

Looked-After / Previously Looked-After Children Policy 2021-2022



St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

"Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."



SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT



“St Gerard’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”.

Introduction

Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) 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
- bullying (either victim or perpetrator)
- prone to mental health issues
- isolated with few friends
- behavioural difficulties
- poor attachments to others
- a need to be very private

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life chances.

The governing body of St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible.

Aims at St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School,

We will do for Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) what we do for all children, only more so. We aim to ensure that LAC and PLAC excel, as we aim for all children to excel. We aim to overcome their barriers to learning and enable them to leave us happy and secure in themselves, and also to understand that they have control over their destiny and that education does matter. We will listen to what LAC and PLAC tell us about what they want from their education, and we will try to address any concerns or issues raised through various means including the school's Student Council and surveys.

We strive to ensure that the culture and ethos of the school are such that, whatever the heritage and origins of members of the school, pupils are provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and celebrate diversity.

Objectives:

St Gerard's will support LAC and PLAC by:

- ensuring an effective induction for the child & carer when joining the school, or for the carer when a child who is already on the school roll comes into care
- balancing high levels of teaching and learning support with academic challenge
- ensuring that each child has a high quality Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- linking each child to a key person they relate well to
- making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships
- developing strong relationships with carers, local authorities (including the Virtual School Head (VSH)) and specialist agencies
- encouraging LAC and PLAC to take responsibility for their learning, and giving them the necessary support
- engaging LAC and PLAC in learning, outside the classroom and in after-school activities
- intervening promptly if a problem emerges (e.g. behaviour or attendance)

- giving integrated but low-profile support in school to each LAC and PLAC so that they are not made to feel different from other children
- planning for future transitions (e.g. to secondary school).

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (September 2021). We comply with this guidance and the procedures set out by our local safeguarding children board.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

- In England and Wales, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 aims to ensure children in care receive high-quality care and services, which are focused on and tailored to their needs.
- The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children.
- In England, the Department for Education (DfE) has provided guidance and regulations on care planning, placement and case review (PDF) (DfE, 2021).
- The DfE has also published a protocol for local authority children's services, local care providers, police forces, criminal justice agencies and local health services (including mental health services) on reducing criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers (DfE, 2018a).
- In England, schools must have a designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children. The DfE has published statutory guidance for local authority maintained schools on their roles and responsibilities (DfE, 2018b).
- The DfE has also published guidance on promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (PDF) (DfE, 2018c).
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standard on the health and wellbeing of looked after children and young people sets out best practice in meeting the health and wellbeing needs of looked after children and young people in England (NICE, 2013).
- From 1 September 2009 the governing bodies of all maintained schools have been required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) to appoint a designated teacher (DT) to promote the educational achievement of children in care who are on the school roll.

Roles and responsibilities Governor with responsibility for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children:

Christine Godwin (Chair of Governors)

Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-after Children: Edd Naylor (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/Senior Assistant Headteacher)

The Role of the Governing Body

- The Governing Body will ensure that the Designated Teacher and the named Governor undertake appropriate training
- The Governing Body will ensure that the Designated Teacher is a member of the Senior Leadership Team or is directly line managed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Governors will consider an annual report covering attainment, attendance, progress, Personal Education Plans, LACs with Special Educational Needs or who are gifted and talented, the impact on school development plans and any other relevant information
- The Governing Body, the Head Teacher and School Leadership Team will act on any issues raised in the report and will ensure that: - the school has a clear overview of the educational needs and progress of LAC on roll - the school's policies are effective in reflecting LAC's need - resources are allocated to support the Designated Teacher to carry out this role effectively for the benefit of LAC.

The role of the Head Teacher

- To ensure that, in partnership with the Governing Body, the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and update the necessary skills, knowledge and training needed to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of LAC and PLAC
- To make sure that the Designated Teacher role deepens the understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting children in care to achieve
- In partnership with the Governing Body, to monitor the effectiveness of the role of the Designated Teacher
- To oversee the development of the policy on LAC and PLAC
- To evaluate the standards and achievement of LAC and PLAC and report these termly to the Governing Body
- To ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to attend training courses that will help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to support LAC and PLAC

The role of the Designated Teacher within the school

- To take lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things that affect how LAC and PLAC learn and achieve
- To promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how LAC and PLAC learn
- To promote the educational achievement of every LAC and PLAC on the school's roll
- To contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put LAC or PLAC at a disadvantage
- To ensure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures in place to support LAC and PLAC learning
- To ensure that the young person has a voice in setting learning targets
- To be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and making full use of Assessment for Learning (AfL)
- To ensure that LAC and PLAC are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that parents/carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- To have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the school
- To set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all LAC and PLAC, and establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
- To act as the named contact for colleagues in social care and health, and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties
- To ensure that the school file for LAC and PLAC holds all the essential information
- To arrange for a mentor or peer mentor for each LAC or PLAC on the school roll.

