



Cherrywood Federation Policy for Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children

Article 20: If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion

Article 25: If a child has been placed away from home for the purpose of care or protection (for example, with a foster family or in hospital), they have the right to a regular review of their treatment, the way they are cared for and their wider circumstances.

Article 39: Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

Approved by:

Anita Saville

Date: 8th December 2025

Next review due by:

December 2027

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Designated LAC & PLAC Teacher: Ms Shepard
Deputy Designated LAC & PLAC Teacher: Mr Waterman

1. Aims

LAC (Looked After Children) & PLAC (Previously Looked After Children) may have experienced disrupted schooling and gaps in learning. In addition, a significant proportion of LAC & PLAC have some form of Special Educational Need and or have been excluded from school. This has resulted in the attainment of this group not being in line with the attainment of their peers nationally.

The school aims to ensure 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
- A safe environment is provided for all LAC & PLAC, where their educational experience is valued, high aspirations are encouraged and belief in the potential of all children is held.
- All LAC & PLAC are provided with, and have access to, support to enable them to have every opportunity to enjoy, learn and achieve in line with their peers.
- 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 policies and procedures for LAC & PLAC meet the requirements outlined within 'The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children, Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, DfE February 2018.'

2. 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.

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

3. Definitions

Looked-after children 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

Previously looked-after children 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, carers and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Wendy Shepard at Joseph Hood Primary School

Contact senco@josephhood.merton.sch.uk

Our deputy designated teacher is Michael Waterman at Joseph Hood Primary School

Contact: Michael.waterman@josephhood.merton.sch.uk

Our designated teacher is Alice Waterman/Leanne Newman at Hatfeild Primary School.

Contact: head@hatfeild.merton.sch.uk

Our deputy designated teacher is Jack Canning at Hatfeild Primary School

Contact: jack.canning@hatfeild.merton.sch.uk

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

Our SLT in both schools are very involved in the provision for the LAC and PLAC pupils, overseeing their educational achievement, the provision and liaising with other agencies.

5. Role of the designated teacher

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

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, ensuring that a member of staff represents the school at all relevant meetings.
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
 - Working with VSH
 - Promoting a whole-school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
 - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
 - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupil
- Ensure that all staff are trained on Trauma & Attachment.
- 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
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their parents, carers 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
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- 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
- 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
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils

- Ensure that:
 - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
 - The identified actions of PEPs are put in place
 - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
 - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
 - Advise relevant staff are advised of PEP targets, making sure that staff work with children to meet their targets.
 - PEPs for LAC are accurate, effective, relevant and completed within the identified timescales with the child, social worker, carers and any other relevant professionals.
 - Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
 - Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

5.3 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium plus funding
- Access training and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them
- Liaise with VSH to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes and meet the targets outlined within the PEP.
- Help raise the awareness of parents, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus funding and other support for these children, including encouraging them to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning

- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure other staff also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Ensure that, with the help of the VSH, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children. All pupils are subject to the school's Behaviour Policy, with reasonable adjustments and additional support in place where appropriate.
- Encourage LAC & PLAC to take part in extracurricular activities and trips, and removing any hidden barriers to their involvement
- Maintain the confidentiality of LAC & PLAC, sharing personal information on a need-to-know basis only.

5.4 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- 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
- Be open and accessible to parents, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
 - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption

- Coordinating and planning smooth LAC & PLAC educational transitions, including starting school, changing Key Stage etc keeping in mind their needs
- Seek advice from the VSH about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
 - There is an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
 - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
 - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- 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
 - Contact external agencies for support-e.g. Virtual Behaviour Service, CAMHS, social worker, arranging meetings to share concerns and plan interventions/support
 - 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
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents, carers or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion

6. Role of All staff

Staff will:

- Have high expectations in regard to the achievement of LAC & PLAC.
- Ensure that the individual needs of LAC & PLAC are met through quality first teaching.
- Be aware that LAC and PLAC can have high rates of SEND and flag concerns regarding learning with the SENCO and DT.
- Be aware of the specific needs of LAC & PLAC in relation to Attachment and Trauma and make appropriate adjustments to teaching and classroom management to meet these needs.
- Be aware of the prevalence of LAC & PLAC mental health needs, and flag concerns to the DT and Mental Health Lead.
- Work proactively with the DT to ensure that LAC & PLAC meet their targets and achieve. Ensuring that any barriers to learning, and inclusion are highlighted at the earliest opportunity.
- Work to ensure the Inclusion of LAC & PLAC within the School community, maintaining their confidentiality while also providing support with raising their self-esteem, and supporting their relationships with peers in line with the Anti Bullying policy.

7. Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

The experiences and outcomes of PLAC can be very similar to those of LAC. PLAC educational needs are unlikely to change because a child's care status has changed. To address this, the needs of LAC and PLAC are prioritised and addressed in a similar way.

The progress of PLAC is reviewed termly and we work in partnership with parents and carers and other professionals to address any areas of concern and put in place support as appropriate.

Parents and Carers of PLAC are encouraged to identify their child's previously looked after status on entry to the school and are required to produce documentation to support this. All parents and carers are written to annually to request that they make us aware of their child's PLAC status. All information is treated confidentially.

LAC & PLAC receive a similar level of support from the school. The attainment of PLAC is monitored on a termly basis by the Designated Teacher and funding for additional support is funded by the annual PP+ of £2630 as outlined within both our schools' Pupil Premium Strategies.

Concerns regarding the progress of PLAC are highlighted to parents and carers in a timely fashion so that support can be put in place swiftly.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Anita Saville, Executive Headteacher with the designated teacher and deputy designated teacher for LAC/PLAC. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour and relationships
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Exclusions
- SEND policy and SEND information report
- Supporting pupils with medical needs
- Merton Admissions Policy and Arrangements
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Pupil Premium report