



Looked After Children Policy

Document Control

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INTRODUCTION

Leger Education Trust believes that all looked after children should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and be able to achieve at a similar level to all our children. We recognise that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers.

Note on terminology: Looked After Children (LAC) are sometimes referred to as Children in Care (CiC). As the statutory name is Looked After Children (LAC), this policy will continue to refer to LAC, but is clear that LAC and CiC are interchangeable.

DONCASTER VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Virtual School is the team of professionals who monitor the educational offer for children in care. Governance is undertaken through the Education and Skills 2030 framework. The Virtual School reports directly into the Corporate Parenting Board and the MALAP (Multi-Agency Looked After Panel).

Although the majority of Children in care in Doncaster attend Doncaster schools, some attend schools in other boroughs throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The Virtual School works together with the schools to make sure Children in care in Doncaster make progress and achieve their educational goals. The Virtual School exists to ensure that children and young people in care have access to good quality education, providing them with improved life chances.

Leger Education Trust is committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Looked After Children (LAC) by ensuring that we work together with the Doncaster Virtual School:

Advocacy

- Staff are aware that being or becoming 'looked after' has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and/or behaviour, due consideration will be given
- Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher/Principal
- Academy staff and governors are aware of the DfE statutory guidance, 'Duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children'.
- There is a dedicated member of the Academy Governing Body at each academy to monitor the work of the Academy in supporting its looked after children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

DOCUMENTATION AND MONITORING OF PROGRESS

We contribute to the process whereby all looked after children have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting at a Leger Education Trust Academy or becoming looked after. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (Student profile, IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need or Education, Health and Care Plan.)

PEP targets should reflect the outcomes everyone, most importantly the child, aspires to. These will determine the need for pupil premium plus for the child or young person. The young person's views will be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP. If appropriate the young person will attend the PEP meeting and contribute. Some young people chair their own PEPs and it is always good practice to have a 'pre-meeting' where you can talk through who will be there, what to expect and most importantly find out if they have any concerns, anxieties or anything they would like you to help them raise.

Following the writing of an PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by staff in order that, the young person has the opportunity to achieve his or her targets. The Academy should assess each young person's attainment either on entry to the Academy or on becoming looked after to ensure

continuity of learning. These baselines should be recorded in the PEP. Doncaster Virtual School will allocate Pupil Premium Plus to the school on a termly basis on receipt of a quality assured electronic PEP.

The Academy will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals and report this to the Virtual School via the PEP system . Where a child is underachieving, please arrange a PEP review to discuss how this underachievement will be addressed.

The Designated Teacher will know all the LAC in the Academy and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The Designated Teacher will also know about any LAC from other authorities. It is important that the Academy flags LAC status appropriately in the Academy's information systems so that information is readily available as required. Previously Looked After Children also should be recorded by the Academy. Pupil Premium Plus funding is allocated to this cohort of children directly from the government linked to census information.

JOINED UP WORKING

At Leger Education Trust, we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and caseworkers to enable LAC to achieve their full potential:

- We will send representatives to any review held for the child where appropriate.
- We will send reports to any review held for the child.
- School's will forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition. The Virtual School will assist and will ensure any additional information is also forwarded.
- We take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our looked after children
- We liaise with other agencies as appropriate so that each looked after child has the opportunity to achieve their full potential
- We ensure that carers and social workers are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment

TRAINING

We will attend Local Authority training regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the education of looked after children. The Principal, Designated Teacher and/or Inclusion Manager will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

GOVERNANCE

We have a governor designated to lead on children in care and other vulnerable groups. We ensure that the designated teachers report at least once a year to governors on the training they have received and the safety of children in care. Governors have good knowledge of the impact of the pupil premium for looked after children and challenge leaders.

ADMISSIONS

The Local Authority, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Academies, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against LAC pupils. Due to care placement changes, LAC may enter the Academy midterm. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. Where an application is received for a place for an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, the Academy will give due attention to the agreed protocol ensuring that these vulnerable young people are swiftly admitted and integrated in to school.

INCLUSION

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced and broadly based curriculum. Our LAC policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. We encourage each looked after child to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self –esteem and learning.

In the few instances where we review whether a child is still appropriately placed in our academy we will:

- Contact the LA education inclusion service and, if appropriate, the SEND Officer to discuss appropriate alternative arrangements
- Involve the child, the social worker and the carer at all stages of decision making
- We will consider all alternatives to exclusion, recognising that exclusion for a Looked After Child has far broader implications than for those of other children.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Looked After Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- A high level of disruption and change in Academy placements
- Lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework

This may result in:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- Underachievement in further and higher education

These issues may also affect adopted young people.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date the outcomes achieved by LAC have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity.

As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Promoting early years experiences
- Celebrating success

The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for LAC within the Academy
- Ensure the pupil premium is used effectively to ensure looked after children make progress, especially in English and Maths.
- Be familiar with the statutory guidance on the role of the designated teacher
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the LAC and the rest of the Academy community
- Know all the LAC in the Academy, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from the Academy record-keeping systems as required
- Attend relevant training about LAC
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from the LAC team when appropriate
- Ensure that LAC receive a positive welcome on entering the Academy, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the new pupil settle

- Ensure that all LAC have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the Academy or of entering care and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan
- Ensure that all data on LAC is made available for meetings between the Principal, governors and The Academy improvement partner
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at six monthly intervals
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual pupil
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to LAC
- Ensure that care and Academy liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other Academy events
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extracurricular activities for LAC
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement
- Contribute information to LAC reviews when required
- Report to the Governing body on LAC in the Academy and inform of relevant policy and practice development
- Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc
- Prepare reports for Governors' meetings to include:
 - The number of LAC on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP)
 - Their attendance compared to other pupils
 - Their attainment (SATs/GCSEs) compared to other pupils
 - The number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions
 - The destinations of pupils who leave the Academy
- Attend governor meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC
- Arrange a mentor (adult and /or pupil) to whom the young person can talk, possibly through the learning mentor scheme or through Connexions, particularly when the pupil is new to the Academy
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENDCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEND. LAC are six to eight times more likely to have a statement of Special Educational Needs than the general Academy population.

Academy staff will:

- Follow Academy/Trust procedures
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC's progress
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC
- Positively promote the raising of a LAC's self esteem
- Ensure any LAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- Be familiar with the Leger Education Trust's policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties
- Give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with The Academy's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/parents/carers/pupil as appropriate

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises LAC according to the DfE Admissions Code of Practice
- Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC

- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC
- Liaise with the Principal, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for LAC who links with the Designated Teacher
- Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher
- Ensure that the Academy's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:
 - Admission to the Academy
 - National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational
 - Out of Academy learning and extracurricular activities
 - Work experience and careers guidance
- Review of the effective implementation of the Leger Education Trust Policy for LAC will be as changes to Government policy are updated
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meetings for LAC

The Local Authority will:

- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for LAC
- Ensure that the education for this group is as good as that provided for every other Doncaster pupil
- Ensure that LAC receive a full time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible
- Ensure that every LAC has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Doncaster from another authority
- Make sure that each LAC has a PEP according to national guidance
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for LAC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training
- Provide alternative educational provision where appropriate
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible
- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of LAC and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs