Looked After Children (LAC) Policy
(also known as CLA – Child Looked After)

2026

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Aims

Westacre Middle School is a fully inclusive school, which strives to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential; personally, socially, emotionally and academically in all areas of the curriculum, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, social background, religion, sexual identity, physical ability or educational need.

Many looked-after and previously looked-after children have suffered disrupted learning, may have missed extended periods of school, and many of them have special educational needs (SEN). The gaps in their learning and, in many cases, the emotional impact of their experiences, are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidence of SEN, needs careful assessment and planning.

The support that schools and designated teachers give to children who are looked-after and previously looked-after should not be seen in isolation. All looked-after and previously looked-after children will have a wide range of support mechanisms that will assist in promoting their educational achievement. The child's foster carer (or residential care worker), social worker or, for previously looked-after children, parents or guardian, will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority, the VSH will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school.

Westacre Middle School ensures that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked after children, and supports other staff members to do this too.
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

Our Designated Teacher is: Mrs L. Coldrick. She can be contacted via our school telephone number on 01905 772795.

Our Designated Governor is: Judy Mayo.

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. The link to this document can be found on our school website under Key Information, Pupil Premium, Looked After (LAC) and Previously Looked After (PLAC): Looked After (LAC) and Previously Looked After (PLAC) | Westacre Middle School

It also takes into account section 20 and section 20A of the Child and Young Persons Act 2008.

Definitions

Children Looked After are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Children Previously Looked After are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
  - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
  - A special guardianship order
  - An adoption order
- They appear to the governing board to have:

- Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
- Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the designated teacher

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by working with VSHs and promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritized.
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve.
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities.
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs.
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.
- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs.
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs. Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place.
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs. If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment. Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children.
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use.
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this.
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services.

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom.
- Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process.

Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:

- Contact the 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.
- Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour.

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing body will:

- Support the Local Authority in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and pLAC pupils.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is given the appropriate level of support to fulfil their role.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire, update the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of LAC and pLAC pupils.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting LAC and pLAC pupils to achieve.
- Recognise its responsibility in partnership with the Headteacher for monitoring how well the Designated Teacher role is being carried out.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Teacher. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies and documents

This policy links to our policies on:

- Inclusion
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Pupil Premium
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour
- Equality including Accessibility Plan
- Safeguarding

As well as the statutory guidance documents:

- Promoting the Education of Looked-after children and previously looked-after children
- The Designated Teacher for Looked-after and Previously Looked-after children
- Worcestershire Virtual School policy for Looked-after and Previously Looked-after children