



## Children Looked After & Previously Looked After Policy

<b>Approved by:</b>	Children's Committee	<b>Date:</b> 8 July 2024
<b>Signed by:</b>	(Chair)	
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	July 2024	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	Summer 2025	

### General Policy Statement

At The North and South West Durham Learning Federation, we strive to provide a safe, secure and caring environment where everyone is valued and respected equally. We aim to deliver an inclusive education where children develop independent learning skills and are taught according to need whatever their age, gender, background, beliefs or abilities.

National legislation regarding disabilities, special education needs, equality, race relations and related aspects underpin this policy which also reflects other national, local and in-house policies and guidance.

### **Rationale**

Children who are looked after and previously looked after (CLA) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who are looked after and previously looked after have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists when compared to their peers. 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 Court under Section 31 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 '**Children Looked After (CLA)**'. They may be looked after by the Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in Durham.

### **The Education of Children Looked After and Previously Looked After**

Children Looked After and Previously Looked After may have some of the following issues:

- Low self esteem
- Poor education standards due to time out of school
- Delayed social/emotional/cognitive development
- Have mental health issues
- Be isolated with few friends
- Have behavioural issues
- Poor attachments to others

- Have a need to be private

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life chances. The Governing Body of The North and South West Durham Learning Federation is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place and working effectively:

- A Designated Teacher for Children Looked After & Previously Looked After in each school.
- Personal Education Plans for all Children Looked After & Previously Looked After.
- All staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect children looked after and previously looked after.
- Effective strategies that supports the education of this vulnerable group.

The North and South West Durham Learning Federation aims to maximise opportunity for every pupil to succeed. Children and young people who are looked after by local authorities and those who were previously looked after are the two groups most likely to underachieve nationally. We are committed to supporting these pupils to achieve their full potential alongside other pupils, to enjoy their learning and to experience success in school.

### **Aims**

- To work together with the Local Authority, Children with Disabilities Team, Carers, Parents, Medical and Nursing Services, Therapy Services, Post-Adoption support team and all other stakeholders in an effective partnership to ensure that the individual needs of the children are met.
- To contribute to the provision of a successful and integrated service for children who are looked after and previously looked after by the LA.
- To ensure that children who are looked after and previously looked after have equality of opportunity in school, enabling them to access, experience and benefit from education alongside peers and respecting their right of anonymity if this is their wish.
- To comply with the LA guidelines on the education and care of children looked after and previously looked after and young people.
- To ensure that suitable advice and information is shared for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked after children.
- To undertake any activity that the school considers appropriate whereby that activity will promote the educational achievement of Children Looked After or Previously Looked After.

### **To ensure these aims are achieved The North and South West Durham Learning Federation will:**

- Identify a Designated Teacher for each school to co-ordinate the education of children looked after and previously looked after.
- Identify a named member of The Governing Body to oversee the provision for children looked after and previously looked after.

- Ensure that staff in the school are aware of any children looked after and previously looked after and understand individual circumstances including parental rights and access.
- Liaise effectively with other agencies involved with the child and ensure school is represented at review meetings.
- Work in partnership with carers, parents and others with parental responsibility to ensure that the child receives their full entitlement including provision and access to school news and information.
- Ensure that all records are kept and maintained appropriately via Welfare Call ePEP system.
- Provide information to the Governing Body and LA about the progress and outcomes of children looked after and previously looked after on the school roll.
- Secure training for the designated teacher or others appropriate to ensure that the school can meet the needs of children looked after and previously looked after.
- Ensure that pupil premium plus (PP+) funding for each child looked after and previously looked after is used to support educational progress and achievement and to support social, emotional and mental health outcomes.

## **Roles and responsibilities in school:**

### **The Governing Body**

Governors will fulfil their responsibilities to children looked after and previously looked after through:

- Ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- Nominating a governor to maintain interest in the well-being of children looked after and previously looked after.
- Ensuring that the Governing Body takes up suitable training opportunities.
- Monitoring appropriate training for school staff.

### **The Heads of School**

The Heads of School have day to day responsibility for the management and organisation of their schools and are the first point of contact for any matters relating to the pupils.

