



# CASTLETOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

### **Purpose**

To promote the attainment, enjoyment, participation, welfare and achievement of Looked After Children (LAC).

### **Rationale**

Looked After Children 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 there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers, which can result in poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population with fewer Looked After Children progressing to Higher Education and following progression pathways that will lead to success and future economic well-being.

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 courts 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**' (LAC). They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

### **Introduction**

Castletown Primary School aims to promote the educational attainment and achievement and Welfare of Looked After Children.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is Mrs Julie Stevens.

The Governor with special responsibility for Looked After Children is Mr Gareth Phillips.

The governing body is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on equality, opportunity and outcomes.

This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children.

Castletown Primary School aims to ensure that Looked After Children are integrated with their peers and are safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve future economic well-being.

### **Aims of this School/Academy**

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for Looked After Children as for all children
- ensure that all Looked After Children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability
- ensure that Looked After pupils take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of Looked After pupils are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- ensure that Looked After pupils are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision.

### **Admissions**

The Governing Body endorses the Sunderland City Council Policy for the admission of Looked After Children.

Due to care placement changes, Looked After Children may enter school mid-term. This school believes that it is vital that we give each Looked After Child a positive welcome and full support for their induction and to help them settle and be part of our learning community.

### **Inclusion**

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

### **Allocation of Resources**

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

We will work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School for Looked After Children and other LA Virtual Schools for those students who are Looked After by 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 Looked After Children**

This School will liaise with the child's social worker to ensure that Looked After Children have a statutory Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of the pupil entering care, or a Looked After Child joining the school, and ensure that the child or young person is actively involved. The PEP will be reviewed according to the statutory requirements within a 6- monthly cycle and will involve all partners.

This school assesses each Looked After pupil's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning and accurate progression analysis from their starting point.

Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP Review meetings and to provide copies of the PEP to:

- Social worker
- Independent Reviewing Officer
- Specialist teacher from Sunderland Virtual School
- Other Local Authority Virtual School where the child is Looked After by another Local Authority
- Other agencies involved

## **Record Keeping**

The Designated Teacher knows all the Looked After Children in school and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Sunderland Virtual School specialist staff, or other Virtual School specialists for those looked after students who are from other Local Authorities, teacher/support worker and social worker.

This School will ensure that the status of Looked After Children is identified within the school's Management Information Systems so that information is readily available as required.

We will comply with the Local Authority's termly data request and send all information in good time.

## **Staff Development**

This School encourages staff to continue their professional development to gain knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to pupils who are Looked After and acquire the skills to support LAC. 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 collaboration and working in partnership with parents/carers, social workers and care workers to enable LAC to achieve their potential and achieve future economic well-being. By regular dialogue and review meetings we aim to further our 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
- Sunderland Virtual School for Looked After Children (*Looked After Children in Education Team*)
- Virtual Schools for looked after children from other Local Authorities
- Educational psychologists
- Local Authority SEN services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Youth Offending Service
- School age parents' officer
- External Learning Providers

## **LAC Policy Review and Evaluation**

We undertake a thorough review of both the Looked After Children Policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The Designated Teacher will:**

- be an advocate for Looked After Children within school
- be proactive in identifying ways in which the school can raise attainment of Looked After Children
- work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students who are from other Local Authorities, providing termly progress data on the progress of Looked After Children
- know all the Looked After Children in school, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required
- attend relevant training about Looked After Children and disseminate information and good practice to other staff
- influence school policy and practice for Looked After Children

- act as the key liaison professional for social workers, other agencies and carers in relation to Looked After Children, seeking advice from Sunderland Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students from other Local Authorities, when appropriate.
- ensure that Looked After Children receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid year, and offer additional support wherever possible such as a pre-entry visits and a transition programme
- ensure that all LAC have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care and provide opportunity for the child or young person to contribute to the plan
- arrange and contribute to PEP Review meetings
- Review PEPs at transfer, when there has been a change of circumstance and at six monthly intervals
- Provide copies of PEPs to Sunderland Virtual School
- Monitor the targets and actions set out in the PEP
- convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a Looked After Children is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to Looked After Children
- ensure effective communication including invitations to meetings and other school events
- actively encourage and promote out-of-hours learning and extra curricular activities for Looked After Children
- ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a Looked After Child transfers to another educational placement
- prepare reports for Governors including:
  - the number of Looked After Children on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan – PEP.
  - their attendance compared to other pupils
  - attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils.
  - the number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
  - the destinations of pupils who leave the school
  - information on policy and practice development
- agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings and other events
- ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO.
- work in partnership with Sunderland Virtual School, and/or Virtual Schools of other Local Authorities, and other agencies to prevent a Looked After Child's behaviour leading to exclusion and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement.
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times

**All school staff will:**

- promote the development of a Looked After Child's self esteem
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of Looked After Children
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a Looked After Child's progress
- ensure any Looked After Children is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- follow school procedures
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on Looked After Children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a Looked After Children is experiencing difficulties
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to the Designated Teacher, Sunderland Virtual School for Looked After Children, and other Virtual Schools for those students who are from other Local Authorities, and professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate

**The Governing Body will:**

- ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises Looked After Children according to the DFE Admissions Code of Practice
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Looked After Children
- ensure that the School/Academy has a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children
- liaise with the headteacher, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of Looked After Children are met
- nominate a governor with responsibility for Looked After Children who links with the Designated Teacher
- ensure that regular reports are presented to the governing body by the Designated Teacher
- ensure that the school's policies and procedures give Looked After Children equal access in respect of:
  - admission to school
  - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
  - out of school learning and extra curricular activities
  - additional educational support
  - work experience and Careers Information Advice and Guidance
- annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for Looked After Children.
- In the event of exclusion, ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meeting of the Looked After Child.

**Sunderland Local Authority will:**

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of Looked After Children
- Provide a specialist team to provide a wrap-around service for Looked After Children as part of Sunderland Virtual School
- lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for Looked After Children
- ensure that the education for Looked After Children is as good as that provided for every other pupil
- ensure that Looked After Children receive a full-time education in a setting appropriate to their needs
- ensure that every Looked After Children has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Sunderland from another authority
- make sure that each Looked After Children has a statutory Personal Education Plan according to national guidance
- ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- work with partners to provide smooth transitions at the end of each phase and during any mid-phase transfer
- be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special educational needs of Looked After Children and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs.

**School Link Policies:**

- Behaviour
- Equal Opportunities
- Inclusion
- Safeguarding Children and Young People
- SEN
- Vulnerable Children

***Review Date: Autumn 2018***