

Author	Owen Walters	Target group	All employees, consultants and volunteers
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Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Policy

Introduction

Anthem Schools Trust believe that schools play a key role in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. We believe that schools can also provide a source of continuity and ‘normality’ for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where students maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of Looked-After Children and Previously Looked After Children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

In line with the DfE guidance on the extended role of the Virtual School Head (VSH), this policy also recognises the needs of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements, who may not be looked-after or previously looked-after but who often experience similar barriers to educational engagement.

These children may be:

- Subject to Child in Need (Section 17) plans
- Subject to Child Protection (Section 47) plans
- Receiving early help
- Living in kinship care arrangements (formal or informal) and still working with a social worker

We recognise that educational engagement is a protective factor for these pupils, helping to reduce risk, build stability, and improve long-term outcomes. As such, the school will work strategically with the Virtual School Head to support their attendance, attainment, progress and wellbeing.

Definitions

The terms Looked After Children (LAC) or Child in Care (CiC) are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy, we are using the term LAC.

- **LAC** is defined as:
Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children’s residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.

- Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents or respite care.

Previously looked-after children are:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

A child is defined as having a social worker if they are:

- Assessed as Child in Need (Section 17, Children Act 1989)
- Subject to Child Protection (Section 47) enquiries
- Recognised as needing statutory intervention due to safeguarding concerns
- Receiving early help or family support where there is ongoing social worker involvement

These children may not be looked-after but face significant barriers to education due to adversity, instability, and safeguarding risks.

Children in Kinship Care Arrangements

Children living full-time with relatives or family friends due to parental incapacity, which may include:

- Kinship foster care (formal, looked-after)
- Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Orders (CAO)
- Informal kinship care where the child remains with a social worker but is **not** legally looked-after

These children may experience trauma, loss and instability comparable to their looked-after peers.

A **Virtual School Head (VSH)** is an officer appointed by the Local Authority, under the Children's Act 1989 and Section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, to ensure that these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential. For further information on this role refer to the *Promoting the education of Looked-After Children & Previously Looked -After Children* (February 2018) and the *Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship carer arrangements: virtual school head role extension* (updated 2 September 2025) guidance documents.

All maintained schools, academies and free schools are required to appoint a **designated teacher** to champion the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after student, and act as a source of information and advice about their needs.

Personnel

For this school:

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (DLAC) is: Heather Lovett

The Designated Lead for Mental Health is: Rachael Horn

The Virtual School Head Local Authority is:

Name: Sarah Lane,

Telephone: 01522 550274

Email: virtualschool@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) – Extended Strategic Responsibilities

The Virtual School Head retains full statutory responsibility for the educational progress of looked-after children. In addition, the VSH now holds a strategic, non-operational role in promoting the education of:

- Children with a social worker
- Children in kinship care arrangements who are not looked-after

For these pupils, the VSH does not track individual progress, write PEPs, or allocate funding, but works with schools to:

- Provide advice, data insights, and challenge
- Identify barriers to good educational engagement
- Improve attendance, attainment, progress, and stability
- Promote educational engagement as a protective factor against safeguarding risk

The school will engage with the VSH and participate in any local authority initiatives or training programmes designed to support these cohorts.

Legal framework

This policy takes account of:

- The UN CRC Article 25 (review of treatment in care)
- The Children's Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 as amended in 2013
- The Adoption and Care planning regulations 2014
- The Education and Adoption Bill 2016
- The Serious Crime Act 2015
- The Gillick competency
- The Fraser guidelines

And the DfE statutory guidance:

- Working together to safeguard children
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children (February 2018).
- Promoting the education of children with a social worker Virtual School Head Role Extension (September 2025).
- Schools Admissions Code 2021
- Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement
- SEND code of practice

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Tackling Extremism and Anti-Radicalisation Policy

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced, broadly based, and engaging education for all looked-after children that engenders high aspirations and aims to accelerate their progress.
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked-after children.
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked-after children.
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked-after children.
- Ensure the designated teacher is a member of the leadership team and there is written cover provision for when they are absent or unavailable.
- Ensure that the designated teacher has appropriate training for the role and recognises that looked-after children and those placed for adoption are not a homogenous group and that their individual needs will be different.
- Promote the attendance of looked-after children.
- Promote a culture that takes account of the child's views according to age and understanding in identifying and meeting their education needs.
- Promote a culture throughout the school and amongst professional partners of understanding the importance of listening to and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings about education and the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) process.
- Ensure the appropriate and educationally impactful use of the LAC Pupil Premium, providing quantifiable results.
- Prioritise the mental health and emotional wellbeing of LAC children.
- Ensure that these particularly vulnerable children are safeguarded from exploitation, radicalisation, and extremism in all its forms.

