

WOODCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Looked After Child

(LAC)Policy 2026

Signed by:

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LAC Policy 2026

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Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for LAC and PLAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.

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

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils 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 pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

1. Legal framework

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

- Children Act 1989
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Academies Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Home-school Agreement
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

2. Definitions

"Looked-after children (LAC)" are defined as children who:

- Are provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under the Children Act 1989, sections 20 and 21.
- Are subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989, part 4.
- Are subject to a placement order.

"**Previously LAC (PLAC)**" are defined under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 as children who:

- Are no longer looked after by an LA because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. "State Care" is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Complying with their duties under legislation, having regard to KCSIE guidance and ensuring that policies, procedures and training in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Adopting a whole-school approach to safeguarding arrangements and child protection, ensuring it is central to the school's processes.
- Holding the school to account on how it supports LAC and PLAC, including how the Pupil Premium+ (PP+) is used and their level of progress.
- Working with the LA to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are LAC or PLAC.
- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of LAC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.

- Ensuring that there are no unintended barriers to the admission of LAC and PLAC either at normal transition or any other point of the school year.
- Appointing a designated teacher (DT), who is appropriately qualified to support the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC has access to appropriate training, resources and support.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each lac OR plac'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).
    - 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 PLAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Reviewing the **annual** report produced by the DT to evaluate the progress of LAC and PLAC in the school.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the headteacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an **annual** basis.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the DT for LAC and PLAC.
- Allowing the DT the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the governing board **annually** on the following:
    - The number of LAC and PLAC in the school

- An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other pupil groups
- The attendance of LAC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups
- The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions of LAC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups

- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring PP+ for LAC and PLAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.
- Understanding the role of the VSH and working with them to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.

The DT for LAC and PLAC is responsible for:

- Working with the Virtual School Head (VSH) and social worker to:
  - Promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.
  - Develop and implement their PEP.
  - Discuss how funding can be used to support the pupil's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies affecting LAC and PLAC to ensure the policies meet the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- 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 PLAC.
- Taking lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand what can affect how LAC and PLAC learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies when working with LAC and PLAC.

- Ensuring that LAC and PLAC 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 pupil needs are met.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting these to the DSL as soon as they arise.
- Playing a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus finding is used.
- Working with the headteacher to submit an **annual** report to the governing board, which details the progress of all LAC and PLAC.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC and PLAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- Highlighting the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns regarding LAC and PLAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor, where a child becomes a care leaver, 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 PLAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, DT, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of LAC and PLAC.

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.

- Developing an understanding of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the LA looking after the pupil.
- Understanding the importance of involving the pupil's parents, guardians or carers in decisions affecting their child's education.
- Being a contact for parents, guardians or carers who want advice or have concerns about their pupil's progress at school.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and PLAC.
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and PLAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and PLAC.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of LAC and PLAC placed within and outside the authority.
- Monitoring and evaluating the educational attainment and progress of LAC as if those children attended a single school.
- Ensuring that there are effective systems in place to:
    - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC and PLAC who are attending the school.
    - Gather information about the education placement, attendance and educational progress of LAC and PLAC.
    - Ensure social workers, the DT, the school, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the pupil's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP.
    - Ensure all LAC and PLAC at the school have up-to-date, effective and high-quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes.

- Avoid drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive, multi-agency co-operation.
- Ensure the educational 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 LA's corporate parenting structures.

- In respect of PLAC's the VSH will:
  - respond to parental requests for advice and information
  - respond to requests for advice and information from the DT, and build a good working relationship with the DT
  - make general advice and information available to the school to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of PLAC, including promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+

4. Personal education plan (PEP)

The school is aware that all LAC must have a care plan or a detention placement plan where the child is remanded to youth detention, and that PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.

The school understands that the PEP is intended to serve as an evolving record of what needs to happen for a pupil to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential.

The school is aware that, wherever a pupil is placed, it is the responsibility of their social worker, supported by the authority's VSH, to initiate a PEP and arrange to meet with the school and the pupil's carer.

The school will ensure that children's PEPs reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the pupil and will be reviewed termly.

The DT will liaise with the VSH and social workers to share information and act as the in-school lead on how the PEP is developed and used to make sure the pupil's progress towards education targets is monitored.

