



# Looked After Children Policy

September 2025

## Rationale

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and stability for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves. School can also provide opportunities for trusting relationships with adults who offer consistency and are positive role models.

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.

## 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 school, or with relatives.

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 DfES in their publication, “The Education of Young People in Public Care”.

## Legal Framework

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children.

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a broad and balanced education for all looked after children
- Prioritise 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

## Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers and the Virtual School to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes

- Support the children's social and emotional needs and mental well-being through an awareness of possible trauma and attachment
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra-curricular activities, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with other pupils
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LEA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies
- Endeavor to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential

## Roles and Responsibilities

Some looked after children may not want school staff or pupils to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, at Newlands, we will ensure this is handled sensitively and close co-ordination with the child, family and social worker will be maintained. However, we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning or emotional difficulty, agencies and teachers may need to be aware.

The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children.

The named Governor (Moya Matthews) should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after children
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of new guidelines
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities
- the Governing body receives an annual report

The Head Teacher (Alison Castledine) 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 governing body on an annual basis on the number of looked after pupils in the school, an analysis of progress and achievement compared to other pupils, the attendance of pupils compared to other pupils, the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils
- monitor and act upon any reported incidents of bullying

## The Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher (Karen Elliott) will serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all looked after children in the school.

The Designated Teacher will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after children of the school by:

- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all looked after children and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis

- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by looked after children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
- acting as an advocate for looked after children 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 looked after children. S/he will:

- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after
- maintain records regarding all looked after children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
- monitor the educational progress of all looked after children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern

The Designated Teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
- 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 looked after children
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties
- 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 school:

- by meeting with the looked after child to discuss any support which they may require and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role
- by ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (usually the class teacher)
- by ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan
- by requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies, including the Virtual School, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support
- 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
- by having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions
- by ensuring all looked after children are made to feel a part of the school environment

## **Personal Education Plans**

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and the Designated Teacher will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and weaknesses
- people who are important to the child
- interests, both in and out of school

- developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child

It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

## **Admission/Induction Arrangements**

Looked after children are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LEA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the Designated Teacher and their named teacher. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our 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 school reports and who may give permission for school trips 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 (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

## **School Trips and Special Activities**

Given the delays that looked after children experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that looked after children enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

## **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 complaint to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain 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 Head Teacher's response.