The Heads of School will fulfil responsibility to children looked after and previously looked after through:

- Ensuring that this policy is approved by the Governing Body and that it is reviewed on an annual basis.
- Ensuring that any practical guidelines needed to ensure the well-being of any particular child are identified.
- Nominating a teacher to take pastoral responsibility and ensure the well-being and education of children looked after and previously looked after.
- Monitoring and informing of the legal position with regard to parental access, provision of school reports.
- Promoting the role of key workers, carers and parents.
- Ensuring sensitivity relating to the child's past experiences.
- Managing any other relevant information.

The Heads of School should report periodically to the Governing Body on:

- The admission of any children looked after and previously looked after.
- Progress and achievement of children looked after and previously looked after.
- Significant issues, events or incidents involving children looked after and previously looked after.
- The level of attendance in relation to school averages.

The Heads of School should ensure appropriate training opportunities are taken up and promote and maintain good working relationships with other key personnel on other agencies.

### **The Designated Teachers**

The Designated Teachers will fulfil their responsibility to the child looked after and previously looked after through:

- Liaising with the Head of School, carers, parents and other agency workers as requested to ensure a coherent approach across services.
- Being aware of the care plan for each child.
- Contributing to the development and maintenance of a personal education plan in partnership with other relevant professionals.
- Knowing who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Knowing who the primary carers are.
- Ensuring that information is provided for those who are entitled to receive it.
- Working sensitively with information to ensure that children looked after and previously looked after are not exposed to inappropriate or intrusive attention from staff or pupils.
- Establishing good relationships and lines of communication with key workers, carers and parents.
- Contributing to or attending meetings as requested.
- Maintaining an overview of the experiences and education of the child.
- Participating in appropriate training to develop the skills and knowledge needed to support the child looked after and previously looked after, particularly in relation to behaviour management and mental health.
- Allocation of pupil premium plus to support educational progress and achievement.
- Liaise with the Regional Adoption Agency, cooperate with adoption support teams and other adoption support organisations who are also part of the LA Regional Adoption Agency.

### **Admissions**

The Governing Body endorses the Durham County Council Policy for the admission of Children Looked After & Previously Looked After. Due to changes in care placements, children looked after and previously looked after may enter school at any time in the term. At The North and South West Durham Learning Federation we believe that it is vital that all new students receive a positive welcome and full support for their inclusion in our learning community.

### **Allocation of Resources**

The Governing Body will ensure that the schools allocate resources to support appropriate provision for CLA, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. We will work in partnership with Durham Virtual School and other Virtual Schools for students who are from other Local Authorities, to ensure that children looked after and previously looked after receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

### **Monitoring the progress of Children Looked After Children and Previously Looked After**

Each school assesses individual looked after and previously looked after student's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The social worker for the child looked after or previously looked after initiates a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the student joining the school, or within 10 days of entering care, and ensures that the young person is actively involved where appropriate. Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP review meetings and provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, Head from Durham County Virtual School (or other Virtual School, where the child is from another Local Authority) and other agencies. The allocation and purpose of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) will be included within the PEP.

### **Confidentiality**

- Information on children looked after and previously looked after will be shared with school staff on a “need to know basis.”
- The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with specific school staff at the PEP meeting once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person and other professionals to ensure complete confidentiality is maintained.

### **Personal Education Plan – PEP completion**

- Social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after or previously looked after or if a child looked after or previously looked after is starting the school.
- The date is set for the completion of a PEP.
- The child is added to the Welfare Call ePEP system by the Virtual School.
- The PEP meeting takes place within 10 days, involving Social Worker, Designated Teacher, class staff, carer and pupil if appropriate.
- A date is set for the next PEP meeting.
- PEP paperwork is completed via Welfare Call and submitted for review by the Virtual School Caseworkers.

**Heads of School** – Judith Benson, Fiona Tweddle and Lee Davis

**Designated Teachers** – Katy Bennett (Evergreen), Chris Farrow (Oaks) and Becky Llewellyn (Croft)

**Link Governor** – Margaret Farrow