

## **Looked After Children (LAC) & Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Policy**

**September 2024**

The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' are often used to define the same group of children and young people. In documents produced by the Department for Education and Surrey Virtual School (SVS), the terms Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are preferred.

When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then undertaken by the local authority who become their 'Corporate Parent'. Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a Section 20 status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, and this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most looked-after children will be living in homes with foster parents, but some may be in a residential children's home, semi-independent provider at Post-16, living with a relative or may be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). Children placed for adoption remain looked-after by the local authority until the Final Order.

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is required for every looked-after child and forms part of their Care Plan. A PEP should be initiated within ten working days and finalised a maximum for 5 working days later. PEPs should be reviewed at least once a term though more may be required if, for example, a child moves school. Children adopted from care (PLAC) do not require a PEP but it is good practice for parents to be asked whether they would like an EPAC (Education Plan for Adopted Children) to be written and regularly reviewed.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure each child can "achieve and reach their full potential." The collective responsibility of Local Authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles:

- Prioritising Education
- Maintaining high expectations and aspirations
- Inclusion – changing and challenging attitudes
- Achieving continuity and stability
- Early intervention and priority action
- Listening to the child's voice at all stages of care and education planning

Clifton Hill School believes that in partnership with Surrey County Council, we have a special duty as Corporate Parents to safeguard and promote the education of looked-after (LAC) and previously looked-after (PLAC) children.

### **Our Aim**

Many LAC (Looked After Children) & PLAC (Previously Looked After Children) will have experienced disrupted schooling and gaps in learning. In addition, a significant proportion of LAC & PLAC have some form of Special Educational Need and or have been excluded from school. This has resulted in the attainment of this group not being in line with the attainment of their peers nationally.

At Clifton Hill School, we will address this by:

- Providing a safe environment for all LAC & PLAC, where their educational experience is valued, high aspirations are encouraged and belief in the potential of all children is held.
- Ensuring that all LAC & PLAC are provided with, and have access to, support to enable them to have every opportunity to enjoy, learn and achieve in line with their peers.
- Ensuring that our policies and procedures for LAC & PLAC meet the requirements outlined within 'The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children, Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, DfE February 2018.'

## **Responsibilities**

### **The Governors**

The Governors are responsible for championing the needs of LAC & PLAC at every level throughout Clifton Hill School.

The Governors will ensure that:

- The needs of LAC & PLAC are considered, reflected and supported within all relevant school policies.
- Governors and Senior Leadership are aware of the legal responsibilities and guidance in regards to LAC & PLAC in education.
- Our admissions practices continue to give LAC & PLAC the highest priority admission to the school, as outlined within 'School Admissions' DfE guidance 2014.
- The annual LAC & PLAC monitoring report is scrutinised to ensure that the academic progress of LAC & PLAC is effectively being tracked and challenged, and that staff have the training and resources needed to support this group of children.
- PP and PP+ spending is scrutinised ensuring that is used appropriately and effectively.
- Resources are available to address the needs specific to LAC & PLAC, and that disparity in academic progress in comparison to their peers within school, including patterns in attendance and exclusion and provision for gifted and talented children are highlighted and swiftly addressed.
- An appropriate member of staff is appointed as Designated Teacher, who has access to training and resources (including time) to undertake their responsibilities, and has the seniority to influence senior leadership, to meet and champion the needs of LAC & PLAC throughout the school.
- All staff are supported in recognising and meeting the needs of LAC/PLAC.

### **The Head teacher**

Is responsible for ensuring that:

- The role of the Designated Teacher (DT) is filled by an appropriate member of staff at all times (including arrangements to allow for staff absences and resignation). The DT should have the seniority to work with Senior Leadership, Governors and all staff to provide information, advice and champion the achievement and needs of LAC & PLAC.