The role of all staff

- To ensure that all LAC and PLAC are made to feel welcome and included
- To have high expectations of LAC and PLAC's involvement in learning and educational progress
- To be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families
- To understand the reasons which may be behind a LAC or PLAC's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children
- To understand how important it is to see LAC and PLAC as individuals and not publicly treat them differently from their peers
- To appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a LAC or PLAC's status
- To understand both what a PEP is, and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers – and, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself – and an understanding of what everyone needs to do to help the child's achieve his or her potential.

Confidentiality

Information on LAC and PLAC 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.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All LAC must have a care plan drawn up and reviewed by the Local Authority that looks after them. The care plan must include a Personal Education Plan (PEP); this forms part of the child's official school record. The school and the Local Authority have a shared responsibility for making sure that the PEP is a useful document. There will be discussion about how the child, the school and the Local Authority can together ensure that through the content, implementation and review of the PEP, the child achieves well. These meetings will involve the young person concerned, the parents/carers, the social worker, a teacher and other professionals, as appropriate. If the child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, this should be reviewed annually and should, where possible, tie in with the PEP.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

LAC and PLAC are a priority for admission and we follow the Local Authority's published admission criteria. On admission to the school or to care, parents/carers will be given an introductory booklet about the school's expectations and processes, and the child will meet with the Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC. The Designated Teacher will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child feels supported in the school. Consideration will be given to giving the child a mentor. On admission, 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 parents/carers, a social worker, other relevant professionals and the child, as appropriate, to put together a new PEP. This early meeting will ensure that communication systems are established from the outset. If records are not received promptly, we will undertake our own assessment to make sure that the teaching and support received are appropriate.

We will endeavor to meet the statutory time scales for PEPs as outlined in guidance. When children already on school roll enter care, the school will ensure that they meet the Designated Teacher as soon as possible, and that the child and his/her parents/carers are made aware of the school's procedures and additional support arrangements. A meeting with other parties will be arranged and a PEP will be prepared as soon as possible; we will follow the procedure adopted for those children at the school who are already in care.

At 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 and other such activities. At this meeting all means of communication to aid the exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed; this might include a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in the child's circumstances.

Many LAC and PLAC do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel 'different'. We will discuss this with the child, and agree who should be aware of his/her care status; however, we recognise that in some cases – for example, if the child has a severe learning difficulty – this may not be possible.

Specific Support

- One-to-one Tuition - All LAC are entitled to extra support as part of a government scheme; this includes one-to-one tuition in English and/or Maths even if they appear to be reaching expected levels of attainment. The school is committed to prioritising all LAC for this tuition.
- Additional funding LAC and PLAC are entitled to additional funding to help improve their outcomes and narrow the gap between their outcomes and those of their peers. Eligibility for such funding and the sums of money available will be determined in line with government policy. The school is committed to ensuring effective use of this dedicated funding, where available, for all eligible LAC and PLAC on roll to provide additional, personalised support and ensure accelerated progress in order to improve outcomes. The appropriate use of allocated funding will be assessed by reference to the Personal Education Plan.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that LAC and PLAC enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips and other enrichment activities which they are eligible for and by allowing sufficient time to gain the necessary consent. Responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities lies with the social worker, although this is often delegated to carers. The person who may give permission will be identified at the first PEP meeting. If there is any uncertainty, we will always send consent forms to the social worker.

Helping to build a child's portfolio of memorabilia

LAC may experience many moves and become dislocated from their pasts. School may be one of the few places where they may safely gather up and record things they have done, have made, have become. The Designated Teacher will ensure that all LAC make a comprehensive portfolio of memorabilia recording stages in their lives at school for them to keep – for example, photographs of themselves and their friends in teams, at play and in class (if appropriate), and special pieces of work (e.g. paintings, poems or models).

Appendix 1 – Definitions Looked-After Children (LAC) are those who are in the care of a local authority, or are being provided with accommodation by a local authority in England in the exercise of their social services functions. Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are those who immediately after being in care (as defined above) became subject to an adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order. A Special Guardianship Order (SGO) appoints one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian(s) A Child Arrangements Order settles the arrangements of the person the child is to live with.

Appendix 2 Complaints Procedure If a young person, parent/carer 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 together with the parent/carer and the social worker. If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 working days, the young person, parent/carer or social worker may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days, unless the formal complaint is about the conduct of the Head Teacher him/herself; in these circumstances, the complaint will go straight to the Chair of the school's Governing Body.

Any issues that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed in a meeting called to assess the impact of any such complaint on the child's education. Those attending the meeting may include the Governor with special responsibility for children in care and representatives of any outside agency whose presence is required by both parties. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head Teacher's response. Pupils who wish to make a formal complaint against the school or about their care will be advised of the support available for children in care.