children Act stipulates very clearly that for a child to be looked-after by a local authority, he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

A child is looked-after when subject to a care order. There are no exceptions to this rule. In these circumstances however, there is no obligation for the local authority to accommodate the child. For example, a child under a care order can be placed with their parents or other relative.

A care order continues in force until either:

- it is discharged by a court
- the child reaches his/her 18th birthday
- child leaves care through an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangement order.

A local authority cannot unilaterally end a care order, and therefore a child, once subject to a care order, will remain looked-after until one of the above events occurs. However, when a placement order is made the care order no longer has effect but is reactivated if the placement order is revoked.

### **Exception**

The only two exceptions to the rule that for a child to be looked-after is that he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours relates to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children with a legal status of V3 (short-term breaks when each break is being recorded as an individual episode). For statistical purposes, information is required for this group of children for receiving respites for periods of less than 24 hours duration, providing the periods include an overnight stay.

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.

## **Admissions**

The Governing Body endorses council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against LAC pupils. This stance is also endorsed by the LEA Admissions Policy. Due to care placement changes, LAC may enter school mid-term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupil settle.

## **Inclusion**

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our LAC policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all LAC pupils.

## **Allocation of resources**

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

## **Monitoring the progress of LAC**

The social worker for the LAC should initiate a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the young person is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each LAC's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. LAC will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing office or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

## **Record Keeping**

The Designated Teacher will know who are all the LAC in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The Designated Teacher will also know about any LAC from other authorities. It is important that the school flags LAC status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

## **Staff Development**

We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support LAC. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to develop awareness of issues associated with LAC.

## **Partnership with parents/carers and care workers**

At school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

## **Links with external agencies/organisations**

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting LAC. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual LAC:

- LAC teams
- educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- medical officers
- school nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service
- LACES team
- Team Fostering
- MAPs
- Virtual School

## **LAC policy review and evaluation**

We consider the LAC policy to be important and we undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Rationale for roles and responsibilities:**

Looked After Children – LAC - are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- a high level of disruption and change in school placements
- lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities
- inconsistent or no attention paid to homework

This may result in:

- poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- underachievement in further and higher education

These issues may also affect adopted young people.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date the outcomes achieved by LAC have been unacceptably poor and the

Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- giving priority to education
- listening to children
- providing stability and continuity
- taking corporate responsibility
- promoting inclusion
- raising standards
- intervening early
- promoting early years experiences
- celebrating success

**The Designated Teacher will:**

- be an advocate for LAC within school
- give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the LAC and the rest of the school community
- know who are all the LAC in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- attend relevant training about LAC
- act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the LAC team when appropriate
- ensure that LAC receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle
- ensure that all LAC have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC
- ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- in conjunction with other agencies actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for LAC
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- report to the Governing body on LAC in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc.
- prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include:
  - the number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP
  - their attendance compared to other pupils
  - their attainment (GCSEs) compared to other pupils

- the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- the destinations of pupils who leave the school
- attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC
- arrange a mentor or befriender (adult and /or pupil) to whom the young person can talk, possibly through the learning mentor scheme or through Connexions, particularly when the pupil is new to school
- ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. LAC are six to eight times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs than the general school population

### **The Virtual School will:**

The Virtual school is responsible for supporting the attainment of high educational outcomes through:

- ensuring that every LAC child has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- ensuring that, where possible, all LAC in need of a new school place attend a school/education setting which is rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. For schools requiring improvement, evidence should be given that the school is providing high quality support to vulnerable students.
- distribution and monitoring of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) grant for LAC
- supporting the admission of LAC into education
- ensuring access to high quality provision and support. For example: all Sheffield LAC and Care Leavers have access to dedicated access to the MAPs Service (CAMHS for LAC)
- providing expert advice and support to Designated Teachers and other professionals working with LAC/Care leavers
- provide networking opportunities and training events
- reporting on outcomes for Sheffield LAC
- dissemination of effective practice

### **Good practice suggests that all school staff will:**

- follow school procedures
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC
- positively promote the raising of a LAC's self-esteem
- ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required

**Good practice suggests that the Governing Body will:**

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the DCSF Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC
- liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC who links with the Designated Teacher
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:
  - admission to school
  - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
  - out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
  - work experience and careers guidance
  - annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC
  - ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings of LAC