



# **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY**

**November 2023**

**Adopted: November 2023**

**To be reviewed: November 2024**

## **Purpose**

**To promote the educational achievement and welfare of looked after children at Cleeve Meadow School.**

**To create a strong culture of consulting with, listening to and encouraging the participation of children who are looked after.**

*The relevant LSCB function as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children is “By listening to and consulting children and young people and ensuring that their views and opinions are taken into account in planning and delivering safeguarding and promoting welfare services.” (paragraph 3.30)*

Where children have an identified special educational need, this approach is of increased importance due to the heightened vulnerability of this student group to abuse and potential barriers to communication as a result of their specific needs.

## **Rationale**

Looked after Children (LAC) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of looked after children have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists when compared to their peers. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is ‘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. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term ‘In Care’ refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the Court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with Foster Carers, in a Children’s Home, in a Residential School, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are ‘accommodated’ by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children’s home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be ‘Looked after children’. They may be looked after by the Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in Bexley.

## **Introduction**

Cleeve Meadow School aims to promote the educational attainment, achievement and welfare of children who are 'looked after'.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is Juliet Morris.

The governing body is committed to providing a quality education for all its students based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of looked after children.

The Improving Attainment Guidance (DfE) 2009 recognises the collective responsibility of Local Authorities and schools to support looked after young people by setting out these principles:

1. Doing the things they do for all young people but ensuring the needs of this vulnerable group are prioritised
2. Balancing high levels of support with real challenge
3. Skilfully linking each young person to a key person they relate well to
4. Making it a priority to know the young people well and to build strong relationships
5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies
6. Making things happen and seeing things through
7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility
8. Actively extending the horizons of each young person
9. Planning for future transitions

## **Aims**

**The aims of the school are to:**

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for this vulnerable group as are all children
- ensure that all looked after students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability
- ensure that the school over comes barriers to enable children who are looked after to fully engage in extra-curricular activities and visits
- ensure that carers and social workers of looked after students are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- ensure that looked after students are involved, where possible, in decisions affecting their future provision.

## **Admissions**

The Governing Body endorses the Bexley Council Policy for the admission of Looked After Children. Looked after children may enter school at any time in the term. At Cleeve Meadow School we believe that it is vital that all new students receive a positive welcome and full support for their inclusion in our learning community.

## **Inclusion**

This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our LAC Policy reinforces the need for teaching and learning that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all looked after students.

## **Allocation of Resources**

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for CLA, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. We will work in partnership with Bexley Borough Virtual School for looked after children and other Virtual Schools for students who are from other Local Authorities, to ensure that looked after children receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

## **Monitoring the progress of Children Looked After**

This school investigates each looked after student's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The social worker for the looked after child initiates a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the student joining the school, or of entering care, and ensures that the young person is actively involved. Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP review meetings and provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, specialist teacher from Bexley Borough Virtual School (or other Virtual School, where the child is from another Local Authority) and other agencies. The allocation and purpose of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) will be included within the PEP. All PEPs are completed electronically through the online system provided by Welfare Call.

## **Record Keeping**

The Designated Teacher knows all the looked after children in school and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Bexley Borough Virtual School specialist staff, teacher/support worker and social worker. The status of looked after children is identified within the school's information systems so that information is readily available to all classroom teachers and relevant associate staff. LAC are identified as a vulnerable group when tracking, monitoring and reporting on attainment and progress.

## **Staff Development**

The Designated Teacher will attend all required training. We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support a child in care. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to raise awareness of issues associated with LAC within the school and disseminate information.

## **Partnership with parents/carers and care workers**

We believe in developing strong partnerships with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this collaboration and partnership working.

## **Links with external agencies/organisations**

We recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting LAC. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual LAC:

- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker

- Virtual School for Looked After Children (Looked After Children in Education Team)
- Other Virtual Schools for looked after children from other Local Authorities
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Youth Offending Service
- External Learning Providers

### **LAC Policy Review and Evaluation**

The Designated Teacher for LAC will undertake a thorough review and evaluation of the impact of the looked after children policy and practice each year and report to the Governing Body.

### **Guidelines**

Good practice for all staff:

The designated teacher should have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how Looked after children learn and achieve. Everyone involved in helping Looked after children achieve should:

- have high expectations of Looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children but the teacher should not allow this to be an excuse for lowering expectations of what a child is capable of achieving;
- understand how important it is to see Looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status;
- appreciate the central importance of the child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them to achieve their potential;
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, virtual school heads (or equivalent) in local authorities and how education – and the function of the PEP – fits into the wider care

The Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc) (England) Regulations 2009 (the regulations) require that the person designated is:

- a qualified teacher who has completed the appropriate induction period (if required) and is working as a teacher at the school (regulation 3(2)) or
- a head teacher or acting head teacher of the school (regulation 3(3)) or
- liaising with the Headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of CLA are met

- nominating a Governor with responsibility for CLA who links with the Designated Teacher
- receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher and at least one annual report
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give CLA equal access in respect of:  
admission to school; National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational;  
out of school learning and extra-curricular activities; work experience and careers guidance.
- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for CLA
- ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings of CLA