The school, in collaboration with the pupil, carer, and other professionals will collaborate to ensure completion of the PEP and that PEP is used as a working document intended to support the pupil's educational needs, raise their aspirations and improve their life chances.

The school 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 pupil's PEP are implemented without delay.

The school is aware that PP+ for PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school, and will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of the cohort of LAC, or PLAC, and according to their needs. If deemed necessary, the school will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

The DT will communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the pupil's educational attainment and progress.

PEP content

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

- Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age and meets their identified developmental needs. .
- On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with school work.
- Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
- Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
    - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
    - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the DT will ensure that information is included within a LAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment. Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the pupil.

5. Working with agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)

The school is aware that strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of LAC and PLAC.

The school will work proactively and collaboratively with other professionals in other agencies and organisations in line with the framework of expectations outlined in the government's Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance document by:

- Collaborating with services to achieve shared goals and share information.
- Learning from evidence and sharing perspectives to evaluate provision.
- Prioritising and sharing resources depending on pupils' needs.
- Celebrating inclusivity and diversity and challenging discrimination.
- Mutually and constructively challenging others' assumptions in a respectful manner.

Information Sharing

The school recognises the importance of proactive information sharing between professionals and local agencies in order to effectively meet pupils' needs.

Staff will be made aware that whilst the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place a duty on schools to process personal information fairly and lawfully, they also allow for information to be stored and shared for safeguarding purposes, as data protection regulations do not act as a barrier to sharing information where failure to do so would result in the pupil being placed at risk of harm.

If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will be encouraged to speak to the DSL.

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data will be put in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out will include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and PLAC and how data will remain secure.
- How pupils 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 the school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

School staff will be proactive in sharing information in accordance with data protection principles as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.

The school will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

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

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

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and PLAC.

The school will coordinate review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of LAC with their statutory care review.

6. Training

The DT and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities

- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

The governing board will ensure that staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep LAC and PLAC safe through training.

7. Safeguarding

The school is aware that LAC and PLAC most commonly become looked after because of abuse and/or neglect and because of this, they can be at potentially greater risk in relation to safeguarding.

The school recognises that many LAC and PLAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.

All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and PLAC as soon as possible.

Where a LAC or PLAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and PLAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or PLAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a LAC or PLAC is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the school will collaborate in the multi-agency strategy discussion where appropriate to determine the pupil's welfare and plan rapid further action as necessary. The school's representative at any strategy discussion meetings will be sufficiently senior, skilled and experienced, and authorised to make decisions on the school's behalf. Information and analysis about the pupil and their family will be provided as required.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the DT if they believe a LAC or PLAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

8. Mental health

All staff will be made aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The school is aware that LAC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The school will support the DT in developing their knowledge, awareness, training and skills to support children with behaviour management and mental health.

The DT will work with the VSH to ensure school staff are able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and PLAC, and know how to access further assessment and support, where necessary. This includes being "attachment aware" whereby school staff understand the impact of attachment disorders on a child's emotional development and learning. A whole school approach will be adopted to identify and support pupils with attachment difficulties.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or PLAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

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 PLAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the DT to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and PLAC, and will always either be a member of, or be supported by the senior leadership team and could be the pastoral lead, SENCO, or DSL.

The school will adhere to its SEMH Policy when responding to potential or explicit mental health issues amongst the LAC or PLAC cohort.

9. Suspension and exclusion

Past experiences of LAC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy and Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school recognises that suspending or excluding LAC or PLAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. When responding to incidents involving LAC and PLAC the school will show full regard to the DfE's statutory guidance *'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'*. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

Where the school has concerns about a LAC's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a LAC to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour and improving this behaviour.

Where the school has concerns about the behaviour of a PLAC which could result in them being excluded, the child's parents or DT may seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support the child to avoid exclusion.

As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Suspension or permanent exclusion will only be used as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy, or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

Where a LAC is excluded, the school will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP.

10. Pupils with SEND

In cases where pupils have an EHCP, the DT will work with the VSH to ensure that their EHCP works in harmony with their care plan and PEP to tell a coherent and comprehensive story of how the pupil's needs are being met.

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

For PLAC, the SENCO, class teacher, DT 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 PLAC.

The DT and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and PLAC with SEND are supported in line with the SEND Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for LAC, e.g. where LAC are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an **annual** basis by the DT and the headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2027.**

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.