

WEST PARK ACADEMY

Children Looked After Policy



The Designated Teacher at West Park Academy is Mrs J Dixon

The Designated Governor at West Park Academy is Mrs C Scarr

Reviewed: February 2025

Purpose

To promote the educational attainment, achievement, progression and welfare of Children Looked After in the care of Darlington whether they attend a school in Darlington or an Out-of-Authority school and for all Children Looked After in the care of other local authorities who attend Darlington Schools.

Rationale

Children Looked After (CLA) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of CLA and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption. The school can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This 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 be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential Academy, with relatives, or even with parents on a part- or full-time basis.

Furthermore, the term “looked after”, which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term “in public care”, which has been adopted by the DfE in their publication, “The Education of Young People in Public Care”.

Legal Framework

Government legislation and guidance requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Children Looked After.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly-based education to all looked after children
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked after children
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked after children
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children
- Develop systems of communications and protocols
- Promote the attendance of looked after children.

Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of children looked after on the roll of the school.

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After for the Academy:

Joanna Dixon

Deputy Designated Teacher for Children Looked After for the Academy:

Alex Nelson

Roles and Responsibilities

- To ensure that the educational achievement of each Child Looked After on roll is monitored, tracked and promoted and, wherever possible, accelerated
- To ensure that there is an up to date Personal Education Plan or PEP with SMART targets that will promote progress
- To advise on the most effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus during the Personal Education Planning meeting
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus funding and additional budget share funding (where relevant) is used to support the learning objectives for the student and to be accountable for how the funding is spent with outcomes evidenced
- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children and young people 'in care' and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are in care, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.
- To ensure that members of staff who teach the Children Looked After on roll provide accurate progress data and advice on specific learning targets to inform the Personal Educational Planning meeting
- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in Children's Services, (CS) and birth parents where appropriate
- To hold a supervisory brief for all children in care, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff where relevant and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date, used on a need to know basis to help the student overcome obstacles to learning and progress
- To track and support the educational progress of all children who are looked after in order to inform the school's development plan
- To intervene quickly if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding to accelerate progress
- To intervene if there is evidence of absence from school or internal truancy
- To ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan are implemented fully, reviewed regularly and that all relevant school staff are aware of them
- To report to the Local Governing Body, at least on an annual basis (preferably each term), on the outcomes for Children Looked After

- To ensure that school staff have an awareness of the impact of attachment disorder and pre-care trauma on learning
- To support the Quality Assurance Process for PEPs and for schools on the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with children looked after. Work with Individual Children Looked After
- To discuss with individual children, possibly alongside a carer, to arrive at a statement about their care arrangements and circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or pupils
- To enable the child to contribute to the educational aspects of their Care Plan
- To ensure that the Pupil Voice sections of the Personal Education Plans or PEPs are completed for each child and is the result of a one-to-one meeting so that the views of the student are faithfully represented in the PEP
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new child looked after into the school
- To develop in-school strategies to track, promote and accelerate the achievement of looked after children and close the gap between them and their peers
- To fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available from the Virtual School and partner agencies

The name of the Governor with special responsibility for Children Looked After in the Academy:

Christine Scarr

The named Governor should be satisfied that:

- The Academy has a coherent policy for Children Looked After
- The Academy's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and Government guidelines on Children in Public Care
- The Designated Teacher has received appropriate training
- Children Looked After have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- The Local Governing Body receives an annual report

Many Children Looked After do not want Academy staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". 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 Principal and Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all children looked after have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Principal and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with children looked after.

The Principal 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 Local Governing Body on an annual basis on the following:
 1. The number of Children Looked After in the Academy
 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 level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils

The Designated Teacher

- The Designated Teacher will serve as the contact for all outside agencies and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support Children Looked After within the Academy. This includes serving as an advocate for all Children Looked After in the Academy
- The Designated Teacher will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding Children Looked After in the Academy by:
 1. Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all children looked after and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
 2. Ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by Children Looked After and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
 3. Acting as an advocate for Children Looked After in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
- The Designated Teacher will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all Children Looked After. She will:
 1. Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after
 2. Maintain records regarding all Children Looked After, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child
 3. Establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
 4. Monitor the educational progress of all Children Looked After and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from Academy or internal truancy, or other similar concern
 5. Ensure that CLA are mentioned on the School Improvement Development Plan.