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP or e-PEP) in place.

- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all student who are looked-after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extracurricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked-after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of new legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies, including who can have access to information post LAC.
- Embed an emphasis on emotional wellbeing throughout the school and curriculum, which looked-after children will particularly benefit from – **this is everyone's responsibility**.
- Give looked-after student a voice and influence in their school lives and ensure that their views are heard and acted on.
- Ensure that previously LAC and eligible students are supported appropriately and have their needs met.
- Identify students with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements as priority groups for targeted academic and pastoral support.
- Work with the VSH to use education as a protective factor, promoting stability, resilience and reduced safeguarding risk.
- Act early where poor attendance, safeguarding vulnerability, or emotional distress may impede progress.
- Ensure staff understand the impact of adversity, trauma and unstable home circumstances on learning and behaviour for these students.

Responsibilities

Headteacher

- Ensuring the curriculum is such that it promotes high engagement and high aspiration.
- Appointing the Designated Teacher.
- Ensuring that the Designated Teacher has received appropriate training.
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher is a member of the leadership team and there is appropriate cover provision in their absence.
- Overseeing the implementation of the policy on looked-after children.
- All systems to support looked-after children.
- Report to the Trust/Virtual School Head on a regular basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after children in the school
 - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other children
 - the attendance of children, compared to other children
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other children
 - the number of complaints.
- Supporting the DLAC and [the Designated Lead for Mental Health](#) to promote good outcomes for pupils.

Designated Teacher for Looked-after Student (DLAC)

The DLAC will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked-after children of the school by:

- Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all looked-after children and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- Ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the social & emotional difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by looked-after children and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements.
- Acting as an advocate for looked-after children and those cared for under Kinship arrangement, in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
- Working to close the attainment and progress gap between looked-after children and their peers and creating a culture of high aspirations for them.

The DLAC will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all looked-after children. They will:

- Gather information (including SEN status, physical and mental health) and maintain records regarding all looked-after children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child.
- Establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
- Monitor the educational progress and attainment of all looked-after children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern.

The DLAC will facilitate effective communication by:

- Building positive home-school relationships between parents/designated carers with regular opportunities for dialogue.
- Playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of looked-after children.
- Helping coordinate education and PEP meetings.
- Serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education.
- Ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties.
- Inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The DLAC will monitor each student's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school by:

- Meeting with the looked-after student to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the student is informed of their role.
- Ensuring each student has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues.
- Ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan, being proactive and participating in setting goals for the student's PEP.
- Requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies.

- Meeting with the SENCO to ensure all looked-after children with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning.
- Ensuring that looked-after children newly admitted into school have their needs assessed quickly. These include their academic needs but also their mental health needs. (See Appendix 1).
- Having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions as well as an induction process.
- Ensuring the involvement of careers advice and guidance services with children in Key Stage 4, including preparation for adulthood.
- Encouraging all children to continue to further or higher education and accessing any additional funding offered.
- Ensuring all looked after-children are made to feel a part of the school environment.
- Listening to the child and giving them every opportunity to express their views and acting according to their age and understanding in identifying and meeting their educational needs.

Designated Teacher Responsibilities for Children with a Social Worker and Kinship Care Arrangements

While the statutory Designated Teacher role applies to looked-after and previously looked-after children, the school will also utilise the expertise of the Designated Teacher to support:

- children with a social worker
- children in kinship care arrangements who are not looked-after

The Designated Teacher will:

- Provide advice to staff on the impact of trauma, instability and adversity
- Promote high expectations and strong engagement in learning
- Support information sharing between social workers, the school, and carers
- Ensure pastoral and academic needs are considered together
- Work with safeguarding leads to ensure education planning and safeguarding planning are aligned

Director of Education

The Trust, through the Director of Education will ensure that:

- The school has a coherent policy for looked-after children and works closely with the VSH.
- Policies and procedures are reviewed alongside social inclusion guidance and DfE guidelines.
- The Designated Teacher has received appropriate training.
- Looked-after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.

Personal Education Plans

Each student will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP or e-PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The PEP will consider:

- The student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Interests, both in and out of school.

- Developmental and educational and pastoral needs, including any specific Physical, Mental Health and/or Special Educational Needs.
- Future plans, and how these can be supported.
- Issues arising for the child.
- It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.
- The student's emotional wellbeing and intervention and therapeutic care to develop resilience and emotional wellbeing.
- The student's wishes and feelings.

