

St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy



Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

This policy was approved by the Governing Body at their meeting on 26.03.24

Designated Teacher: Gill Novak-Lemmings

Designated Governor: Emma Farmer

Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
0.1	04.03.24	Head of School	

Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Annual	04.03.25

Our Mission Statement

By working together at St Mary's School, we aim, through Jesus Christ, to share God's love, helping our community to learn, grow and make a difference.

Nationally, Looked After Children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. We believe that St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy has a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are exceptionally well prepared for the next steps in their lives. We aim to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful, enthusiastic learners and responsible individuals by providing a positive, safe and stimulating environment where all are included and achievements are celebrated. St. Mary's CVA believes that in partnership with Derby City Council we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of Looked After Children.

Definitions

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 or respite care. 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).

LAC reviews, involving the school, will take place up until an adoption order has been granted. However Pupil Premium Plus funding will continue for LAC until they are 16 years old.

Aims

To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.

To support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential, enjoy learning and take as full a part as possible in all school activities.

To ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children.

To work with the Virtual School and ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

Our school's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education
- Promoting attendance
- Targeting support
- Having high expectations
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising aspiration
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Early intervention and priority action
- Listening to children
- Promoting health and well-being
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals

The Role & Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

Designated Teacher (DT) The role became statutory in September 2009 under the Children and Young Persons' Act 2008 (the 2008 Act). The Designated Teacher must be a qualified teacher or a member of staff. Ideally, s/he should be a senior member of staff who has enough status and experience to advise and provide training to school staff on issues relating to LAC. They need to be able to influence decisions about the teaching and learning of these children.

DT Responsibilities:

- Knowing who all the LAC are in school and ensuring that availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required.
- Attending relevant training about LAC and acting as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how LAC should learn.
- Helping school staff understand the issues that affect the learning of LAC such as differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of the Assessment Framework.
- Making sure that LAC are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Removing the barriers to learning for LAC.
- Ensuring any LAC new to the school are welcomed positively and assessed when they start at the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This will be used to inform planning and teaching.
- Developing personalised learning packages for LAC in conjunction with the relevant teaching staff.
- Ensuring that the LAC in their school have a voice in setting learning targets for themselves.
- Championing for LAC.
- Leading on developing and implementing the PEP within the school. The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP process completing the relevant pages of the ePEP form.
- Monitoring the child's progress against the targets on the PEP and extending these targets if they have been achieved.
- Ensuring the child makes a smooth transition to the new school and that the child's records are transferred without delay.
- Liaising with the Virtual School in all aspects of the LAC progress and support.
- Communicate with the Virtual School to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of LAC.
- Manage PP+ for Previously Looked After Children to support educational attainment and personal development.
- Convening urgent multi-agency meetings if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion.

- Arranging for a mentor or key worker to whom the young person can talk to. Arranging for the LAC to be supported by their peers.
- Producing at least one annual report to the governing body which should include: current progress, attendance and exclusions (if any), any concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the actions put in place are effective in addressing the learning needs of LAC, how the DT works in partnership with the LA, training undertaken for carrying out the role effectively. The report must not mention the children's names for confidentiality reasons.

Who are Looked After Children?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- 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 (section 21).

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 in accordance with guidance from the Nottingham Diocese of Catholic Schools 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 Derby City Admissions Forum. 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
- school age parents' officer.