



South Downs Learning Trust



A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN(LAC) POLICY

DATE APPROVED BY TRUSTEES	MARCH 2021
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	MARCH 2022
STATUS	MANDATORY

OUR VISION

A community of primary and secondary academies that are the first choice for students and families in Sussex, with an outstanding reputation for high aspiration and high achievement.

Designated Teacher for looked After Children (LAC) Policy

Aim

The aim of this policy is:

- to promote educational inclusion for Looked After Children (LAC), to enable them to access the full range of educational opportunities available to them and to reach their potential, both academically and personally
- 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

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 “normality” 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.

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of LAC and schools play a pivotal role in this.

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, LAC are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, LAC significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. Compared with their peers, a high proportion of LAC leave education with no formal qualifications and an even smaller percentage go on to further education. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

South Downs Learning Trust recognises that LAC can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas.

We are aware that LAC may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting adult consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances.

South Downs Learning Trust recognises that LAC may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

We believe that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked after Child can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC are able to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Definitions

LAC are registered students 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

Previously LAC are registered students 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 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 LAC, working across schools to monitor and support these students 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.

Emotional well-being and care

NSPCC research has found that children living in care are more likely to have problems with their mental health than children who aren't in care and if we don't help children and young people early enough then these problems can get worse.

Data from the Office of National Statistics shows that children in care are 4 times more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty. If a placement breaks down it can have a detrimental impact on a child's emotional wellbeing and mental health and if a child's mental health grows worse they may need increasingly specialist placements.

We believe we all have a responsibility to break this cycle. We want to inspire system change to support good emotional wellbeing for all LAC and to work in partnership with other agencies to help keep their placements stable.

LAC may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self-esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. The Trust Body of South Downs Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- Personal Education Plans (PEP) for all LAC. In addition, a child may require a separate plan at school. For example, if a child has Special Educational Needs (SEN), they may need a SEN Support Plan. Any additional plans will be linked to their Personal Education Plan.

- A Designated teacher for LAC. The designated teacher will lead on how the Personal Education Plan is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored. At South Downs Learning Trust, this is usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- School staff will work alongside the designated Social Worker to ensure education becomes a key protective factor for the child.
- All staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect LAC.
- Effective strategies that support the education of this vulnerable group.

Legal Framework

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective procedures for supporting and promoting the education of LAC.

South Downs Learning Trust 's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of LAC is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all LAC.
- All LAC will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require.
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- If a child is at risk of exclusion, we will ensure that a preventative approach is taken to reduce this risk. This includes promoting good attendance.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible. Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of LAC.

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- 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. A child's care status is recorded on our School Information Management system. This is accessible to authorised users only. All paper records are kept in a secure filing cabinet, separate from other school files and accessible through the DSL, the Deputy DSLs and other specified staff. The school will retain the record for as long as the pupil remains at the school and will then be transferred to the new school. The original file will be passed on either by hand or sent via other secure transit, separate from the child's main school file, as soon as possible from the notification. Electronic files will be kept on MyConcern and passed on to the next school accordingly.

- 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 updated legislation and guidance.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavour to support all LAC educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, extra-curricular activities and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.

Roles and Responsibilities

Many LAC do not want school 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.

The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all LAC 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 LAC.

The named Trustee should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for LAC.
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and DFE guidelines
- the Designated teacher has received appropriate training. This is recorded on the school's training log
- LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- the Trust Body receives regular safeguarding reports; this includes the number of LAC in the school.

- the school has an overview of the needs and progress of LAC resources are allocated to meet the needs of LAC

The Head Teacher will:

- appoint the Designated teacher
- ensure that the Designated teacher has received appropriate training
- oversee the development of the policy on LAC
- be responsible for all systems to support LAC
- report to the Trust Body on an annual basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after pupils in the school
 - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
 - the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils
 - the number of complaints

The Designated teacher will:

- ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan (PEP) to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met. This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.
- ensure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed with the child and any other relevant people. A Personal Education Plan will be initiated by the Social Worker within 20 school days of the LAC starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the LAC. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.
- ensure that each LAC has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated teacher but should be based on the child's own wishes.
- help establish and maintain the ethos regarding LAC of the school by:
- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all LAC 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 LAC and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
 - ensuring that all staff through appropriate training, consider the approach and language they use when discussing sensitive topics. For example, during PSHE, discussions about families may be a theme so staff may discuss the content with the child's carer prior to deliver so that advice can be sought, or preparation work can be carried out at home in advance acting as an advocate for LAC 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 LAC. The Designated teacher will:
 - have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information
 - maintain records regarding all LAC, 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 LAC 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
- promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage LAC to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
- act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of LAC.
- set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
- ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school – to a new school.
- be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- be aware that LAC are vulnerable to bullying behaviours, so we will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- ensure that attendance is monitored.
- attend training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding LAC.

