



Children Looked After (and Previously Looked After) Policy

Mount Pleasant Primary School

Approved by Governing Body	November 2023
Review 1	November 2024

Introduction

Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to providing quality education for all pupils based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. We aim to create a secure, accepting, collaborative and stimulating school community in which everyone is valued, and all pupils can achieve their best. Inclusion permeates every aspect of school life to increase learning and participation for all pupils. Particular attention is paid to the provision made for different groups of pupils within school who may be vulnerable, for example because of their attainment, gender, ethnicity or background.

All pupils are entitled to a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum. This includes pupils who have SEN or disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language and those who are gifted or talented. By setting suitable learning challenges, responding to pupils' diverse needs and overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils, Mount Pleasant Primary School strives to ensure that all pupils learn and make good or better progress.

Mount Pleasant Primary School recognises that, nationally, there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential or foster care, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in 'Guidance on The Education of Looked After Children' (May 2000), Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 and 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children' (November 2018). The school also recognises that Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) may also share the same vulnerabilities and many of the social and emotional needs of Looked After Children.

Children who are 'looked after' may be 'accommodated', 'in care' or remanded/detained' as follows:

- Accommodated (Section 20): This is a voluntary arrangement because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.
- In care: A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A Care Order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority or shares this with the parents.
- Remanded/detained: A child can be remanded or detained as in the following: -
 - (i) An emergency protection order
 - (ii) Removed by police using their powers of protection
 - (iii) Remanded by a court following criminal charges
 - (iv) A court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.

Children Looked After and PLAC are an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. Mount Pleasant Primary School is committed to ensuring these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure the following are in place, and working effectively:

- A Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and PLAC who is part of the school leadership team.
- A named Governor for Children Looked After and PLAC
- Electronic Personal Education Plans for all Children Looked After (ePEPs) including attainment data are kept up-to-date and reviewed at least once every six months
- All staff to have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect Children Looked After and PLAC and appropriate training is provided where necessary.
- Effective strategies that support the education of this vulnerable group are included in planning for Children Looked After and PLAC and are implemented.

Curriculum

If a Child Looked After appears to be having difficulties with the curriculum or to be failing to engage with it, this will be addressed as follows:

- The class teacher and Designated Teacher will look at all possible contributory factors and gather a wide range of evidence in conjunction with other relevant staff
- Look at factors which may be masking underlying learning difficulties
- Talk to the child
- Seek advice from the SENCo
- Target interventions and additional support
- Use of Single Point Referral Process
- Liaise with the Virtual School, social workers, teachers, and carers

We recognise that there are factors which may prevent Children Looked After from achieving as highly as they could, even if there are no apparent learning difficulties. To ensure that under-achievement does not go unrecognised, the attainment of each Child Looked After will be tracked and compared to previous results. If progress is not as expected, school will provide additional support.

We are aware that certain aspects of the curriculum, e.g. activities to mark Mother's Day or to investigate family history, may cause difficulties for Children Looked After and we will ensure this is handled sensitively by planning alternative but relevant activities.

Attendance

If a Child Looked After is identified as having poor attendance or punctuality:

- The social worker and carers will be contacted by the Attendance Officer to gain their support and collect any relevant information
- The Virtual School will be alerted
- School will support the Child Looked After and carers using established attendance and punctuality systems including first day calling; weekly review with APSO

Behaviour

We recognise that psychological trauma and lack of continuity in the lives of Children Looked After may lead to challenging behaviour in school and that it is especially important to employ positive behaviour strategies in these circumstances. The following arrangements are in place address behaviour problems at an early stage:

- The social worker and carers will be contacted by the Designated Teacher as soon as behaviour problems are identified or if there are significant changes to the behaviour of a Child Looked After.

School will make good use of its behaviour policy to support the Child Looked After. However, school discipline procedures will be modified to take account of the particular needs of Children Looked After.

If the problem continues, the social worker, carers, and staff from support services such as Educational Psychology, PRS, The Virtual School will be invited to a meeting with appropriate school staff to determine supportive strategies to reduce the challenging behaviour. The responsibility for organising such a meeting lies with the Designated Teacher.

