Children who have had a social worker (including LAC)

Reviewed by:	Teaching and Learning Committee
Reviewed when	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Source and date of model policy, if applicable	Cambridgeshire Virtual School and School Bus
Added to website (if applicable)	n/a
Shared to 'All Staff'	Yes
New review date noted on schedule	Yes

Aims of the Policy

The Trumpington Federation will champion the individual needs of all children who have or have had a social worker enabling them to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

This will be achieved by:

- Placing the highest priority on their education
- Promoting regular attendance
- Having high expectations and aspirations
- Promoting access and inclusion in all areas of school life
- Promoting stability and continuity
- Supporting early intervention
- Valuing the voice of the child
- Promoting social, emotional and mental health and well-being
- Working in partnership with parents, carers, social workers and other professionals

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2024) 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Federation policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Home-school Agreement
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Mental Health Policy

1. Guiding Principles

- The voice of the child is of paramount importance
- All children who have or have had a social worker will receive high quality education which is inspiring and challenging, resulting in the best possible outcomes, thus closing the educational gap between these children and those who have not been known to social care.
- Every child will have a positive educational experience which promotes social and emotional learning and wellbeing alongside academic success to ensure readiness for adulthood
- The Trumpington Federation will meet the needs of children who are in care, previously in care, or children who have, or have had, a social worker, through effective liaison and integrated work with all key partners including the relevant Virtual School

2. Definitions

Under the Children Act 1989, children in care are 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. This can happen under a number of arrangements.

"Looked-after children (LAC)" are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are subject to a placement order.

"Previously LAC (PLAC)" are defined as:

- Children who are no longer in the care of an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

We, the Governing Body of the Trumpington Federation are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for all care-experienced children. We seek assurance that the Designated Teacher for children in care has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority and sufficient time and experience to fulfil this statutory role.

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Federation has a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring all governors are fully aware of the statutory guidance for children in care, previously in care, and the non-statutory guidance on promoting the education of children with a social worker.

- Monitoring the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that children who have ever had a social worker are making accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole Federation staff have relevant skills, knowledge and understanding.

The governing body should receive information relating to:

• The number of care-experienced children on roll, and those who have or have had a social worker.
• Compliance and quality of individual children's Personal Education Plan (for Children in Care)
• The use and impact of the Pupil Premium Plus grant in raising educational outcomes
• Whether any school policies or practices need addressing to better meet the needs of these children.

The Headteacher (the Headteacher may also be the Designated Teacher)

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Reviewing the Federation's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC has received the appropriate training.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each child in care's:

  Legal status (i.e. whether they are cared for under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.

  Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA.
- Ensuring that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep LAC and PLAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring PP+ for PLAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.
- Promoting and monitoring the education of all children who have, or have had, a social worker.

The designated teacher for LAC and PLAC is responsible for:

- Having a full understanding of relevant statutory guidance and attending relevant training as required
- Acting as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals so that they and the Virtual School Head (VSH) understand the support available to LAC and PLAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement and social, emotional and mental wellbeing of care-experienced children at the Federation; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.

- Monitoring the effective spend of the pupil premium plus grant to maximise educational outcomes for children in care and working with the Virtual School to discuss how funding can be used to support the child's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE (this may be delegated to another DSL)
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for all children.
- Ensuring children are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC and taking the lead responsibility for helping all Federation staff to understand the factors that can affect how care-experienced children learn and achieve, any barriers they might face and the impact of trauma and poor attachments
- Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting these to the DSL as soon as they arise.

The Designated Teachers are the Heads of School.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and PLAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Where a child ceases to be in care and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

Our staff will ensure their part in embedding an 'inclusive culture' which is attachment aware and trauma-informed. This may include attending training, referring to the Designated Teacher for advice and sharing accurate information and data with the Designated Teacher. They will hold high expectations of and aspirations for all children, including those who have or have had a social worker.

4. Policies and Procedures

Staff Development and Training

The Headteachers and Governing Body will ensure that the Designated Teachers are trained for the role when they come to post and will continue to support them to access ongoing professional development pertinent to the role.

All staff are encouraged to participate in training that will enable them to meet the needs of care-experienced children, and children with a social worker, more effectively and the Designated Teacher will raise awareness of typical issues and barriers for these children at a whole school level.

Admissions

In line with national guidance the Trumpington Federation prioritises the admission of care-experienced children.

The importance of a thorough and planned transition is recognised and this may include:

- Transition meetings between schools
- The swift transfer of information between schools
- Additional school visits and identification of staff mentor and/or peer buddy
- Additional support and planning for care-experienced children at times of transition
- Structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Personal education plan (PEP)

All LAC must have a personal education plan (PEP).

The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a pupil to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child. The PEP will be reviewed termly.

The Federation, with other professionals and the child's carers, will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances. All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages as far as possible.

The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:

- Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
- On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
- Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
- Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:

    Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.

    Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focuses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.

    Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment. The designated teacher will communicate with the virtual school regarding how the PP+ funding can be best used.

The Federation is aware that PP+ funding for PLAC is allocated directly to and managed by the school and will work with the virtual school to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of the cohort of LAC and PLAC, according to their needs.

Attendance and Punctuality

School attendance procedures will reflect the specific needs of care-experienced children, or those with social workers. This may include reasonable adjustments such as celebrating 100% attendance despite incidents of non-attendance due to care placement moves.

Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the Trumpington Federation will speak to the child, carer / parent, social worker and other relevant professionals including the Virtual School where a child is in care.

Exclusions

The Trumpington Federation will make every effort to avoid excluding a care-experienced child, in recognition of the impact of their early experiences and what their behaviour may have been communicating. We also recognise there may be increased risk of disengagement from school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss.

Past experiences of LAC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the Federation's Behaviour Policy and Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The Federation will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' and recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the Federation's Behaviour Policy, or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

Where a looked-after child is at risk of being suspended or permanently excluded, the Federation will engage with the designated teacher and the pupil's parents, or other individuals involved in the pupil's care. The designated teacher will contact the VSH as soon as possible to work together, and with other relevant individuals, to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to help the Federation address the factors affecting the pupil's behaviour and reduce the need for suspension or permanent exclusion.

Where a looked-after child is excluded, the Federation will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP.

Pupils with SEND

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for PLAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and PLAC with SEND are supported in line with the SEND Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for LAC, e.g. where LAC are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident.

Information sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and PLAC and how data will remain secure.
- How pupils and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between the Federation and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

5. Pupil mental health

LAC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the Federation is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and PLAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The Federation understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or PLAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

6. Safeguarding

The Federation recognises that many LAC and PLAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and PLAC as soon as possible.

Where a looked-after child or previously looked-after child has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the Federation to ensure that the welfare of LAC and PLAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or PLAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a looked-after child or previously looked-after child is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

7. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Where a care experienced child is allocated pupil premium plus, it is to be used for the benefit of their educational needs. The Trumpington Federation will ensure that:

- The allocation of PP+ promotes high aspirations and seeks to secure the best educational outcomes
- The extra funding provided by the PP+ reflects the significant additional barriers faced by CYP in care
- For children in care, the allocation of PP+ will be linked to clear desirable outcomes as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Cambridgeshire Virtual School Contact Details

- https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/school-improvement/cambridgeshire-s-virtual-school-forlooked-after-children/
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