

Looked After Children Policy

Springwood Heath Primary School



Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: April 2020
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Last reviewed on:	April 2020
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Next review due by:	April 2022
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Springwood Heath Primary School
Policy on the Education of Young People in Public Care

(Looked After Children Policy)

“Success together through caring and learning”.

There are many reasons why children need foster care. These include family illness, family breakdown and problems at home or a situation where their welfare is threatened.

High aspirations, careful assessment and planning, an emotionally healthy learning environment and high quality teaching and learning all contribute to improved wellbeing and attainment, and consequently long term positive outcomes.

Springwood Heath Primary School has a key role to play in the education of children and young people in public care. Springwood Heath may represent the one constant factor in a young person’s life when other aspects of life may be uncertain or unstable. We aim to provide a stable and secure base and a learning environment where young people will feel intrinsically valued and are able to ‘achieve and reach their full potential’.

Rationale:

Nationally, the education outcomes at all stages, for Children Looked After and children previously looked after are of concern with a significant gap compared with outcomes for their peers who are not looked after or previously looked after.

It follows that children and young people who are looked after or previously looked after require additional support and positive discrimination in their favour if this situation is to be improved.

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 Liverpool Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in Liverpool.

Definition of a previously Looked After Child:

A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.

The roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority regarding children who are looked after:

Local Authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of Children Looked After by them. When a child is taken into care, the Local Authority shares parental responsibility with the birth parents, and may sometimes limit, or veto, decisions made by the birth parents. The Local Authority is required to appoint at least one person, the Virtual School Head (VSH), to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's CLA wherever they live or are educated. For all Looked After Children a Care Plan and placement agreement is drawn up within 14 days of a child coming into care and 10 days for a first placement for a voluntarily accommodated child. The care plan is written and reviewed by the Local Authority. As part of the Care Plan, every child must have a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

Roles and Responsibilities:

Governing Body & School Leadership Team will

Ensure there is a designate a member of staff appointed who is a qualified teacher (the designated teacher) as having the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children and previously looked after children.

Ensure the designated teacher has appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Ensure the designated teacher is able to undertake appropriate training to support their role.

Ensure looked after children and previously looked after children are the priority group for admission to the school.

Ensure Pupil Premium Grant+ allocated is used for the benefit of looked after Children and previously looked after children to support progress, attainment, engagement and well-being.

Ensure school policies and approaches appropriately reflect the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

The Designated Teacher will:

The Designated Teacher (DT) in a school is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children in their school. The DT has lead responsibility for helping school staff understand what support this cohort might need to learn and achieve. The Designated Teacher

Is the central point of contact within the school in order to facilitate working with others, such as social workers, Virtual School Heads and parents/carers and understands the importance each role has to play.

Champions the individual rights of the young person, hears and respects their wishes and shows sensitivity about their care status

Promotes a culture in which children looked after and previously looked after believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, and where everyone working with this cohort have high expectations and aspirations for them.

Makes sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets, can discuss their progress and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.

Promotes good home-school links through contact with the child's carer or the person who has parental responsibility about how they can support his or her progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers.

Is a source of advice for staff about assessment and differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children.

Makes sure that looked after and previously looked after children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements.

Has lead responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the looked after child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the school, and is responsible for ensuring that the PEP is updated and available in time for the Local Authority review of the child's wider care plan.

Helps looked after and previously looked after children transition into the school and make smooth transitions to new schools or colleges, including arrangements for timely sharing of information.

Makes sure that the school does everything possible to provide educational stability; including promoting attendance, avoiding exclusion and removal of barriers to them accessing the general activities and experiences that the school offers to all its pupils.

Contributes to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put looked after and previously looked after children at a disadvantage.

Makes sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures in place to support learning and that school policies do not unintentionally put looked after and previously looked after children at a disadvantage.

Role and Responsibilities of All Staff in school:

As with all children, have high aspirations and celebrate the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children.

Respond to requests for information to support the completion of PEP's and other documentation needed as part of review meetings.

Liaise with the designated teacher where a Looked After Child is experiencing difficulty.



Monitoring the progress of LAC:

The social worker for the LA should initiate a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the young person 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.

PEPs:

Each child will have a statutory 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 meeting is chaired by the school.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strength's and weaknesses
- 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.

