

Looked After Children Policy

The Willows



Primary School

Explore - Dream - Discover

AIM

To ensure that our looked after children and care leavers enjoy and achieve and progress to a long term education, training and employment pathway.

Our Principles

- We are corporate parents, either legally or because we are in loco parentis. As corporate parents we accept that we have to be challenged by the question, 'is this good enough for my child?'
- We will work together, overcome differences between professionals and be child and solution focused. As a result:
- Our young people will have timely access to education that meets their needs and therefore we will rapidly overcome problems with finding suitable placements, funding or admissions processes.
- Our young people will not miss or be excluded from education: we will always work together to find solutions and alternatives for individual cases and for strategic issues.
- Our young people will feel safe in school and our aspiration is that they will also enjoy learning. A child who does not feel safe will not learn. How children feel about their school is important to us: we will listen and respond.

To whom does the policy apply?

Any individual or organisation providing or supporting the education of looked after children.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Designated Teachers

- We have a Designated Teacher [DT], Mrs Ball – Assistant Headteacher, with the seniority, training and personal commitment necessary to support all LAC in the school.
- LAC will know and feel supported by their Designated Teacher e.g. because they meet prior to a PEP to discuss their views.
- The DT will ensure directly, or by taking management responsibility, if they delegate any of their responsibilities:
 - ❖ That the voice of the child is heard and acted upon appropriately
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 - ❖ ePEPs are up to date and have SMART [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related to Time] targets for progress
 - ❖ All are challenged to achieve good outcomes for LAC and that progress is tracked and supported

Partners are engaged to ensure good outcomes e.g. social care, carers.

Governors

- Governors will ensure statutory requirements are met. Our link governor with responsibility for safeguarding will ensure the policy is supported.
- The governor will have the training and personal commitment to take responsibility for outcomes for LAC.
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Senior Leadership Team will:

- Consider LAC in developing strategy as appropriate.
- Ensure that resources targeted at LAC [Pupil Premium Plus, money for special needs etc.] are used directly to benefit them.
- Ensure LAC have access to the best of what the school has to offer and that barriers to do with being in care, which might make this difficult, are overcome.
- Work with, support and challenge wider partnerships in providing the best possible educational provision and support for LAC.

Multi Agency Working, Shared Accountability and the Virtual School

Schools, the Virtual School, social care and other agencies, over which they have control, will work together and hold themselves and others to account for ensuring the best possible outcomes for LAC and delivering this policy.

Carers

- Carers, residential workers and parents [as appropriate and advised by social worker] will be involved proactively, their expertise valued and their constructive input welcomed.
- Carers will attend ePEPs and other meetings as required.
- Carers will know how to support LAC e.g. via ePEPs, work at home, transitions.

Children in Care

- Looked after children will be and feel safe in school.
- Their voices will be heard and responded to appropriately e.g. because they are invited to and feel welcomed in their PEP meetings.
- Information about LAC will be only shared on a need to know basis and with due regard to their wishes, feelings, right to privacy and all relevant data security requirements.

DEALING WITH KEY CHALLENGES

Admissions

- LAC will have timely access to education that meets their needs.
- Schools will actively welcome applications for school places for LAC. However, we will ensure that the provision will be right for the child and, if there are issues, school will meet and resolve them with social care, the Virtual School (VS) and admissions as needed.
- In year transfers of Stoke-on-Trent LAC will only occur if they have been agreed by the VS.

- LAC will not be taken off roll until the child starts a new placement.

Access to appropriate curriculum

- Looked after children will have access to the best curriculum that we can offer. We will work proactively with others to ensure that the curriculum meets their needs.

Meeting learning, emotional health and well being needs

- A proactive approach will be taken to: meeting SEN; seeking further advice and making EHC plan requests and carrying out EHC reviews as appropriate.
- Staff at The Willows will have sufficient up to date knowledge and training about emotional and health needs [particularly attachment and trauma] to be able to support LAC and seek help when needed. For example school has:
- completed the 'Attachment Aware Schools audit' with EP or VS support [see VS website]
- attend training on attachment provided by Educational Psychology Services
- attend training on interventions with specific relevance to LAC e.g. Emotion Coaching; Five to Thrive [EYFS settings]; Stoke Speaks Out [especially EYFS and R – Y6].
- Set up or attend EP or CAMHS consultations, promoting multi-agency attendance to ensure a 'joined up' approach
- Include targets to address emotional and health needs as appropriate in ePEPs.

Achievement

- The necessary data set to show up to date baseline attainment, current attainment, targets [set on the basis of at least expected average national progress] and value added will be recorded in the ePEP and shared openly
- Aspirations will not be lowered on the basis of current performance but will be based on secure knowledge of the child's potential.
- In order to enable our LAC to achieve their potential we will take shared responsibility for writing and delivering high quality long term plans with short term SMART targets in the ePEP.
- Where LAC are not making at least average progress a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

No Permanent Exclusion

- Our LAC have already had many broken relationships in their lives. LAC need to understand and deal with the consequences of their actions but permanent exclusion has disproportionate consequences for LAC. Examples of this can be seen in terms of breakdown of care placements or break up of sibling groups and mental health. Therefore we will not permanently exclude LAC but instead we will work together proactively, using resources in our control, to solve problems.

In the event of a serious issue, which might otherwise lead to permanent exclusion, the child will be fixed term excluded and an emergency review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS and the issue resolved. As appropriate, by shared agreement and in the best interests of the child, a managed move to other provision may sometimes be necessary.

Inclusion and suspension

- The VS and social worker will be informed of a suspension on the day it occurs, with paperwork within 48 hours.
 - The VS and social worker will be invited to the return from suspension meeting and review of ePEP, if plans need to change.
 - Schools will take a proactive approach to sourcing the DfE recommended first day provision for suspension, in view of the additional pressures that suspension can put on care placements.
 - LAC will not be on part time timetables other than for a multi-agency agreed, ePEP recorded, regularly reviewed, fixed term.
 - A proactive approach will be taken to inclusion, using available funds, training and personnel.
 - Where Alternative Provision is appropriate, this will always be accessed via the AP Learning Pathways hub if in Stoke.
- Under all circumstances the school remains responsible for LAC in whatever provision they attend.

Attendance

- Schools will maximise attendance, promote inclusion and minimise fixed term exclusion.
- A first day calling system will be operated for all absence on and off site [e.g. in Alternative Provision].
- Where attendance is falling or below 85% a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] will be called and attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

PEPs and other plans

- All LAC will have an up to date, accurate and high quality ePEP from 20 days of coming into care or starting a new school, reviewed termly at a multi-agency meeting
 - DT, social worker and young person's sections will be completed prior to the meeting
 - The DT will drive the PEP process and chair the PEP meeting unless otherwise agreed.
 - The DT will use social care advice to ensure the PEP links to Care Plan
 - All LAC who need it will have an EHC plan that cross references with the PEP
- The DT will ensure that SMART targets are set to enable LAC to meet their potential and that linked funding is used appropriately.

If PEP targets are not being met, the DT/social worker/carer or VS will call a review of the ePEP [and EHC plan if appropriate] attended by social care and the VS as appropriate.

Transition

- We will ensure there are clear plans for the next phase of education, training and employment in ePEPs
- The DT will attend a pre-admission meeting or review in the new provision and so ensure plans are handed over and maintained.