- The DT is provided with the time to fulfil their role and completes the LA Statutory Designated Teacher Training every two years as well as any other training to assist with the fulfilment of their duties.
- Policies and procedures to monitor and address the needs of, and support for LAC & PLAC are in place and adhered to, with reference to academic progress, admissions, attendance, safeguarding and exclusions, and that swift action is taken when concerns arise.
- The curriculum delivered reflects the needs of children with attachment and trauma needs.
- Clifton Hill School reports on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children to Governors, the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Local Authority as required.
- All school staff receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities in regards to LAC & PLAC as detailed within this policy and related guidance.
- All staff are aware of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups and their propensity towards being both the victims and perpetrator of Criminal and Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse.
- The exclusion of LAC & PLAC is avoided, alternatives to exclusion are considered and additional support is put in place to support those children at risk of exclusion.
- Acknowledge and support anti-bullying within the school, knowing that PLAC and LAC may have experienced bullying throughout their life.

#### The Designated Teacher (DT) for LAC & PLAC

The Designated Teacher is responsible for and committed to championing the needs and attainment of LAC & PLAC, in an effort to bridge the gap and raise their attainment so that it is in-line with their peers.

The DT is a qualified teacher and “someone with sufficient authority to make things happen...[who] should be an advocate for Looked After Children, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them.” or The Head teacher or Assistant Head teacher, as stipulated by Designated Teacher (Looked-After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.

The designated teacher is responsible for:

- Coordinating support for LAC & PLAC in school and providing information, advice and training for staff and governors to raise awareness of their needs e.g. mental health.
- Being the first point of contact for the Local Authority, LAC & PLAC, their carers and associated professionals, ensuring that a member of staff represents the school at all relevant meetings.
- Liaising with the Virtual School, Social Workers, Carers and other relevant professionals when LAC & PLAC are experiencing difficulties and/or at risk of exclusion, arranging meetings to share concerns and plan interventions.
- Ensuring that all LAC & PLAC (and their carers) have an identified member of staff that they can approach in school.
- Monitoring the progress of LAC & PLAC throughout the school year culminating in an annual progress report to Governors.
- Coordinating and planning smooth LAC & PLAC educational transitions, including starting school, changing Key Stage etc. keeping in mind their needs.

- Swiftly identifying learning needs, safeguarding and mental health concerns to the Safeguarding Lead, Mental Health Lead and SENCO where appropriate and jointly planning interventions to address these concerns.
- Encouraging LAC & PLAC to take part in extracurricular activities and trips, and removing any hidden barriers to their involvement.
- Ensuring instances of bullying affecting LAC & PLAC is acted upon swiftly and that appropriate support is put in place.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of LAC & PLAC, sharing personal information on a need to know basis only.
- Using the PLAC PP+ appropriately and creatively to address the needs of PLAC in school.
- Making sure that LAC & PLAC automatically receive their 'vulnerable group Bursary' and that it is allocated appropriately.
- PEP's (Personal Education Plans)
  - Ensuring that PEP's for LAC are accurate, effective, relevant and completed within the identified timescales with the child, social worker, carers and any other relevant professionals.
  - PEP's for LAC children with ECHP's complement rather than mirror the EHCP.
  - Advising relevant staff of PEP targets, making sure that staff work with children to meet their targets.
  - Ensuring that the Pupil Premium for LAC is used appropriately to support the child in meeting targets outlined within the PEP.

#### All staff

- Have high expectations in regard to the achievement of LAC & PLAC.
- Ensure that the individual needs of LAC & PLAC are met through quality first teaching.
- Are aware of the specific needs of LAC & PLAC in relation to Attachment and Trauma and make appropriate adjustments to teaching and classroom management to meet these needs.
- Are aware of the prevalence of LAC & PLAC mental health needs, and flag concerns to the DT and Mental Health Lead.
- Work proactively with the DT to ensure that LAC & PLAC meet their targets and achieve. Ensuring that any barriers to learning, and inclusion are highlighted at the earliest opportunity.
- Work to ensure the Inclusion of LAC & PLAC within the School community, maintaining their confidentiality while also providing support with raising their self-esteem, and supporting their relationships with peers in line with the Anti Bullying policy.
- Acknowledge and support anti-bullying within the school, knowing that PLAC and LAC may have experienced bullying throughout their life.