

**Howes Primary School**  
**Looked After Children Policy**





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## **1 Introduction**

Howes Primary School is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. We recognise that an educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes, and well-being of every young person matter. At Howes Community Primary School, we recognise that this is evident in our ethos and willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties. We are aware that Looked After Children constitutes a group in the sense that they may share common experiences as a result of having been taken into care, but that they are also individuals and members of other groups. We will take this into account when planning to meet their needs, treating all pupils as individuals, and making reasonable adjustments to account for pupils' varied life experiences.

Nationally, Looked After Children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. We believe that Howes Community Primary School has a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are exceptionally well prepared for the next steps in their lives. We aim to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful, enthusiastic learners and responsible individuals by providing a positive, safe and stimulating environment where all are included, and achievements are celebrated. At Howes, we are committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in "Guidance on the Education of Looked After Children" (May 2000) and Section 52 of the Children Act 2004.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is legally defined as "looked after" if they are in the care of the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

Looked After Children (LAC) are 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.

Children can be “looked after” by the local authority under the following categories:

### **1.1 Accommodated (Section 20)**

Section 20 is used to accommodate children who are unable to live with their parents. There is no time limit however they should not be used as a long-term solution. Parents retain parental responsibility.

Children’s services have a duty to accommodate under section 20 if:

- No-one has Parental Responsibility for the young person or
- The young person is lost or abandoned or
- The person who has been caring for the young person is unable to continue to provide suitable care and accommodation.

### **1.2 In Care (Interim or Full Care Order)**

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.

Children who are looked after may be living:

- with foster parents;
- at home with their parents under the supervision of Children’s Social Care;
- in a residential children’s home
- with extended family members (known as kinship placements);
- with friends of the family or other ‘connected persons’

### **1.3 Previously - Looked After Children (PLAC)**

Previously - Looked After Children (PLAC) are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by a local authority 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).



## **2 Aim**

Looked After Children may face the following:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/ cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others.
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues.
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private.

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. Therefore, the aim of this policy is to promote educational inclusion for Looked After Children, to enable them to access the full range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to them and to reach their potential, both academically and personally.

## **3 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **3.1 LAC Designated Teacher (DT)**

The role became statutory in September 2009 under the Children and Young Persons' Act 2008. The Designated Teacher must be a qualified teacher or a member of staff. Ideally, they should be a senior member of staff who has enough status and experience to advise and provide training to school staff on issues relating to LAC. They need to be able to influence decisions about the teaching and learning of these children.

The LAC Designated Teacher is Melanie Walters.

DT Role and Responsibilities:

- Knowing who all the LAC are in school and ensuring that availability of all relevant details from school record-keeping systems as required.
- Attending relevant training about LAC (LA and Virtual School) and acting as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how LAC should learn.
- Helping school staff understand the issues that affect the learning of LAC such as differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of AfL.



- Making sure that LAC are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Removing the barriers to learning for LAC.
- Ensuring any LAC new to the school are welcomed positively and assessed when they start at the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This will be used to inform planning and teaching.
- Developing personalised learning packages for LAC in conjunction with the relevant teaching staff.
- Ensuring that the LAC in their school have a voice in setting learning targets for themselves.
- To be an advocate for LAC.
- Encourage Looked After Children to participate in extra-curricular activities and out of hours learning, where feasible.
- Leading on developing and implementing the PEP within the school. (The social worker is responsible for initiating the PEP process completing the relevant pages of the ePEP form.)
- Monitoring the child's progress against the targets on the PEP and extending these targets if they have been achieved.
- • Ensuring the child makes a smooth transition to the new school and that the child's records are transferred without delay.
- Liaising with the Virtual School in all aspects of the LAC progress and support.
- Communicate with the Virtual School to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of LAC.
- Manage PP+ for Previously Looked After Children to support educational attainment and personal development.
- Convening urgent multi-agency meetings if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion.
- Arranging for a mentor or key worker to whom the young person can talk to. Arranging for the LAC to be supported by their peers.
- Producing at least one annual report to the governing body which should include: current progress, attendance, and exclusions (if any), any concerns regarding behaviour, how the PEP has been implemented and whether the actions put in place are effective in addressing the learning needs of LAC, how the DT works in partnership with the LA, training undertaken for carrying out the role effectively.
- Promoting good home-school links and the importance of education as a way of improving life chances for LAC.
- Ensuring that, where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the Virtual School is informed at the earliest opportunity and additional support is provided to prevent exclusion, which would only be used as absolute last resort.
- Considering the needs of LAC and PLAC when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy.



### **3.2 The Head Teacher**

The responsibility for the educational and personal well-being of Looked After Children rests with the Headteacher, working with the Designated Teacher, they will ensure inclusive strategies are in place for Looked After Children and that staff, are enabled to carry them out. The Headteacher will support and monitor the effectiveness of the Designated Teacher.

### **3.3 All Staff**

All staff at Howes have a duty of care. With specific regard to Looked After Children, all staff must:

- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- respond positively to a child in public care's request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary;
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
- as with all children, ensure that no child in public care is stigmatised in any way;
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children
- positively promote the self-esteem of Looked After Children

### **3.4 Governing Body**

The school has a named Governor with special responsibility for Looked After Children: Debbie Newman.

