

Looked After Children Policy 2025

Next Review Date: Annual – autumn 2026

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Mrs E Wombwell

CONTEXT

Nationally, Looked After Children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion, compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children are enabled to be happy, healthy, stay safe, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under sections 31 or 38 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home, or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' - LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is required for every Looked After Child and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed at least every six months.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard Looked After Children, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'aspire to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles:



The role of a Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children is statutory for every local authority. Virtual Headteachers will scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all Looked After Children and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

Surrey Virtual School: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/social-care/svs> .

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

THE HEADTEACHER AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out
- Appoint a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and empower them to fulfil their role and responsibilities
- Ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- Recognise the particular circumstances of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children and provide for these in other School Policies (see list of related policies and documents below)
- Ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- Work with local authority Virtual Head Teacher to promote the achievement of Looked After Children

DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- Monitor the educational progress of all Looked After Children in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community
- Hold high expectations for these children
- Intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school - taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible
- Act as an advocate for Looked After Children
- Promote the involvement of Looked After Children in out-of-school-hours learning
- Be the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners
- Ensure every Looked After Child has a current 'Personal Education Plan (PEP)' that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard
- Attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways, to care planning meetings
- Provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate
- Present an Annual Report to school governors
- Access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement)
- Cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate

ALL STAFF

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of all children
- Maintain the confidentiality of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, and ensure that they are supported sensitively
- Respond promptly to Designated Teacher's requests for information
- Work to enable Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school
- Promote the self-esteem of all children including those who are Looked After and/or Previously Looked After
- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children
- Be aware that 60% (nationally) of Looked After Children report that they have been bullied and, therefore, work to prevent bullying in line with the school's policy

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

- Ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher (*with Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school*) and that the appropriate level of support is given in order to fulfil their role

- Monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children
- Ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children
- Monitor the effectiveness of the role, governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher
- Examine whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children to achieve
- Scrutinise the school's admission procedures to ensure children with Looked After status are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Looked After Children
- Champion the needs of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children and support the work of the Designated Teacher.

Links with other agencies

St John's Primary School recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and works closely with colleagues from services involved with Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, including Social Care teams, Community Educational Psychologist, Health services, CAMHS, etc.

Related Policies and Documents

Admissions
 Anti-Bullying
 Assessment
 Attendance
 Behaviour (Exclusions)
 Child Protection and Safeguarding
 Curriculum
 Educational Visits
 E-Safety including the Acceptable Use Policy
 Extended Schools
 Prevent – Radicalisation & Extremism
 PSHE Policy, including Relationships and Sex Education
 Recruitment and Selection
 Risk Assessment
 SEND / Inclusion
 Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment
 Staff Code of Conduct
 Teaching and Learning
 Whistleblowing