At the PEP meeting decisions are made on how Pupil Premium Plus should best be used to support targets that will improve the educational progress, school attendance and behaviour of the child. PEPs are submitted electronically to the VSH Team. The PEP is reviewed termly and allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus grant (termly) is dependent on the completion and quality of the PEP documentation including clear outcomes and costing's.

Pupil Premium/Pupil Premium Plus:

Introduced in 2011, the pupil premium is a sum of money (£1,320) given to schools each year by the Government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children and to close the attainment gap. The Pupil Premium Plus grant introduced in 2013 is a specific funding allocated for looked after children and previously looked after children. (This is currently £2,300 for 2019/20) The Government acknowledged the enduring impact of trauma and loss in children's lives and the key role of schools in supporting children who have had a difficult start in life. It is recognised that the impact of abuse, neglect, trauma and loss doesn't disappear overnight. The focus is on children's social and emotional and wider needs. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was introduced in April 2015 as additional.

In deciding how to use the Pupil Premium Plus, we will want to understand and take account of the particular needs of looked after and previously looked after children, as

these may be additional to or different from the needs of children who attract the Pupil Premium because they are from financially deprived family circumstances; for example, financial subsidies such as school trips and clubs may not address the needs of previously looked after children. The DfE has clearly said that the funding should not be used to supplement the general school budget, or to support other groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs or who are low attaining. Some children who are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus will have special educational needs or low attainment, but these are needs which should anyway be met through the usual or additional funding streams available to the school.

Every decision about spending Pupil Premium Plus begins with a good understanding of the child's needs. The shared understanding of the child's needs makes it possible to identify the intervention needed to support these needs, which can then inform Pupil Premium Plus spending. (It may be possible to use Pupil Premium Plus to commission such an assessment from the LA's Educational Psychology Service.)

The DfE state, 'Our experience is that permanently placed children can particularly struggle with: Attachment relationships with adults | Managing their peer relationships | Managing their feelings and behaviour | Coping with transitions | Developing their executive functioning skills' (Pupil Premium Plus 2019/20: A PAC-UK Education Service Guide)

Suggestions for Pupil Premium Plus spending can be found at <https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Pupil-Premium-Plus-Guide-Web-Version-V1.5.pdf>

At Springwood Heath Primary using our Pupil Premium/Pupil Premium Plus we offer -

A nurture breakfast club which allows children to settle into the school day.

Training and supporting staff to provide key attachment relationships with regular 1:1 'attachment time' built into children's timetables.

Social skills groups or Circle of Friends interventions

Lunchtime clubs with opportunities to practice social skills

Emotional literacy and emotion regulation groups, including anger management. Time spent with our Learning Mentor.

Providing calm boxes and staff to spend 1:1 time helping children to regulate themselves. Providing calm zones in classrooms and centrally within the school.

Spending time preparing children for change in advance e.g. using social stories or visual timetables.

Extra learning resources over and above what we provide for all children.

Providing individual and group sessions and aspiration raising activities.

Additional support in school that will build self-esteem, confidence, resilience or learning skills, e.g. peer mentoring, nurture group provision and therapeutic support.

Communicating with Agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH):

We recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting LAC children. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual LAC children:

- LAC teams
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- Medical professionals
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers

We 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 worker.

We will work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the Social Worker, carer and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher will communicate with the Social Worker/VSH and agree on how pupil premium plus (PP+) can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.

The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the Social Worker/VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.

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, VSH 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. In particular, the DT will ensure that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal

status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with the consent of parents or on an interim of full care order).

Confidentiality:

To ensure the safety and well-being of a 'Looked After Child', information will be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. The Designated Teacher will discuss what information can be shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting and will only share this once agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, (where appropriate) and other parties. All staff in school are aware that complete confidentiality of any information relating to children should be maintained at all times.

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 Looked after Children (England) Regulations 2006).

Exclusions:

At Springwood Heath we recognise that Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion we 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 their Behaviour 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.

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 children in care to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

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 within 10 days, 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 within 10 working days. 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. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head teacher's response.

Springwood Heath's Designated Teacher is: Mrs Chris Beacall

Springwood Heath Primary School, will play an important part in the lives of its Looked After Children, and recognises that Springwood Heath is somewhere where children develop their self confidence and skills, receive praise and encouragement, learn about and build relationships and achieve,

because 'Every Child Matters'.

Further information can be found

Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190244/01047-2009.pdf