We recognise that Children Looked After as a group, are far more likely to be excluded than their peers, and that exclusion can place additional pressure on foster placements. To reduce the likelihood of this occurring, school may consider:

- A single point referral to PPRS
- Short term use of a part time timetable
- Additional adult support, particularly at less structured times of the day

Homework

Whilst we recognise that Children Looked After may not always find it easy to complete homework, we believe they should be given support and encouragement to do so. The following strategies are in place to help Children Looked After complete homework tasks as set for their peers:

- Homework support from ETAs
- Directed use of early morning time

Extra-curricular activities

We recognise that Children Looked After are often prevented from joining in with after school activities because of transport arrangements and that they may resist taking part in any school-based activities because of poor relationships with their peers, for example. As we believe it is important that Children Looked After can play a full part in school life, the following strategies are in place to help them do this:

- The Designated Teacher will monitor the involvement for Children Looked After in extra-curricular activities each half term
- The Designated Teacher will liaise with the young person, carers and social workers to try and promote the involvement in extra-curricular activities at each PEP meeting.

The success of all school strategies and use of funded initiatives will be monitored and evaluated by:

- Collection and analysis of information
- Discussion with school staff, carers, social workers and staff from local authority support services, both informally and during meetings, e.g. those set up to write Personal Education Plans
- Discussion with Children Looked After
- The headteacher monitoring and evaluating school strategies

Roles and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher:

The Designated Teacher should:

- be an advocate for Children Looked After and PLAC
- when children are new to the school, ensure a smooth and welcoming induction for the child and carer and note any specific requirements, including care status
- ensure that an ePEP is completed as soon as possible (NB this should be prepared with the child and carer in liaison with the social worker and other relevant support workers/agencies and be linked to the Care Plan meetings within 28 days, 3 months and 6 months and, at least every 6 months)
- keep ePEPs and other records up-to-date, particularly in time to inform review meetings
- ensure that each child in public care (if they wish) has an identified member of staff that they can talk to (this should be based on the child's request and may not necessarily be the Designated Teacher)
- co-ordinate support for the child in the school and liaise with other professionals and carers as necessary
- ensure staff receive relevant information and training and act as an advisor to staff and governors
- ensure confidentiality for individual children and only share personal information on a need-to-know basis
- provide written information to assist planning/review meetings and ensure attendance as far as possible
- ensure that the child and parent(s)/carer(s) receive early notification of meetings, parents' evenings and other events and that communication remains regular and positive
- encourage Children Looked After and PLAC to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible
- ensure speedy transfer of information between individuals and other relevant agencies and to a new school if and when the child transfers
- seek urgent meetings with relevant parties where the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is in danger of being excluded
- ensure that any returns on Children Looked After are completed – as requested by the Virtual School

Roles and responsibilities of all school staff

All school staff should:

- ensure that any child in public care and any PLAC is supported sensitively, and that confidentiality is maintained
- be familiar with the policy and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of ePEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings
- respond positively to a child in public care's (or PLAC's) request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainments and needs, as appropriate
- as with all children, ensure that no child in public care or PLAC is stigmatised in any way
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care or PLAC to achieve stability within the school setting

- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Children Looked After and PLAC
- positively promote the self-esteem of Children Looked After and PLAC

Roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body

The governing body of the school will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Children Looked After
- be aware of whether the school has Children Looked After and PLAC and how many (no names)
- liaise with the headteacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out their responsibilities in relation to Children Looked After and PLAC
- support the headteacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Children Looked After and PLAC are met
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provided feedback to the governing body (these reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons)
- review the effective implementation of this policy

The Kirklees Virtual School

The role of the Virtual School is to track, monitor and ensure support for the progress of every Child Looked After belonging to the local authority, as if they attended a single school, as well as to give support to professionals working with Children Looked After placed in Kirklees by other local authorities. The key priority is to ensure that they are all making good progress and are in appropriate education provision that promotes high aspirations for Looked After learners. The Designated Teacher will attend all training and network meetings provided by the Virtual School and ensure implementation of any recommended policies and procedures.

Confidentiality

Information on Children Looked After 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 ePEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Training

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.