

## Looked After Children Policy 2019

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 Directors are also Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Director' used in this Policy also means Trustee. This Policy applies to all pupils attending schools within the Link Academy Trust.

The Link Academy Trust 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 children and young people's social and emotional development.

### Definition

'Looked After' is a term that refers to Children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility. This can happen either with parental agreement or when a Court makes a Care Order. The child may be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, with family members or sometimes with their parents. These children are therefore subject to corporate parenting.

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

### Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, Looked After Children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. 75 pc of Looked After Children leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12 pc go on to further education compared with 68 pc of the general population. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

The Link Academy Trust recognises that Looked After Children can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that Looked After Children may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances. The Link Academy Trust recognises that Looked After Children may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

The Link Academy Trust believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC are able to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

## In Supporting Looked After Children we will:

- Create a whole Trust ethos in which all staff understand their role and accept their responsibility as a 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 nearer to those of their peers.
- Make sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability and have high expectations for the child and ensure equal access to a broadly based education
- Identify our Trust's role to promote and support the education of our Looked After Children.
- Have an appropriately trained 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.
- Encourage Children to be healthy - for example, helping learners to adopt healthy lifestyles, build their self-esteem, eat and drink well and lead active lives, stay safe - for example, keeping learners safe from bullying, harassment and other dangers and enjoy and achieve - for example, enabling learners to make good progress in their work and personal development and to enjoy their education.
- Record, monitor and improve the academic achievement of the child in addition to achieving stability and continuity, reducing exclusion and promoting attendance.
- Promote inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes, while promoting good communication between those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.

All staff, directors and governors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Looked After Children by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to compete tasks and responsibilities. Also, to establishing and maintaining appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures both within the Trust and with other agencies.

## In pursuit of this Policy we will:

- Nominate a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children who will act as their advocate and co-ordinate support for them.
- Nominate a governor on each Local Board to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children in the Trust are taken into account at a school management 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 which they will be encouraged to disseminate throughout the organisation.

## **DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (See Statutory Regulations from September 2009)**

The name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is available in each Academy.

## The Designated Teacher needs to:

- Be a qualified teacher or Executive/ Academy Head.

- Be a person who has been doing the role for at least six months and must be taking active steps to becoming a qualified teacher.
- Maintain a register of all Looked After Children (this includes Looked After Children to both Devon and other local authorities). This will include a record of:
  - Status i.e. care order or accommodated.
  - Type of Placement e.g. foster, respite, residential, adoptive.
  - Name of Social Worker, area office, telephone number.
  - Ensure statutory documentation is kept up to date and is relevant to the child's needs and ability i.e. Personal Education Plan (PEP)
  - Daily contact and telephone numbers of those who need to be contacted in an emergency or for any other concerns. E.g. name of child, name of parent or carer or key worker in children's home.
  - Share Child Protection / disability information (if not appropriate to share, indicate the confidential nature of the information).
  - Relevant health information.
  - Baseline information and all test results.
  - Named officers in the LA with regard to exclusion issues, attendance issues and transition issues.
  - The child is entitled to decide who attends their Looked After Children Statutory Reviews (6 monthly); if a school representative does not attend, the school needs to submit a written report that promotes the continuity and stability of their Personal Education Plan.
  - If the child also has an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place, every attempt will be made to coordinate the reviews and ensure that both documents, the PEP and EHCP, are linked where appropriate.
  - Participate in appropriate DT training and joint agency training.
  - If there are safeguarding concerns for a Child in Care, contact and advice should be sought from the Safeguarding team.

## GOVERNORS

The name of the Designated Governors for Looked After Children is available in each Academy

**What every Designated Governor for Looked After Children needs to know:**

- Number of Looked After Children on school roll.
- Number of Looked After Children with up to date PEPs.
- Overall attainment of Looked After Children in the school / performance compared to peers.
- Number of Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and statements.
- Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of Looked After Children.
- Number of Looked After Children who have been excluded in previous 12 months.
- How LA supports educational achievement of Looked After Children.

**The Local Board will:**

- Ensure the DT has opportunity to attend training and that academy staff, directors and governors are aware of the Department for Education 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.
- Make certain that there is a dedicated Governor to champion and monitor the work of the Trust in supporting its Looked After Children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

- Take an active approach in co-operating with, and supporting, 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 Executive/ Academy Head.

