

## **Looked After Children (LAC) Policy**

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Trustees of the exempt charity are also Directors of the company; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all schools within the Link Academy Trust.

### **Rationale**

At the Link Academy Trust, we believe that all Looked After Children, and those previously in care, should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Devon children. As a trust we aim to be champions for Looked After Children and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development.

To do this we commit to:

- Supporting them to raise their aspirations;
- Giving them a sense of the control they have over their own lives;
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption.

### **Definition: Who are our Looked After Children?**

Most Looked After Children will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the Care of the Local Authority if he or she is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- (a) Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
- (b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order;
- (c) Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child.

### **Legal Framework**

- From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children's and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children. The Governing Body of the Link Academy Trust is the Board of Trustees.
- The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Looked After

Children was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes.

- Previous legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Looked After Children.

### **Academies are required to:**

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education for all Looked After Children;
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of Looked After Children;
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all Looked After Children;
- Ensure there is a (qualified) Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of all Looked After Children who are on the school roll;
- Develop effective systems of communications and protocols;
- Promote the attendance of Looked After Children.

### **Objectives**

To support LAC at The Link Academy Trust we will:

- Create a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent;
- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children;
- Bring the educational attainments of our Looked After Children in line with those of their peers;
- Make sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- Balance high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress;
- Have a Designated Teacher (DT) for Looked After Children who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with carers, parents (as appropriate) and Social Workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues;
- Work alongside the Social Worker, PEP Coordinator, Area Learning Advocate and other professionals to ensure that each Child in Care has a current, good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person and helps them make excellent progress;
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Closely monitor each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes;

- Ensure there is a well-planned and coordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented.
- Plan for future transitions effectively including planning for transport.

All staff, Local Board Members and Trustees are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Looked After Children by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to complete tasks and responsibilities. They will also establish and maintain appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures, both within the academies and with other agencies.

In addition we will:

- Challenge negative stereotypes amongst students and staff;
- Closely monitor the social and personal progress of all Looked After Children;
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's Care status and the background and family history of children who are in Care, especially surrounding teaching and learning relating to the family;
- Ensure a clear protocol is followed in the sharing of information, both within school and with outside agencies.

In pursuit of this Policy we will:

- Nominate a Trustee to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children in the academy are taken into account at a school and MAT Senior Leadership level and to support the Designated Teacher.
- Support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training to support Looked After Children.
- Expect the Local Board to be the 'eyes and ears' of the Trustees when working with the academies and therefore listen to LAC provision and report back to Trustees.

### **Admissions and Transitions**

We will:

- Prioritise the admission of Looked After Children, and those who have been adopted who have a Special Guardianship Order, within our own Admissions procedures in order to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Looked After Children;
- Ensure that all Looked After Children meet the Designated Teacher who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral;
- Ensure a warm welcome to our academy by providing appropriate induction for all Looked After Children so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers and parents where appropriate;
- Meet with the Devon Area Learning Advocate to make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are obtained at the outset;
- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition (where the receiving school is made known);
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.

### **Attendance (also see our Attendance Policy)**

We will:

- Implement a first day of absence procedure for all Looked After Children whose attendance falls below 95%;
- If school is not using a management system linked to DCC provide weekly updates on attendance of Looked after Children to sarah.short@devon.gov.uk using Egress for security;
- Inform the Carer / Area Learning Advocate / Education Welfare service / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance;
- Acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.

### **Exclusion (also see our Behaviour Policy – Relational Support Policy)**

We will:

- Actively follow the DCC Protocol for Reducing Exclusions of Children in Care.

### **Multi-Agency Liaison**

We will:

- Support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making;
- The Designated Teacher will liaise closely with carers, parents (if appropriate) and the child's Social Worker on a variety of issues, including homework, kit and equipment required. It is important that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared;
- There will be a clear understanding about the role and responsibility of staff in relation to the child and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved;
- Our staff will share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child;
- Be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of the parents.
- Our Designated Teacher will ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the academy are completed and returned on time, to comply with statutory obligations;
- Encourage each of our Looked After Children to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.
- The Trust Inclusion and Improvement Hub will support the designated teacher to explore external agencies that may offer support.

### **Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting in time for every Statutory Care Review that involves the Social Worker, PEP Coordinator, Foster Carers, child and parent (if appropriate). Additional

attendees may include eg. Careers South West, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare Officer, Area Learning Advocate etc. We will seek the views of the child as to appropriate attendees in line with the statutory guidance;

- Have a high quality PEP for each child which includes appropriate targets and has been quality assured by the Virtual School;
- Contribute to the process whereby all Looked After Children have a high-quality PEP in place within 20 days of starting at the school. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need);
- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in the PEP will be adhered to by our staff in order that all our Looked After Children have the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set;
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the Child in Care and used as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- Make or support applications for a Personal Education Allowance (PEA) eg. those who are at risk of under-achieving academically or for extra-curricular activities through discussions at PEP meetings;
- Seek to nominate our Looked After Children to DCC for the annual Looked After Children Celebration of Achievement Event.
- Expect the Inclusion and Improvement Hub to consider additional support that maybe available from external agencies.

