

Looked After Children Policy

2023-2024



School: Highfield Middle School

Head Teacher: Richard Oades

Named personnel with designated responsibility:

Academic Year	Lead	Nominated Local Governor	Chair of board of trustees
2023-24	Ellie McFadden	Lynsey Briddock	Rob Moore
2023-24	Ellie McFadden	Lynsey Briddock	Paul Carvin

Policy review dates

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date shared
September 2023	Update staffing Update trust details	R Oades	November 23

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Highfield Middle School believes that in partnership with Northumberland County Council as Corporate Parents we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of Looked After Children.

Rationale

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. The majority of children who come into care are there because of abuse or neglect, domestic violence or parents' drug related issues. As a school we recognise that outcomes nationally for looked after children fall well below national averages and we understand and support the government agenda to address this disparity. As corporate parents in Northumberland 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.

Overall Aims

1. To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
2. To support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve their potential and enjoy learning.
3. To fulfil our school's role as corporate parents to promote and support the education of our Looked After Children, by asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

The Aims of the school are to:

- Ensure that school policies and procedures are inclusive of looked after children
- Ensure that all looked after children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and this includes the provision of a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability
- Ensure that looked after children take as full a part as possible in all school activities including extra-curricular activities

- Ensure that carers and social workers and the Virtual School Head teacher for looked after children are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment, attendance and transition arrangements
- Ensure that appropriate intervention strategies are put in place when there is concern about a child's lack of progress
- Ensure that looked after children are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision
- Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to support the needs of looked after children.

Who Are Looked After Children?

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 by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subject of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subject 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 courts 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 or they may be fostered with family members. All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' – LAC. They may be looked after by Northumberland Local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in Northumberland.

Admissions

The governing body endorses Highfield Middle School's policy. Cheviot Learning Trust, as the Admission Authority for the school, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against looked after children. Due to care placement changes, looked after children may enter school mid-term. It is vital that as a school we ensure that they are given a positive welcome in order that they feel secure. If necessary, we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupils settle.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our Looked After Children Policy reinforces the need for teaching that is

fully inclusive. The governing body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all looked after children and will be kept up to date via reports from the designated teacher/governor.

Allocation of Resources

The governing body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for looked after children, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. The governing body will hold the school to account for the progress and attainment of looked after children.

Monitoring the progress of Looked After Children

The social worker for the looked after child should initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP) – within 10 days of the pupil joining the school, or of entering care. Wherever possible the looked after child should be actively involved in determining their plan. It is vital that the school assesses each looked after child's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning and progression.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all looked after children at regular intervals and will provide the Local Authority with termly information in line with the Virtual School pupil tracking system. The school will put in place intervention strategies to support underachievement and provide appropriate challenge for gifted and talented pupils in order that pupils are helped to fulfil their potential.

The school will inform the Attendance and Exclusion Service of any concerns regarding attendance and, if necessary, liaise with the service regarding all matters relating to fixed term exclusions.

Looked after children will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

The PEP will be placed on line as part of the Virtual School monitoring and communication system.

Transition

The school will ensure that all stakeholders are provided with the appropriate information, advice and guidance to support the smooth and effective transition of looked after children and young people at all key stages.

Record Keeping

The designated teacher will know the names of all the looked after children in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The designated teacher will also know about any looked after children from other authorities who are attending the school. It is important that the school

indicates looked after children's status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required. Information regarding looked after children will be stored securely.

Staff Development

Staff will be enabled to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support looked after children and disseminate this professional development to all relevant staff. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to be the focal point in the school for all issues associated with looked after children.

Partnership with parents/carers and care workers

As a school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable looked after children to achieve their potential. Review meetings, which take place at least every six months, are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

Links with external agencies/organisations

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting looked after children. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual looked after children:

- Looked After Children Education Team (LACE)
- Educational Psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- SEND
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CYPS
- Attendance and Inclusion Service
- Social care worker/Community care worker/Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service.

Reporting to the Governing Body

In line with the statutory guidance (The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children - Statutory guidance for governing bodies.) The designated teacher will provide the governing body, as a minimum, with an annual report on the progress of looked after children and young people. Review and Evaluation of LACYP Policy.

IN PURSUIT OF THIS POLICY WE WILL:

- Nominate a Designated teacher for Looked After Children who will act as their advocate and co-ordinate support for them.
- Nominate a school governor to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children in the school are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Teacher.
- Support the Designated teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training on Looked After Children.

The Designated teacher will:

- Maintain an up-to-date record of all Looked After Children who are on the school roll. This will include:
 - Status i.e. care order or accommodated.
 - Type of Placement i.e. Foster, respite, residential.
 - Name of Social Worker, area office, telephone number.
 - Daily contact and numbers e.g. name of parent or carer or key worker in children's home.
 - SEN Code of Practice
 - School Action/School Action Plus where appropriate
 - Child Protection information when appropriate.
 - Baseline information and all test results.
 - Attendance figures
 - Exclusions
- Ensure that there is a Personal Education Plan for each child/young person to include appropriate targets and above information. This must be compatible with the child's/young person's Care Plan and where applicable include any other school plan, e.g. Statement of Special Education Need, and associated plans, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme.
- Ensure that someone attends Social Services Reviews on each child/young person and/or always prepares a written report which promotes the continuity and stability of their education.
- Liaise with the Education Support Service for Looked After Children on a regular basis with regard to the performance, attendance and attainment of Looked After Children.
- Ensure that if/when the child transfers school all relevant information is forwarded to the receiving school as a matter of priority.
- Ensure that systems are in place to identify and prioritise when Looked After Children are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this in line with existing school policy.
- Ensure that systems are in place to keep staff up to date and informed about Looked After Children where and when appropriate.
- Ensure that Looked After Children, along with all children are listened to and have equal opportunity to pastoral support in school.
- Ensure that they keep the school up to date with current legislation and its implication for the school in respect of Looked After Children.
- Report to the Governing body annually on the performance of the looked after children who are on the roll of the school.

All governors and staff will:

- Support the local authority in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

We consider the Looked After Children Policy to be important and we will undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice with key stakeholders each year.