



Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children Policy

Date policy originally produced: March 2019
Date approved by Trustees: November 2022
Produced by: Suzanne Wilson
Policy review date: September 2023

Other related policies that support this Looked After Children policy include: - Admissions, Anti-Bullying, Attendance, Behaviour, Child Protection, E Safety and Acceptable Use of the Internet, Inclusion, Physical Intervention, Pupil Premium, SEN, Supporting Children with Medical Needs

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

At Hull Collaborative Academy Trust (HCAT) we do not discriminate against any child or adult on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We embrace the individuality of all our community members and comply fully with the Equality Act 2010.

Introduction

Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to other groups.

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.

The Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all children receive access to a broad and balanced curriculum which motivates and inspire them to learn. The gaps in LAC, and PLAC learning – and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences – are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress, the school therefore carries out careful planning, monitoring and evaluation to ensure the best possible outcomes for our LAC, and PLAC.

Definition of “Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children”

Looked after children (LAC) are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children’s residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

Previously Looked after children (PLAC) are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from ‘state care’ (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

Principles and Objectives

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and previously Looked After Children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004.

The Designated Teacher

The designated person must be a qualified teacher. The role became statutory in September 2009 under the Children and Young Person’s Act 2008. Ideally, the designated teacher should also be a senior member of staff who is able to influence decisions about the teaching and learning, plus promote the educational achievements of every LAC and PLAC.

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

Some responsibilities of the designated teacher are to:

- Maintain a detailed record of all LAC and PLAC, including information relating to current status, type of placement, name and contact details of Social Worker, Virtual School Head (VHS), relevant health information, Special Educational Needs & Disability status, Personal Education Plan (PEP) information, current and historic assessment information.
- Ensure that a PEP is completed when a child enters the school and is then reviewed at least every 6 months – this should take into account the opinions of the social worker, class teacher, carers and where possible the child and their parents/carers.
- Complete and keep PEPs updated, plus ensuring targets are SMART
- Working closely with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding LAC and PLAC are quickly and effectively responded to.
- Co-ordinate support for the child in school, liaising where necessary with other professionals and carers
- Ensure that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by LAC and PLAC and understand the need for positive systems to support them
- Ensure all information remains confidential, sharing only personal information on a need to know basis
- Prepare reports for and attend LAC meetings
- Monitor the educational progress of all LAC and PLAC, plus 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
- Submit data every term to the local authority Virtual School Head (VHS)
- Produce at least one annual report to the Trustees, which should include information on staff training, links with external agencies and for each child: current progress, attendance, exclusions (if any), concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the plans put in place are effective in addressing the learning needs of the child. The report should not mention any child's name.

This is not an exhaustive list of expectations.

The role of Trustees

Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 places a duty on the Trustees to designate a member of staff (the designated teacher) as having responsibility to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.

To this effect, the Trustees should:

- Ensure that the necessary provision is being made for any pupil who is a LAC or PLAC.
- Ensure that the designated teachers are given the appropriate level of support and has the opportunity to keep up to date with relevant training
- Ensure the designated teacher disseminates relevant training and provides support for all members of staff that will influence teaching and learning for LAC and PLAC.
- Trustees, in partnership with individual head teachers, are responsible for monitoring how well the role is working. As part of this monitoring an annual report will be received from the Designated Teacher.
- Annually review the effective implementation of the Trust's policy for LAC and PLAC.

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

Personal Education Plans

All LAC must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. The PEP is a record of the child's education and forms part of the overall Care Plan. It provides a clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision to ensure academic progress. The social worker, parents, carers, and the child may be invited to the PEP meeting to ensure the views of all stakeholders are considered. The school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this.

Issues that may be discussed in the PEP:

- the child's strengths and weaknesses
- include the child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective
- 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.

The PEP should set clear objectives or targets which relate to academic achievement as well as out of school activities and wherever necessary behavioural targets.

If a child moves school, the PEP should be forwarded, as a matter of urgency, to the new school when known.

In relation to previously LAC, although they no longer required a PEP, the designated teachers should continue to consider their educational needs. The designated teachers should maintain links with VSHs who must make advice and information available, in order to promote the educational achievement of this group of previously looked-after children.

Role of the Virtual School Head

Virtual school head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents, and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

Funding

LAC are entitled to additional funding to help improve their outcomes and narrow the gap between their outcomes and those of their peers.

The academy trust is committed to ensuring effective use of dedicated funding, where available, for all eligible Looked after Children on roll to provide additional, personalised support to ensure accelerated progress in order to improve outcomes.

All Looked after Children are entitled to one-to-one tuition in English and/or Mathematics even if they appear to be reaching expected levels. This school is committed to prioritising all Looked after Children for this tuition.

The appropriate use of allocated funding is to be assessed through the Personal Education Plan.

Admissions

The Trustees and Academy Trust believe that admissions criteria should not discriminate against Looked After Children or previously Looked After Children; we therefore ensure Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children are given the highest priority.

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may also enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive HCAT welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.

If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC. The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and previously-LAC with SEND are supported in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

Attendance

If a pupil who is looked after is identified as having poor attendance or punctuality, the Designated Teacher will contact the Social Worker and parent/carers to gain their support and collect any relevant information. If necessary, a supportive plan to improve attendance will be devised, which will be monitored and reviewed as part of the PEP meetings.

Mental Health

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional, and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education.

The Designated Teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child or young person's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health. The Designated Teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the academy is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

Partnership Working

The Academy Trust values partnership working, and to secure the best possible outcomes for Looked After Children, it is essential that we work with parents/carers, social workers, the Virtual School Head, and other external partners to ensure we are providing the best possible life chances for our Looked after Children.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that all children and young people in care enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving placements for them on trips or enrichment activities which they are eligible for and allowing sufficient time to gain the necessary consent.

Responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities lies with the social worker, although this is often delegated to carers. The person who may give permission will be identified at the first PEP meeting. If there is any uncertainty, we will always send consent forms to the social worker.

Suspensions/Permanent Exclusions

We recognise that the past experiences of LAC and PLAC can impact on their behaviour. This will be an important consideration when looking at how best to support the child or young person with their learning in the design and application of the school's behaviour policies.

In line with the DfE's statutory guidance (Suspension, permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies, and Pupil Referral Units: September 2022), the Head Teacher will make every effort to avoid suspending or permanently excluding LAC/PLAC.

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

This is in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of pupils quickly disengaging from school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss.

If a LAC or PLAC is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher will:

- contact the Virtual School Head (“VSH”) as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- work with the VSH and child’s carers, to consider what additional assessment and support (such as additional help for the classroom teacher or one-to-one therapeutic work) needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child’s behaviour and prevent the need for the exclusion; and, in the case of PLAC, talk to the child’s parents or guardians before seeking the advice of the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

If any period of exclusion is unavoidable, we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. We will notify the social worker and VHS without delay following a decision to either suspend or permanently exclude.

Reviewing

This policy will be reviewed yearly by the Trust’s Safeguarding Lead, or sooner if required.

Hull Collaborative Academy Trust

Table of changes

Date	Change or inclusion
September 2022	Added the following section: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of the VHS• Admission – to reflect the latest Trust Admissions policy• SEND• Attendance – DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance: September 2022• Mental Health• School Trips & Special Activities• Suspension and Exclusion – DfE guidance Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and PRU in England: September 2022• Review