Admission/Induction arrangements

Looked-after children and Previously Looked After Children, including those cared for under a Kinship care arrangements are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow our Admissions Policy.

On admission, the student will meet with the Designated Teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the student is made to feel comfortable in our school.

Records will be requested from the student's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer/parent, social worker, other relevant professionals, and student as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the student's new Personal Education Plan and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/schoolbook to detail any sudden significant changes in a student's circumstances).

Attendance and Educational Stability

Children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements are identified as priority groups for attendance monitoring. As attendance is strongly linked to safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes, the school will:

- Monitor attendance closely and intervene early where concerns arise
- Work with social workers, carers and the VSH to address barriers
- Recognise that poor attendance may signal safeguarding risk
- Support consistent routines and transitions

The school will treat education stability as a protective factor and will minimise unnecessary disruptions to timetable, groups, curriculum or staffing for these students.

School trips and special activities

Given the delays that some looked-after children experience in getting consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that looked-after children enjoy the same extracurricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

It may be necessary to add any additional needs a looked-after student might have to a Visits Risk Assessment in order that they might have their specific needs accommodated.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for looked-after children

Looked-after children are one of the groups of pupils that attract PP+ funding. This is additional funding provided to help improve the attainment of looked-after children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Local authorities receive a PP+ grant allocation based on the number of children looked after for at least one day and aged 4 to 15 on 31 August, as recorded in the latest looked-after student data return.

VSHs, working with education settings, should implement PP+ arrangements for all looked-after children, in need of support for whom the authority is responsible, in accordance with the latest conditions of grant published by the department and any supplementary departmental advice it issues. VSHs have considerable flexibility in the use of PP+ funding in order to maximise its impact for individual looked-after children as well as the whole looked-after cohort. All VSHs should publish a clear policy on their use of PP+, including how they decide the level and use of top-sliced funding.

Arrangements for PP+ should be as un-bureaucratic as possible, whilst providing for strong transparency and accountability. Ofsted's framework for Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services requires inspectors to ask for the Virtual School Annual Report. The Virtual School Annual Report should include:

- details of how the VSH has managed the PP+ and Early Years Pupil Premium for looked-after children; and
- evidence of how the VSH's spending of the premium has supported the achievement of the children looked-after by their local authority, including clearly setting out how top sliced funding has supported this.

The PP+ can be used to facilitate a wide range of educational support for looked-after children. VSH should seek the input of the school's designated teacher and carers when deciding on how to use PP+ to support a child. It is important that interventions supported by pupil premium should be evidence-based and in the best interests of the child.

PP+ funding for previously looked after children and those cared for under a kinship care arrangement is allocated directly to and managed by their school. Children in kinship care arrangements only attract Pupil Premium Plus funding if they meet the criteria for **previously looked-after children** (i.e., under an SGO, CAO or adoption order after having been looked-after).

Children who are in informal kinship care or who simply have a social worker **are not eligible** for Pupil Premium Plus. However, they may be considered for targeted support through the school's wider use of Pupil Premium funding or other intervention resources.

Both VSH and schools manage their PP+ allocation for the benefit of their cohort of looked after or previously looked after children and according to children's needs. It is not a personal budget for individual children; however, both VSHs and schools may choose to allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

Below is a summary of positive characteristics of interventions which can be helpful when considering whether an intervention might be an effective use of PP+ to support a looked-after child. VSH and designated teachers may also find it helpful to refer to the Education Endowment Fund Tool Kit.

Getting the most from Pupil Premium Plus

Approaches that are:	Which emphasise:
Individually tailored to the needs and strengths of each student	Relationship-building, both with appropriate adults and with peers
Consistent (based on agreed core principles and components) but also flexible and responsive	An emotionally intelligent approach to the setting of clear behaviour boundaries
Based on evidence of what works	Increasing student's understanding of their own emotions and identity
Focused on clear short-term goals which give opportunities for children to experience success	Positive reinforcement Building self-esteem
Include regular, high-quality feedback from teaching staff	Relevance to the learner: relate to student's interests where possible; make it matter to them
Engage parents/carers in the agreement and evaluation of arrangements for education support (e.g. via the PEP)	A joined-up approach involving social worker/carer/VSH and other relevant professionals
Supporting student transition (e.g. primary-secondary/KS3-4)	Strong and visionary leadership on the part of both of the student's headteachers
Raising aspirations through access to high-quality educational experiences	A student-centred approach to assessment for learning
Promote the student's awareness and understanding of their own thought process (metacognition) and help to develop problem-solving strategies	

Children in Kinship Care Arrangements

The school recognises the unique circumstances of children being raised by relatives or family friends. These pupils may fall into one of three categories:

1. **Looked-after kinship foster care** – full VSH statutory involvement
2. **Previously looked-after under SGO/CAO/adoption** – PP+ to school, DT statutory role.
3. **Informal kinship care with ongoing social worker involvement** – included in the VSH strategic remit.