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 LAC
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education, including the Virtual Head for the Local Authority
- 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).
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked after Children, as for all pupils.

- Maintain LAC confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated teacher's requests for information.
- Work to enable LAC to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all LAC.
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of LAC.
- Ensure their teaching approach and language is sensitive to the child's needs, for example, referring to the carer by their name (and not mum or dad).
- Respond positively to a child in request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- Ensure that as with all children, that no Looked after child is stigmatised in any way;
- Provide a supportive climate to enable a Looked after Child to achieve stability within the school setting.
- As with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC.

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 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.

The PEP (Appendix A) will consider:

- 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

LAC are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the Local Authority's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the Designated teacher 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 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 LAC may experience in getting appropriate consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that LAC enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities. If a carer requests support with funding for activities, the school will meet with the carer to discuss whether any financial support can be provided by school. The school may also liaise with any allocated Social Worker.

Confidentiality

Information on LAC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis.

The Designated teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Record keeping and information sharing

The Designated teacher will keep an up-to-date record of LAC and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff.

A Personal Education Plan will be initiated within 20 school days of the Looked After Child starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the LAC. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly.

Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition.

It is vital that the Looked after Child is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Exclusions

South Downs Learning Trust recognises that LAC are particularly vulnerable to exclusions.

Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

The child or young person's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening (Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information).

Staff development and training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated teacher is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of LAC.

Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with LAC, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include English as a foreign language (EAL), being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs.

Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs provision, English as an Additional Language and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those LAC who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs to ensure they are supported appropriately.

Support and resources

The Trust Body will ensure that the school allocates resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Admission arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. The school recognises that Looked after Children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked after Children in the school's over subscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of LAC (England) Regulations 2006).

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked after Child including Children's Services, Educational Psychologist, Health Services, CAMHS etc.

Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. South Downs Learning Trust is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

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, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond in accordance with the school's complaints procedures.

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.

Further information

Further information from the LA relating to supporting 'LAC' can be found on the cvirtual.school@eastsussex.gov.uk 01323 464630

Other relevant policies

This policy links with a number of other school policies. These include:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment Policy
- PSHE and Citizenship Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Children with Medical Needs Policy
- Staff code of conduct

Policy Review:

Annually

Appendices

Ocklynge School contact information

Role	Name	Contact Details
Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) Designated LAC teacher	Sylvia Berhane	berhanes@ocklynge.co.uk 01323 735469 07986 589262
Deputy DSL	Sandra Denton	dentons@ocklynge.co.uk 07886 865782
SENCO	Rachael Willer	willerr@ocklynge.co.uk 07849 060349
Headteacher	Jon Reynard	reynardj@ocklynge.co.uk 07736 018307
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Sandi Buttrey	lado@eastsussex.gov.uk
Chair of governors Virtual School Representative	Anne Wardle	awardle@sdlt.org.uk
Virtual School Representative	Louisa Morley	Louisa.morley@eastsussex.gov.uk 01323 464630

Ratton School contact information

Role	Name	Contact Details
Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) Designated LAC teacher	David Brown	dbrown@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Deputy DSL	Kirsty Cox	kcox@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Deputy DSL	Maureen Huggins	mhuggins@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Deputy DSL	Sue Jones	sjones@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Deputy DSL	Bronwyn Meyer	bmeyer@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Deputy DSL	Keil Morris	kmorris@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
SENCO	Michelle Veale	Mveale@ratton.co.uk 01323 504011
Head of School	Gavin Peevers	reynardj@ocklynge.co.uk 07736 018307
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Sandi Buttrey	lado@eastsussex.gov.uk
Chair of governors Virtual School Representative	Carole Bradbrook	cbradbrook@sdlt.org.uk
Virtual School Representative	Alicia Horridge	alicia.horridge@eastsussex.gov.uk 01323 464630