The Governing Body 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;
- 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;

#### **4 Confidentiality and Information Sharing.**

The Designated Teacher will seek and receive information about the academic attainment and other educational issues affecting the learning of newly admitted Looked After Children at an early stage and pass this on to relevant staff to avoid unnecessary breaks in learning. This will include the Personal Education Plan if in place. If there is no current PEP, the Inclusion manager will liaise with the Social Worker and Virtual School to ensure this is part of the initial meeting in school.

Information about the circumstances of Looked After Children will be shared on a 'need to know' basis. Where no arrangements are in place, only staff who are in direct contact with a Looked After Child will be informed of these. If there are learning or behaviour issues for a Looked After Child, all staff will be informed by the Designated Teacher of strategies in place or if the young person is experiencing particular difficulties.

The Designated Teacher will talk to the children about the information to be recorded about their personal circumstances and make it clear that this is to help all the people involved in their lives work together to help them in school. The nature of this conversation will depend upon the age and level of understanding of the child.

Information about the academic attainment of all Looked After Children in school will be collected as follows:

- termly assessment
- end of year report

#### **5 Curriculum**

If a Looked After Child appears to be having difficulties with the curriculum or to be failing to engage with it, this will be addressed as follows:





- The Designated Teacher will look at all possible contributory factors and gather a wide range of evidence in conjunction with other relevant staff.
- Look for factors which may be masking underlying learning difficulties.
- Talk to the child.
- Implement support from the SEN/pastoral team to support learning.
- Additional strategies may include: use of initiatives and interventions, liaison with the virtual school and other specialist services, contact with social workers and carers

We recognise that there are factors which may prevent Looked After Children from achieving as high as they could, even if there are no apparent learning difficulties. To ensure that under-achievement does not go unrecognised, the attainment of each Looked After Child will be tracked.

We are aware that certain aspects of the curriculum, for example activities to mark Mother's Day or to investigate family history, may cause difficulties for Looked After Children and we will ensure this is handled sensitively by planning alternative but relevant activities.

## **6 Attendance**

Information about the attendance of Looked After Children will be collected as follows: Regular meetings with the Attendance team at the Local Authority. This information will be analysed by the Designated Teacher to identify individuals or groups of Looked After Children whose attendance is poor so early intervention can take place.

If a Looked After Child is identified as having poor attendance or punctuality

- The social worker and carers will be contacted by the Designated Teacher to gain their support and collect any relevant information
- We will continue to work with the Local Authority Attendance Team who will be involved fully in planning and delivering strategies to improve attendance

## **7 Behaviour**

We recognise that psychological trauma and lack of continuity in the lives of Looked After Children may lead to challenging behaviour in school and that it is especially important to employ positive behaviour strategies in these circumstances. The following arrangements are in place to address behaviour problems at an early stage:



- The Designated Teacher will contact the social worker, carers and Virtual School as soon as behaviour problems are identified or if there are significant changes to the behaviour of a Looked After Child.
- If the problem continues, the Social Worker, carers, and staff from support services such as the Educational Psychology Service, SEMHL, the Virtual School will be invited to a meeting with appropriate school staff to determine supportive strategies to reduce the problem behaviour.
- We recognise that Looked After Children are far more likely to be excluded. Any exclusion will be carefully considered by the Designated Teacher and Headteacher and only issued when there is no alternative. All exclusions will be confirmed in writing and copies will be sent to carers, social worker and Virtual school.
- Information about the behaviour of Looked After Children will be collected as follows:
  - CPOMS – following school policy and procedure
  - The school's main incident log- kept by the Headteacher
  - Discussions with the class teacher
  - Records of incidents recorded in Individual files.
- All information will be analysed by Designated Teacher to identify individuals or groups of Looked After Children who are at increased risk of exclusion so early intervention can take place.

## **8 Homework**

Whilst we recognise that Looked After Children may not always find it easy to complete homework, we believe they should be given support and encouragement to do so.

## **9 Extra-Curricular Activities**

We believe it is essential that Looked After Children can play a full part in school life, the following strategies are in place to help them to do this:

- The Designated Teacher will monitor the involvement of Looked After Children in extra-curricular activities on a termly basis
- The Designated Teacher will liaise with the young person, carers and social workers to try to promote involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- The Designated Teacher will liaise with LA support services such as the Virtual School to develop strategies for increasing the involvement of Looked After Children in extra-curricular activities if their uptake is shown to be low.

The success of all school strategies and use of funded initiatives will be monitored and evaluated by:



- The collection and analysis of information
- Discussion with school staff, carers, social workers and staff from LA Support Services, both informally and during meetings.
- Discussions with Looked After Children

## **10 Evaluation**

The general success and appropriateness of this policy will be evaluated every two years. In addition, we will monitor and analyse the impact of this policy on pupils, staff and parents of different ethnic groups. The results of the evaluation will be passed to the school Governor with responsibility for Looked After Children before being presented to the Governing Body.

To be reviewed: June 25