

Ravensdale Junior School

Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

(To be read in conjunction with our policies on Child Protection and Safeguarding, Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Inclusion and Children Missing from Education.)

Ravensdale Junior School alongside Transform Trust aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care.

Designated Teacher for LAC: Miss Sarah Hayford
Governor with responsibility for LAC: TBC

This policy has been developed in consultation with Derby City Looked After Children and Care Leavers. See Appendix 1.

The Governing Body is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in “Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004” (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of LAC.

AIMS

The aims of the school are to:

- Ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children
- Ensure that all LAC have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- Provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual’s needs and ability
- Ensure that LAC pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- Ensure that carers and social workers of LAC pupils are kept fully informed of their child’s progress and attainment
- Ensure that LAC pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision.

See Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

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 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 (E-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 E-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 E-PEP.

See Appendix 3 - Derby City's guidance on E-PEP forms

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 Special Educational Needs services
- Derby City Virtual School for LAC
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service
- School age parents' officer.

LAC POLICY REVIEW AND EVALUATION

We consider the LAC policy to be important and we undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year.

APPENDIX 1

Looked After Children say...

- “I would like to have a say as to whether I move school or not.”
- “Money should not be the most important thing when deciding if I should move schools.”
- “I would really like to have a chance to visit the school before I start.”
- “I would like my school work and achievements to be passed on to my new school and not forgotten about.”
- “I would have liked a buddy or peer mentor when I moved to my new school to help me get settled.”
- “We want to be treated as normal. We don’t want to be pitied or treated differently.”
- “I’d like to be able to choose a particular teacher to talk to – not just the designated teacher.”
- “I want to keep my life private. I don’t want people knowing everything about me unless I say so.”
- “I don’t want my teachers hearing embarrassing/personal details about me and my family at review meetings.”
- “I want my own copy of school reports and I want my parents to have a copy.”
- “The head of year is extremely important in passing on ‘need to know’ information to individual subject teachers.”

APPENDIX 2

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rationale for roles and responsibilities:

Looked After Children – LAC - are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.

This may result in:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- Underachievement in further and higher education.

These issues may also affect adopted young people. The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. To date the outcomes achieved by LAC have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Celebrating success.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for LAC within school
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the LAC and the rest of the school community
- Know who are all the LAC in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and
- Ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- Attend relevant training about LAC
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC,
- Seeking advice from the LAC team when appropriate.
- Ensure that LAC receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle.
- Ensure that all LAC have an appropriate Personal Education Plan (E-PEP) that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- Keep E-PEPs and other records up to date and review E-PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events

- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra curricular activities for LAC
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- Contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- Report to the Governing body on LAC in the school and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc
- Prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include:
 - o the number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – E-PEP.
 - o their attendance compared to other pupils.
 - o their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils.
 - o the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
 - o the destinations of pupils who leave the school.
- Attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC.
- Arrange a mentor or befriender (adult and /or pupil) to whom the young person can talk, possibly through the learning mentor scheme or through Connexions, particularly when the pupil is new to school
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed and are in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEN. LAC are six to eight times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs than the general school population.

Good practice suggests that all school staff will:

- follow school procedures.
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress.
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC.
- positively promote the raising of a LAC's self esteem.
- ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support E-PEPs and review meetings.
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required.

Good practice suggests that the Governing Body will:

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the DfES Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC
- ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC
- liaise with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC who links with the Designated Teacher
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher.
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:
 - o admission to school
 - o National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
 - o out of school learning and extra curricular activities
 - o work experience and careers guidance.

- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for LAC.
- ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings of LAC.

The Local Authority will:

- lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for LAC
- ensure that the education for this group is as good as that provided for every other Derby City pupil
- ensure that LAC receive a full time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- ensure that every LAC has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Derby from another authority
- make sure that each LAC has a E-PEP according to national guidance
- ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for LAC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer
- identify a designated officer who has responsibility for championing the education of LAC
- be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of LAC and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs.

APPENDIX 3 – E-PEP GUIDANCE

(A) Initiating E-PEPs on Child's entry to care

- You will receive a E-PEP via secure email from the E-PEP Administrator with the first four pages completed.
- Complete, update and amend the education sections of the E-PEP electronically prior to the E-PEP meeting.
- Discuss the plan with child/young person. Encourage and record their comments on the young Person's Views sheet.
- Inform the school nurse that the young person has entered public care or that a young person in care has joined the school.
- **Keep original completed E-PEP in child's school file and use as a working document.**
- Take a photocopy of completed E-PEP and discuss at the E-PEP meeting. Following the meeting amend as appropriate.
- Return the E-PEP electronically via secure email to E-PEP@derby.gov.uk within two days of the E-PEP meeting
- The E-PEP Administrator will then distribute the E-PEP to all relevant people.

(B) For Statutory Care Plan Review meetings

- It is a statutory requirement that E-PEPs are reviewed every six months.
- Before the Statutory Care Plan Review, update the E-PEP by
 - o Recording any amendments
 - o Reviewing targets and actions from last E-PEP meeting
 - o Be sure to record any changes here as well as setting new targets and record any comments from child/young person
- Take a copy of the E-PEP (and any attached information) to the meeting or, if not attending, send it to the Reviewing Team.
- Put a copy of the **E-PEP- Plan/Review** form (and any updated information) with the original E-PEP in the child/young person's school file

Also consider

- If the child/young person has Special Educational Needs, you may wish to hold the E-PEP and Provision Plan reviews together to minimise paperwork and time.
 - If child/young person moves school forward the completed E-PEP, including the Review documents, along with the child's school file in the normal way to the receiving school.
- For fuller explanations please refer to the DfES "Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care".

Signed:

Date: