



Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) Policy

Rationale

At Stokes Wood Primary School we recognise that LAC and PLAC can experience specific and significant disadvantages within a school setting. We are committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We recognise that LAC and PLAC may have faced significant trauma in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) including abuse, neglect, exportation loss and/or rejection. When children are exposed to these adverse and stressful experiences, it can have a long-lasting impact on their learning, as well as on their ability to think and to interact with others.

Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, national progress and attainment data clearly shows that LAC and PLAC are at greater risk of suspension and are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Helping LAC/PLAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Stokes Wood Primary School believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every LAC and PLAC can be successful. We believe in ensuring that LAC can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society, and achieve economic wellbeing.

School can be a source of stability for children who may have been subject to emotional distress and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and thrive.

Policy (Legal Framework)

Looked after children (LAC)

The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the [Children Act 1989](#): a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if they fall into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

Previously LA children (PLAC)

PLAC children are those who:

- are no longer LAC by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Every local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure that their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged; this officer is called the Virtual School Head (VSH). The duties of the VSH are defined in the DfE statutory guidance "[Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children](#)" (February 2018).

The governing body of a maintained school must ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff, undertakes the responsibilities within the school to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school's roll; this person is the 'designated teacher' (DT). The duties of the DT are defined in the DfE statutory guidance "[The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children](#)" (February 2018). At Stokes Wood Primary School the designated teacher is Megan Williams.

Principles

Stokes Wood is committed to enhancing the achievement and welfare of LAC and PLAC in the following ways:

- We are corporate parents legally 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?'
- Working together with, carers/parents, social workers, virtual school staff (where relevant) and pupils (where practicable) to ensure that decisions are child and solution focused.
- Providing timely access to education ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education that meets the needs of the individual child.
- Prioritising a reduction in suspensions and promoting attendance. We will always work to find solutions and alternatives for individual looked after children.
- Providing a climate where children 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.

Procedures

Admissions

At Stokes Wood we welcome LAC and PLAC. We recognise that LAC and PLAC are an 'excepted group' and must be prioritised regarding school places following the [DfE Admissions Code](#) (September 2021).

Due to care placement changes, LAC children may enter Stokes Wood mid-term. To ensure a positive start, pre-entry visits and support can be arranged.

The PEP (Personal Education Plan)

A PEP will be initiated within twenty school days of the LAC starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary (at least termly and within 6 months of the previous PEP). The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns, ensure appropriate support is in place and set SMART targets. The child should be involved in their PEP by attending the meeting and/or sharing their views or in another way (e.g., gathered by the DT before the meeting).

We will have robust arrangements in place to ensure that any undiagnosed special educational needs are reflected in the PEP and addressed through the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) framework as soon as possible.

Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

PPP for LAC will be delegated to schools by the relevant virtual school. We will allocate the Pupil Premium Plus funding (PPP) to support appropriate provision for individual LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy and the child's PEP. We will work in partnership with the child's Virtual School to ensure that LAC receives the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve in all aspects of school life.

For PLAC, the PPP funding will go directly to the school's budget if the child is listed as PLAC on the January census and will be used to best support PLAC within school.

Suspensions

At Stokes Wood we recognise that LAC and PLAC are particularly vulnerable to suspension. Where a LAC/PLAC is at risk of suspension, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. Consultation with social workers, the Virtual School and other relevant parties will be important in identifying strategies to minimise the risk of suspension.

If a suspension is unavoidable, the reintegration meeting should consider all measures and resources that provide support and prevent further suspension. Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy.

Confidentiality

We will maintain and respect the child's confidentiality in consultation with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties. Complete confidentiality is to be maintained and information on LAC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis.

All staff will do their utmost to maintain the child's confidentiality e.g., avoiding reference to their care status/PEP meetings in front of their peers.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with LAC and PLAC, such as Social Care teams; virtual schools, Educational Psychology, health services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

LAC and PLAC are significantly more likely to have SEN than their peers and we work proactively to ensure that children's needs are assessed early and their needs are met. Some children will have an education healthcare plan (EHCP) which will form a part of the wider care plan. Where a child has individual needs but no EHCP then additional SEN support will be recorded in the PEP.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governors

Our governing body will nominate a governor (SEND governor) who will:

- Ensure that the needs of looked after children are taken into account at a school management level.
- Ensure LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- Support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training about looked after children.
- Ensure that the needs and outcomes of looked after children are incorporated in policy decisions wherever relevant.
- Ensure the school's work with looked after children is reviewed termly by the SLT and governing body.
- Attend training as required and keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding LAC.

Designated Teacher (DT)

Government Guidance says that the DT should be "someone with sufficient authority to make things happen, who should be an advocate for LAC and PLAC, assessing services and support, and ensuring that the school Looked After and Previously Looked After Children Policy shares and supports high expectations for them."

At Stokes Wood Primary School the Designated Teacher for looked after children is Megan Williams. The Designated Teacher will act as their advocate and co-ordinate support for them as per statutory guidance '[The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Children In Care](#)'

If parts of the designated teacher role are delegated, this will be made clear to all those who are involved with the child.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Know all the looked after children in school and those who have recently left care and who may therefore, still need support
- Make sure the young person's voice is heard and responded to.

- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for the achievement of LAC and PLAC
- Have sufficient up to date knowledge and training about the education, care and health [physical and psychological] needs of looked after children.
- Respond proactively, support and challenge staff and seek support and advice from professionals.
- Ensure each looked after children has an up to date, complete and high quality Personal Education Plan [PEP] every term.
- Ensure appropriate interventions and assessments are carried out so barriers to learning are overcome and record these plans in the PEP.
- Make sure that looked after children are prioritised in support arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Work closely with other agencies, sharing information as appropriate.
- Ensure that there are well supported plans for transitions including a plan for education.
- Attend training as required and keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding LAC.
- Keep governors and SLT up to date with the needs, issues and outcomes for LAC and PLAC via a termly report and any other necessary communication.
- Ensure statutory funding (Pupil Premium Plus) is spent effectively and contributes to rapidly improving the education of all looked after children in the school.
- Ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively, that information is shared only on a need to know basis and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account.
- Establish good working relationships and communications with foster carers and key workers, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend school events, meetings and reviews.
- Seek and prioritise meetings with and make referrals to appropriate external agencies whenever the child is experiencing difficulties and/or is at risk of being suspended .
- Provide written information to assist planning, reviews and reporting as required.
- Ensure an adequate transition plan is in place if a LAC moves school and records are transfer of records without delay.

Senior Leadership Team

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- Listen to and take account of the views of LAC and PLAC.
- Regularly review provision and outcomes for LAC and PLA.
- Follow guidance and statutory guidance on admissions, suspensions etc.
- Prioritise LAC and PLAC in resource decisions and ensure that resources directly targeted at looked after children [PPP, money for special needs etc.] are used directly for them.
- Work with, support and challenge wider partnerships in providing the best possible educational provision and support for our LAC and PLAC.
- Ensure LAC and PLAC 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.
- Promote multi agency working and a solution focused, child centred approach.
- Ensure the outcomes for LAC are tracked, monitored and appropriate interventions are put in place and included in termly PEPs.

Teaching and Support Staff

In addition we will require our whole school teaching and support staff to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for LAC and PLAC by:

- Having an awareness of the impact of trauma (including abuse, neglect, loss, and separation) on children's development and their ability to build relationships, and how this might affect their behaviour.
- Ensuring the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained.
- Responding appropriately to requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews.
- Using effective classroom strategies to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC and be aware that some curriculum content may trigger difficult emotions, such as schoolwork on "family."
- Ensuring that no child in care becomes a victim of stigmatisation at any time.
- Positively promoting the self-esteem of LAC and PLAC.
- Having high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC and PLAC, as for all students, and work to ensure they achieve stability and success at school.
- Engaging with relevant training that is offered to enable them to work effectively with LAC and PLAC.

Virtual School

We will work with our Virtual School so they will provide:

- Support and leadership to our school to ensure that our LAC access high quality learning and support, which meets their needs in a timely way and leads them onto a long term education, training and employment pathway
- Strategic leadership to ensure there are high aspirations for LAC education and the right provision, policies and protocols are in place to support them.
- Direct, targeted support for LAC.
- Training about education issues for all those who work with our LAC and PLAC.
- Specialist support to our school, for example: multi agency working, PEP, promoting inclusion and preventing suspension,
- Support and advice to our LAC social workers, foster carers and other agencies.
- Advice to other local authorities who have looked after children educated in our school.
- Data and analysis of outcomes for LAC in our Local Authority.

Local Authority (LA)

We will expect other LAs to provide support for their looked after children in our school, including planning, funding and support. This will include all the stipulations of this policy and a particular emphasis on:

- Pre planning for new education placements. Where there are issues, a pre placement admissions meeting should be held with all professionals involved.
- Continuing financial support
- Continuing professional support via the PEP process.

Storing and managing information

The Designated Adult will keep up-to-date records of LAC in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to other staff, without breaking confidentiality where appropriate.

All records containing sensitive information relating to the LAC or PLAC in school will be treated as highly confidential and be securely locked away when not in use or stored digitally using secure passwords. Storage of all LAC/PLAC information complies with GDPR.

Copies of reports and documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition. It is vital that the LAC is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with the child themselves will depend on their age and level of understanding.

We will respond to requests marked as urgent within 24 hours and within an hour in emergencies. In other cases we will adhere to the statutory or agreed time scales.

Dealing with Complaints

Any complaints concerning SEND should be made in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

For further information, please refer to the School's Complaint Policy which can be requested from the school office or is available here on our school website.

OFSTED

Stokes Wood Primary School are aware that the OFSTED inspection framework will consider the provisions that we, as a whole school, have put in place to support looked after children. We understand that a judgement will be made within the OFSTED framework in terms of how far this school is able to support looked after young people. The formal report will include comments about the progress and support provided to these vulnerable young people.

Review

Specific issues with the policy should be raised directly with the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher or the governing body (as appropriate).

Stokes Wood Primary School will review the effective implementation of this policy annually, in regard to successfully meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for LAC and PLAC.