### **School Trips and Special Activities**

We aim to ensure that Looked After Children enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible. The responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities is that of the Social Worker, sometimes delegated to Foster Carers. **The person who may give permission will be clarified at the first PEP meeting.**

### **Complaints**

If a young person, parent 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 alongside the carer and Social Worker.

### **Roles & Responsibilities =Trustees:**

The name of the Designated Trustee for Looked After Children is: Jane Collings

Trustee for Looked After Children should be aware of:

- The number of Looked After Children on the academy roll;
- The number of Looked After Children with up-to-date PEPs and have they been assessed as good quality;
- Overall attainment and progress of Looked After Children in the academy / performance compared to peers;

- Number of Looked After Children with SEN and with an Education Health Care Plan (ECHP);
- Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of Looked After Children ;
- Number of Looked After Children who have had a Fixed Period Exclusion in the previous 12 months;
- Is the academy making effective and efficient use of the Pupil Premium for its Looked After Children?
- Is the academy meeting its statutory duties with respect to the Designated Teacher? (qualifications, experience etc);
- Is the Designated Teacher provided with appropriate professional development and time to fulfil the role?
- How LA supports educational achievement of Looked After Children.

**This information is gathered through focussed visits and regular Local Board meetings who pass it up to the Trustees through the Standards and Curriculum Committee. The ATSSL (Academy Trust Safeguarding and SEND Lead) will provide a summary of this data termly.**

The Trustees will:

- Ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009; (DCSF, The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies [2009]);
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that academy staff and Local Board Members are aware of the DfE Statutory Guidance;
- Have knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance 2015 (Promoting the Education of Looked After Children);
- Take a proactive approach to ensure cooperation with the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of Looked After Children attending the academy.
- Ensure that Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Academy Head;
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, Looked After Children.

### **The Role of the Academy Head and EIT (Executive Improvement Team)**

- Ensure that the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of Looked After Children.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting Looked After Children to achieve;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the role of the Designated Teacher;
- Oversee the development of the policy on Looked After Children;
- Wherever possible allocate Looked After Children a Key Worker;

- Evaluate the attainment and progress of Looked After Children, discuss them at EIT meetings and report these termly to the Local Board, Trustees and Virtual School.
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has access to Inclusion and Improvement Hub resources and expertise.

**Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (see Statutory Regulations from September 2009 & Promoting the Education of Looked After Children 2015):**

The name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is displayed in the office of each Academy and on the website.

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- Promote the educational achievement of every Child in Care on the academy's roll.
- Set up systems to regularly record the achievement of all Looked After Children, monitor their attainment and progress and, where progress is not being made, take appropriate actions to support the pupil.
- Ensure effective expenditure of the Pupil Premium Plus funding.
- Ensure the Voice of the Child is heard.
- Build a good working relationship with the Area Learning Advocate from the Virtual School bringing to their attention any concerns;
- Regularly report progress and attainment for every Child in Care to the Virtual School;
- Promote a whole academy culture where the personalised learning needs of every Child in Care matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised;
- Facilitate the training of academy staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Looked After Children learn and develop;
- Contribute to the development and review of whole MAT policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Looked After Children at a disadvantage;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning
- Ensure timely completion and return of the annual teacher Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for each Child in Care;
- Be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in Care;
- Make sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/interventions promoted by the Department for Education;
- Ensure able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential
- Promote good home-school links through contact with Carers and effective communication;
- Work with curriculum leaders and curriculum hub groups to monitor the educational progress of Looked After Children and intervene, drawing upon external agency

support if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy or other similar concern;

- Maintain records regarding all Looked After Children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- Establish a specific system for Looked After Children with regard to contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Looked After Children;
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of all Looked After Children and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis;
- Play an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to statutory reviews of Looked After Children as required;
- Serve as a named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and Social Care and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- Ensure data requested by the Virtual School for Looked After Children is returned on time;
- Ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between Key Stages and Year groups and schools where appropriate;
- Ensure that each child who is in Care has a carefully selected Key Worker, who has preferably, received Mentor training through the Virtual school.

**The role of all staff and those involved in supporting Looked After Children is to:**

- Ensure that all Looked After Children are treated inclusively;
- Have high expectations of Looked After Children's involvement in learning and educational progress and ensure that more able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential;
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- Be aware of the reasons which may affect the behaviour of a Looked After Child and understand that this is often a form of communication which may need a more personalised response or intervention;
- Understand how important it is to see Looked After Children as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- Appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Child in Care's status;
- Understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, Carers, Social Workers, Area Learning Advocates and, depending on age and understanding, the child him/herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

**The role of all those involved in supporting Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs (in line with our SEND policy) is to:**

- Quickly identify any Special Educational Needs and ensure appropriate provision will be made;
- Have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Looked After Children are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this;
- Ensure that if the child has a Statement of Special Educational Need or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly Care Planning Reviews; dates can be obtained from the Social Worker.

The Academy Head and/or Designated Teacher will be responsible for briefing all staff on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

**Reviewed by the S&C committee on 27.01.2021**  
**Approved by the Board of Trustees on 08.02.2021**