#### Whole Trust approach:

- The voice of the child will be listened to and acted upon.
- We will celebrate the achievements of Looked After Children.
- Our staff will have high expectations of the child, encouraging achievement and ambition.
- Our Looked After Children will have a special, trusted adult in school that is able to take time to listen to them and have access to support and counselling in school if required.
- For our young Looked After Children, there will be clarity in relation to who is and is not allowed to collect them from school.
- Training will be provided so that all our staff understand the needs of Looked After Children in order that they actively promote the child's best interests. They will be aware of a variety of issues that may undermine the child's ability to engage in the learning process - including feelings of loss, rejection, isolation, confusion and low self-esteem.
- Adults in our academies will be sensitive to the child's wishes over what is known and by whom regarding their care status.
- We will ensure that effective assessment, recording and reporting practices are established.
- There will be appropriate information sharing about individual Looked After Children.
- Our DT will ensure that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared within our Trust and between school, carers, parents (as appropriate) and outside agencies. They will also ensure that high educational expectations are maintained.
- We will actively support and encourage the engagement of Looked After Children in out of school hours learning.
- Our staff will work in partnership with carers, agencies and parents (where appropriate).
- We will support carers to value educational achievement and improve attendance
- Our staff will help our Looked After Children to feel that they are fitting in and offer them a safe haven and a sympathetic ear in a crisis.
- Our staff will be aware that being or becoming 'in Care' has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and or behaviour, due consideration will be given.
- We will make certain that our staff are aware of possible unresolved feelings the child may have about their own families and siblings, in addition to insecurity over their current homes and carers.

#### Special Educational Needs / Gifted and Talented (see our SEN and Gifted & Talented Policies):

- Any special educational needs/gifted and talented abilities will be quickly identified and appropriate provision will be made.
- We will have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Looked After Children are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this.
- If the child has a statement of special educational need, we will ensure the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly care planning reviews; dates can be obtained from the social worker.

### Admissions and transitions:

#### We will:

- Prioritise Looked After Children within our own admissions procedures and admit pupils as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing trust stability for Looked After Children.
- Ensure a warm welcome to our academies 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.
- Make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information is obtained at the outset.
- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving academy at the point of transition where the receiving academy is made known.
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.

### Attendance: (see our attendance policy)

#### We will:

- Establish a first day of absence procedure where attendance is identified as a problem.
- Inform the Carer / Education Welfare service / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance.
- We will acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.

### Exclusion: (see our exclusion policy)

#### We will:

- Actively follow the Devon County Council (DCC) Eliminating the Exclusion of Looked After Children Protocol.

### Multi-agency liaison:

- We will support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making.
- The DT will liaise closely with carers, parents (if appropriate) and the pupil'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 well-planned and co-ordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented.
- 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.
- We will be aware of and sensitive to the appropriate role of the parents.
- Our DT will ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned on time to comply with statutory obligations.
- We will 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.

### Personal Education Plans (PEPs):

#### We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting in time for every statutory care review that involves the social worker, foster carers, child and parent if appropriate. Additional attendees may include e.g. Connexions, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare officer etc. We

will seek the views of the child as to appropriate attendees in line with the statutory guidance.

- Have a PEP for each child which includes appropriate targets. This will be compatible with the timing of the child's Care Plan. Other school plans e.g. Statement, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme will feed into and form a part of the PEP.
- Contribute to the process whereby all Looked After Children have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place ideally, within 20 days of starting 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).
- Seek to nominate our Looked After Children to DCC for the Looked After Children Celebration of Achievement Event.
- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that 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.
- Make or support applications for a Personal Education Allowance (PEA) e.g. those who are at risk of underachieving academically or for extra-curricular activities; through discussions at PEP meetings.

### Related Documentation:

- *DfES, Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DH/DfES, 2000)*
- *A Guide to the Law for School Governors, (2004)*
- *Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004*
- *DfES, Every Child Matters: Change for Children, (2004)*
- *DfES, Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Social Care, (2004)*
- *DfES, Statutory Guidance on the Duty of Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievements of Children in Care under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004, (2005)*
- *DfES, Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors, (2006)*
- *Ofsted, Raising Achievement of Children in Public Care, (2005)*
- *Social Exclusion Report, A Better Education for Children in Care: Full Report, (2003)*
- *DfES, Care Matters: Time For Change, (2007)*
- *DCSF, The Children's Plan: building brighter futures, (2007)*
- *Looked After Children – good practice in schools (2008)*
- *DCSF, the Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies, (2009)*
- *DCC Eliminating Exclusions Protocol*
- *Ofsted, Children's Messages to the Minister, (2009)*
- *DCSF, Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report, (2009)*
- *Ofsted, The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2008/09: Improving outcomes for Children in Care (2009)*
- *DCSF, Improving the Attainment of Children in Care in Primary Schools: Guidance for Schools (2009)*
- *DCSF, Improving the Attainment of Children in Care in Secondary Schools: Guidance for Schools (2009)*

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

This Policy is reviewed by the Executive/ Academy Heads by Local Boards and the Standards and Curriculum Committee on an annual cycle

**Approved by the Board of Directors: 7 October 2019**