We will:

- Ensure sensitivity and confidentiality when addressing family background.
- Work closely with carers and social workers to ensure stability and consistent communication.

- Prioritise attendance, pastoral support, and mental health support.
- Ensure staff receive training on the impact of kinship care, trauma, loss and attachment.
- Include kinship children in pupil-level vulnerability mapping alongside LAC/CWSW

Appendix 1: Mental health

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional, and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with:

- executive functioning skills - the mental processes enabling us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. (Harvard University Centre on the Developing Child <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>)
- forming trusting relationships,
- social skills,
- managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger),
- sensory processing difficulties,
- foetal alcohol syndrome
- coping with transitions and change.

This can impact on their behaviour and education. It is key that designated teachers have awareness, training, and skills regarding these student's needs and how to support them, particularly in relation to behaviour management and mental health. Many schools will have an officer responsible for making links with mental health services. In the *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision* the government outlines plan to encourage schools to appoint a Designated Senior Lead (DSL) for mental health.

Whilst the DSL is not expected to be a mental health expert, they are responsible for:

- ensuring the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary; and
- ensuring the school understands the impact that issues such as trauma and attachment difficulties and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children and are 'attachment aware'¹.

Measuring emotional and behavioural difficulties

It is important to have a means of regularly measuring the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by looked-after and previously looked-after children. For looked-after children, currently, this is often done through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The SDQ is a clinically validated brief behavioural screening questionnaire for use with 4 to 17-year-olds or 2 to 4-year-olds. The SDQ can help professionals form a view about a looked-after student's emotional wellbeing. It exists in three versions: for parents or carers, teachers and a self-evaluation for children aged 11 to 17.

Looked-after children may benefit from the triangulation of the scores from the carer's SDQ with those of their teacher and, if s/he is aged 11 to 17, the self-evaluation to better inform the student's health assessment *and* PEP.

¹ ensuring that the school understands attachment theory and the impact of attachment disorders on a child's emotional development and learning and adopts a whole school approach to identifying and supporting pupils with attachment difficulties. This includes upskilling of staff and use of appropriate support resources, such as those developed by Bath Spa University (see Useful resources and external organisations) [Mental-health-services-and-schools-link-pilot-evaluation](#).

The school may also wish to use other screening tools. Pages 16 to 18 of the *Improving mental health support for our children and young people* document linked below include examples of this.

Designated teachers may find it helpful to refer to the following documents with respect to supporting looked after and previously looked after student's mental health.

Mental health and behaviour in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2>

Improving mental health support for our student and young people

<https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/improving-mental-health-support-for-young-people/>

Student's attachment: attachment in student and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng26/resources/children-attachment-attachment-in-student-and-young-people-who-are-adopted-from-care-in-care-or-at-high-risk-of-going-into-care-1837335256261>

Transforming children and Young People's Mental Health Provision

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision>

Appendix 2: Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

A good practice guide for schools: understanding and meeting the needs of student who are looked-after, fostered, adopted or otherwise permanently placed (PAC, 2013)

<https://www.pac-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/A-Good-Practice-Guide-for-Schools.pdf>

Become (formerly The Who Cares Trust) <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/>

The National Student's Bureau <https://www.ncb.org.uk/>

Research

Education Matters in Care: A report by the independent cross-party inquiry into the educational attainment of looked-after student in England.

[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15782/1/Education Matters in Care September 2012.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15782/1/Education_Matters_in_Care_September_2012.pdf)

Looked after student: good practice in schools (Ofsted report 2008)

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8180/1/Looked-1.pdf>

Practice tools

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) teaching and learning toolkit

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit>

This provides useful information and evidence on effectiveness of types of support which can be facilitated by pupil premium funding.

Mental health

Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care (NICE guideline, 2015)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng26/resources/children-attachment-attachment-in-student-and-young-people-who-are-adopted-from-care-in-care-or-at-high-risk-of-going-into-care-1837335256261>

This guideline covers the identification, assessment, and treatment of attachment difficulties in student and young people up to age 18 who are adopted from care, in special guardianship, looked after by local authorities in foster homes (including kinship foster care), residential settings and other accommodation, or on the edge of care.

MindEd <https://www.minded.org.uk/>