- The Designated Teacher will facilitate effective communication by:
 1. Building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
 2. Being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
 3. 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 of Children Looked After
 4. Helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
 5. Serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education
 6. Ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties
 7. 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 achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within Academy:
 1. By meeting with the Child Looked After to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role
 2. By ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan
 3. By requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies.
 4. By working closely with the SENCO to ensure all looked after children with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning
 5. By having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions
 6. By ensuring all Children Looked After are made to feel a part of the Academy environment.
 7. By ensuring that children have an entry to school/ exit school transition document to support with school moves.

Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which the Designated Teacher will take the lead in developing. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate. These meetings take place every term.

The PEP will consider:

- Medical needs, SEND status, behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- Attendance
- The child's strengths and areas to further develop
- Interests, both in and out of the Academy
- Current attainment and targets for the future
- Targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting and costed provision in order to enable the child to achieve them
- Evidence of Pupil Voice

Darlington and Durham Local Authorities will:

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of Children Looked After
- Provide targeted support for Children Looked After as part of the Virtual School
- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for Children Looked After
- Ensure that the education for this group of pupils is as good as that provided for every other pupil
- Ensure that Children Looked After receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- Ensure that every Child Looked After has a school to go to within 20 school days of coming into care or of coming to Darlington from another authority
- Make sure that each Child Looked After has a PEP according to national guidance
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for Children Looked After 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 CLA and Care Leavers in Further and Higher Education
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special education needs of Children Looked After and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs
- Hold events that celebrate the achievement of CLA
- Consider the views of all CLA through a variety of strategies including the Young Person's Council.

In Darlington and Durham Virtual Schools, this is usually presented in a digital format, using Welfare Call, using the headings below (or similar, depending on the Local Authority Virtual School):

1. The PEP meeting	2. About me	3. My Education	4. Educational progress	5. Attainment Levels	6. My Views, Wishes and Feelings	7. Targets/ Outcomes	8. Other Information
9. Evaluation QA feedback							

In Leeds Virtual School, this is completed using a paperwork system.

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

Virtual School Head
 Calvin Kipling
 Darlington Borough Council
 Room 232
 Town Hall

West Park Academy, part of Lingfield Education Trust an exempt charity limited by guarantee in England and Wales (Registered no: 08027885) whose registered office is at Corporation Road Primary School, Corporation Road, Darlington DL3 6AR

Feethams
Darlington
DL1 5QT

Tel: 01325 406272 (Ext 6272)
email: calvin.kipling@darlington.gov.uk

Previously Looked After Children

Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) are those who immediately after being in care (as defined above) became subject to an adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order.

- Adoption order – Refer to Section 46 of the Adoption and Children act 2002 or Section 12 of the 1976 Adoption Act.
- Child arrangements order – This order settles the arrangements of the person the child is to live with. Refer to Section 8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by Section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order.
- Special guardianship order – This order appoints one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian(s). Refer to Section 14A of the Children Act 1989

The school will also provide additional provision in order to meet their academic needs and emotional needs. Their progress is carefully tracked and interventions are in place in order to support this.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Looked After Children are a priority for admissions criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the Designated Teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our Academy. This initial meeting must be initiated within the first 10 days.

West Park Academy has prepared a list of what the member/s of staff would need to know immediately:

- What does the pupil call their carers?
- Has anyone talked to the pupil about their 'story' what do they want to tell their peers about themselves?
- Name and number for Social Worker
- Past PEP and paperwork from previous school

Records will be requested from the child's previous school and, as soon as practicable after they are received, a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires Academy reports and who may give permission for educational visits or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed.

Academy Educational Visits and Special Activities

We will aim to ensure that Children Looked After enjoy the same extracurricular opportunities as other children.

Complaints

- If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the Designated Teacher, who will try to resolve the situation
- If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days
- Any issue that remains unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Principal's response.