WOODLANDS SCHOOL LOOKED AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOK AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

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LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY STATEMENT FOR WOODLANDS SCHOOL

We are a Rights Respecting School and this policy is underpinned by our continued work of our commitment to UNICEF and the UN Convention of Rights of the Child.

This policy links directly to the following articles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the child.

Children's rights and responsibilities:

- Article 3 - The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.
- Article 4 - Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights.
- Article 6 - Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential.
- Article 7 - Every child has the right to a legal name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.
- Article 8 - Governments must respect every child's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.
- Article 9 - Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.
- Article 12 - Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.
- Article 13 - Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.
- Article 15 - Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.
- Article 19 - Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 20 - If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language.
- Article 23 - A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.
- Article 25 - If a child lives away from home (in care, hospital or in prison, for example), they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.

Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for LAC and previously-LAC are of real concern. Students who are looked after require special treatment and additional attention in order to improve their situation.

Woodlands School endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our students. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage students to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that students enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for LAC realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help students develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 2004
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2025) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Definitions

"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 2004.
- 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 Local Authority (LA) has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

"Previously-LAC" are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA 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).

Roles and responsibilities

The **Governors are** responsible for:

- Ensuring Woodlands has a coherent policy for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Reviewing Woodlands policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC has received the appropriate training
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child's:

- Legal status (i.e. whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.
- Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA.
- Ensuring that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep LAC and previously-LAC safe.
- Ensuring LAC and previously-LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC in Woodlands.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the headteacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis.

The **Virtual School Head (VSH) of Blackpool, Lancashire and Manchester is** responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through
- adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's LAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC.
- Working with Woodlands to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
- Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
- Inform the headteacher and designated teacher if they have a student on roll who is looked after by the LA.
- Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a student's PEP.
- Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC.

- Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
- Ensure the education achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The **Headteacher is** responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Governors on the following:
- The number of LAC and previously-LAC in Woodlands
- An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other student groups
- The attendance of LAC and previously-LAC, compared to other student groups
- The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other student groups
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

- The **Designated Teacher for LAC and Previously-LAC is** responsible for:

  - Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to LAC and previously-LAC.
  - Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and previously-LAC at Woodlands; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
  - Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
  - Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
  - Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
  - Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC.
  - Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
  - Leading on how the child's PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
  - Liaising with the SENCO to ensure all student needs are met.

- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the headteacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all LAC and previously-LAC.
- Will ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are termly, high-quality, and aligned with EHCP outcomes where applicable. They will also ensure Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding, whether received directly for PLAC or via the VSH for LAC is planned, costed, and impact-evaluated.

The **DSL is** responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

The **SENCO is** responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-LAC.

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and previously-LAC and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and previously-LAC.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and previously-LAC.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All LAC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.

The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a student to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential.

The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

Woodlands with other professionals and the child's carers will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances.

All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

The PEP will address the student's full range of education and development needs, including:

Working with Agencies and the VSH

Woodlands will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.

Woodlands will support with coordinating the review meetings.

Woodlands will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard LAC and previously-LAC.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and Woodlands, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher for LAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.

Through the designated teacher, Woodlands will work with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.

The designated teacher will communicate with the VSH and agree on how student premium plus (PP+) can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.

PP+ for previously-LAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, Woodlands.

Woodlands will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or previously-LAC, and according to their needs.

If deemed necessary, Woodlands will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.

Woodlands will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and previously-LAC.

Training

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and previously-LAC have received the appropriate training, this includes information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework

- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting students to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

Student mental health

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated teachers will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure Woodlands is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be used on a termly basis to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about LAC and previously-LAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

Exclusions

Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing Woodland's Behaviour Support Policy.

Woodlands will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.

Where Woodlands has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

Exclusion will only be used as a last resort, after Woodlands and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the student's education in the event of exclusion.

Woodlands will inform parent/carers that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

Students with SEND

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.

If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC.

Information sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met.

The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and previously LAC and how data will remain secure.
- How students and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
- How carers contribute to and receive information.
- Mechanisms for sharing information between Woodlands and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual students is passed between authorities, departments and Woodlands when students move.