

Ormiston Forge Academy

Looked After Children Policy

March 2018



Approved by the Local Governing Body: **LGB Meeting 21st March 2018**

Review period: **March 2019**

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I. Policy statement and principles

I.1 Policy aims and principles

A looked after child is a child who is in the care of a local authority, or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions¹. Children that fall within this definition are referred to as looked after children.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by the local authority if he, or she, is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than twenty-four hours by the Local Authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
- Children who are the subjects of a care order, or interim care order.
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection.
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the Local Authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement.

Nationally, looked after children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Approximately two thirds of looked after children have special educational needs and we recognise that we have a major part to play in ensuring that looked after children are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

The role we play in our students lives are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children.

We aim to provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption and will tackle 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 we understand the pivotal role we play in this.

The academy’s approach to supporting the educational achievement of looked after children is based on the following objectives:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place
- Promote inclusion by providing a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes
- Ensure all looked after children have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra-curricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the academy experience fully
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child’s care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of looked after children especially surrounding work on family
- Ensure that there is a designated teacher appointed and that they are provided with regular training

¹ Definition from Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989

- Ensure that all staff receive appropriate training
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within the academy and with outside agencies
- Endeavour to support the needs of all looked after children that are educated in this academy
- Support and encourage students to achieve to their fullest possible potential
- Promote and encourage improved attendance

This policy is consistent with all other policies adopted by OAT / the academy and is written in line with current legislation and guidance.

1.2 Complaints

All complaints are dealt with under the **OAT Complaints Policy**.

Complaints should be made in writing and will follow the OAT complaint procedures and set timescales. The handling of complaints may be delegated to an appropriate person.

1.3 Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and / or government guidance
- As a result of any other significant change or event
- In the event that the policy is determined not to be effective

If there are urgent concerns these should be raised to the Vice-Principal, responsible for Inclusion in the first instance for them to determine whether a review of the policy is required in advance of the review date.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Key personnel

Designated Senior Person		Louise Kay, Vice-Principal, Inclusion
Contact Details	Email	Louise.kay@oatforge.co.uk
	Telephone	01384566598
Designated Governor		Stephen Rayner
Contact Details	Email	Stephen.rayner@oatforge.co.uk
	Telephone	c/o 01384566598

2.2 Roles

The Designated Lead for LAC students

The Vice Principal Inclusion will act as designated lead for Looked After Children, and will lead on ensuring the following for students identified as LAC in the academy;

- When new to the academy, ensure a smooth and welcome induction for the student and carer, and note any specific requirements, including care status.
- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed, as soon as possible. This should be prepared with the student and the carer, in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies, and be linked to the Care Plan meetings, where in place. Where appropriate, the PEP should take account of any Individual Educational Plan (IEP), Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), career plan or any other relevant plans. The PEP should inform and be reviewed, concurrently with the Care Plan, i.e. within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least, every 6 months
- Keep PEPs and other records separate and up to date, particularly in time to inform review meetings.
- Ensure that each Looked After child has an identified member of staff, a keyworker, that they can talk to.
- Co-ordinate support for the student in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary.
- Ensure staff receive relevant information and training
- Ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need to know basis.
- Provide written information to assist planning/review meetings.
- Track Progress and Attendance of LAC students
- Ensure that the student and carer(s) receive early notification of meetings, parents' evenings and other events and that communication remains regular and positive. The Home School Agreement may be adapted to take into account any specific points around communication, transport arrangements and consent signatures
- Encourage Looked After Children to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, wherever possible.
- Ensure speedy transfer of information between individuals and other relevant agencies and to a new school if and when the student transfers.
- Seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the student is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded.
- The Designated lead will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the latest regulations and practices outlined in good practice and national guidelines documentation

Roles and responsibilities of all staff

- Ensure that any Looked After child is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- Be familiar with the Guidance on Looked After Children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings
- Respond positively to Looked After child's request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary
- Contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate
- As with all students, ensure that no Looked After child is stigmatised in any way;
- Provide a supportive climate to enable any student in public care to achieve stability within the school setting
- As with all student, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children
- Positively promote the self-esteem of Looked After Children.

The governing body of this school will:

- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Looked After Children.
- Be aware of whether the school has Looked After Children and how many.
- Ensure that there is a named Designated Governor for Looked After Children.
- Liaise with the Principal to ensure that the Designated Lead is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children.
- Support the Principal, Designated Lead and other staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met
- Nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body. These reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons.
- Review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

3. Procedures

3.1 Admissions / transition arrangements

Looked after children and previously looked after children² are a priority for admission this is recognised in our admissions policy's oversubscription criteria.

On admission, a looked after child will meet with the designated senior person 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.

Records will be requested from the child's previous placement and as soon as practicable after the records are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, other relevant professionals and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan (PEP), 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 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.

3.2 Personal Education Plan

Each looked after child will have a PEP, which their social worker will take the lead in developing. The academy'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. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate and the child's opinions will also be important throughout the development and review of the PEP.

The PEP will consider the child's:

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Interests, both in and out of the academy
- Developmental, educational and pastoral needs
- Future plans, and how these can be supported

The PEP will also identify any issues arising for the child and put in place targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

The PEP will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs of the child and to ensure that the academy are offering the best possible support to the child.

3.3 Confidentiality

Many looked after children do not want academy staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status however we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

² Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order).

3.4 Communicating with agencies

- The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the looked after children's social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- The school will co-ordinate their review meetings, for example, hold their annual review of looked after children with their statutory care review.
- The school will work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues.

3.5 Attendance

Attendance at the academy is important to all students overall development. We will monitor students' attendance and identify those with attendance issues and work closely with those students, their carer(s) and any appropriate bodies to improve that the attendance levels of looked after children.

3.6 Exclusions

We understand that looked after children are disproportionately represented in regards to national exclusions statistics. We will endeavour to support and work with our students to ensure that any issues are identified and early intervention strategies are put in place

3.7 Allocation of resources

Since April 2011 LAC, who have been looked after continuously for more than six months, have been eligible for the additional Pupil Premium Grant funding.

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