West Pennard C of E Primary School

Looked After Children Policy

October 2024

Tony Wheat
Headteacher

Sylvia Smith
Chair of Governors

Ratified by: …… Date: ……

Chair of Governors

Review date: Autumn Term 2027

WEST PENNARD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY
October 2024

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. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

At West Pennard CE Primary School, we recognise 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. West Pennard CE Primary School 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.

At West Pennard CE Primary School we believe that the educational experience of all children should be positive and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that this 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.

POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The aims of the school are to:

- 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 children take as full a part as possible in school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of looked after children are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- ensure that Looked After Children are involved, where possible, in decisions affecting their future provision

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.

Governor Responsible: Mrs Hilary Austin
Designated Teacher: Mrs Lorraine Clarke

West Pennard CE Primary School's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all Looked After children

- All Looked After Children will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require

- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly based education

- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing

- Achieving stability and continuity

- Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance

- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes

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- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes

- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child

- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible

- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children

DEFINITION:

The terms Looked After Child (LAC), Children Look After (CLA) and Child in Care (CiC) are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy we are using the term LAC. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. Children who are "looked after" may be "Accommodated" "In Care" or "remanded/ detained" as follows:

Accommodated (Section 20)
This is a voluntary arrangement, because parents are ill, missing, unable to cope, or as part of a child protection plan negotiated with the family. The parents retain parental responsibility.

In Care
A child is in care only if a court has granted a Care Order which it will issue if it believes a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A care order generally gives parental responsibility to the local authority, or shares this with the parents.

Remanded/Detained
A child can be remanded or detained as in the following:

- an emergency protection order
- removed by police using their powers of protection
- remanded by a court following criminal charges
- a court directing a social services department to accommodate a child (already on a supervision order for criminal behaviour) for up to six months.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEADTEACHER

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below.

- It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.

- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of Looked After Children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.

- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children to all parties involved.

- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER
The Designated Teacher should:

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met.

- This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.

- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people.

- Maintaining an up-to-date record of the Looked After Children in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required.

- Ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes.

- Track academic progress and target support appropriately.

- Co-ordinate any support for the Looked After Children that is necessary within school liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage LACs may face.

- Establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies.

- Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need to know basis.

- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage Looked After Children to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.

- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of Looked After Children.

- Set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.

- Ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school – to a new school.

- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.

- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.

- Ensure that attendance is monitored.

- Attending training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding Looked After Children.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all pupils.

- Maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.

- Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.

- Work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school.

- Promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children.

- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children.

- Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's policy.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The governing body of this school will:

- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and Guidance for Looked After Children.

- Be aware of whether the school has Looked After Children and how many (no names).

- Ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

- Liaise with the Head Teacher to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out her/his responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children.

- Support the Head Teacher, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of Looked After Children are met.

- Nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body (these reports should not include any names of individual children for child protection and confidentiality reasons).

- Review the effective implementation of this policy, preferably annually and at least every three years.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Information on looked after children will be shared with school staff on a "need to know basis"

- The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties. Complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle.

The school recognises that Looked After children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked After Children in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

HOME-SCHOOL LIAISON

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable Looked After Children to achieve their potential. Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working.

MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPs)

All Looked After Children must have a care plan which is regularly reviewed by the local authority. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) should identify intended educational objectives and outcomes for Looked After Child and be shared with all of the professionals who are involved in their care. PEPs are reviewed each term and in advanced of review/LAC meetings. We believe the PEP should provide a detailed snapshot of a young person's education, provide an opportunity for their voice to be heard and their views shared and set out the roles and responsibilities of all those working to help LAC achieve the very best they can at school. The PEP should include challenging, curriculum-based targets and support the LAC's educational progress. If the LAC has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan, this should be reviewed annually and should, where possible, tie in with the PEP. The PEP must be fully completed and must have clear information regarding the use of the Pupil Premium funding and how it is linked to the child's learning targets. It must also explain the use of any SEND funding where appropriate.

EXCLUSIONS

At West Pennard CE Primary School we recognise that Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion. The child or young person's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening. Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information.

LINKED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Behaviour Policy, the SEND Policy and the SEN Information Report.

POST-LAC

Post-LAC children are a wider group which collectively refers to children who have:

- Been adopted from care
- Left local authority (LA) care on a special guardianship order (SGO) or;
- Become subject to a child arrangement order (CAO).

All children in these groups are eligible for post-LAC pupil premium (PP) funding. The DfE takes the view that many children from the groups described above will have "*experienced grief and loss and will have had traumatic experiences in their early lives. 72% of those adopted in 2013-14 entered care due to abuse or neglect. Their needs do not change overnight and they do not stop being vulnerable just because they are in a loving home. Their experiences in early life can have a lasting impact which can affect the child many years after adoption. We therefore believe that teachers and schools have a vital role to play in helping these children emotionally, socially and educationally by providing specific support, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs*".

At West Pennard CE Primary School, we continue to monitor the needs of the child. Although PEP / care reviews will no longer take place, as a school, we offer an EPAC (Educational Plan for Adopted Children) to parents/carers, to help continue the cycle of closely monitoring and understanding the child's needs. It may be agreed with parents, that if other plans are in place, there may be no need to have an additional plan as the EPAC if this is only duplicating information another plan states (i.e. EHCP/SEND Support Plan). These decisions are made on a case by case basis.