



Looked After Child Policy

Date Policy due to be reviewed: September 2027

Committee Responsible for Policy: Full Trust Board

WORK HARD | BE KIND | AIM HIGH

Section 1 - Definition

'Looked After' is a term that refers to children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility. This can happen either with parental agreement or when a Court makes a Care Order. The child may be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, with family members or sometimes with their parents. These children are therefore subject to corporate parenting.

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'. In addition, provision for 'Looked After' children extends to children who have now been adopted after a period of being 'Looked After' by the Local Authority.

This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children (LAC).

Governor Responsible: Mrs Louise MacArthur-Clare

Designated LAC Leader: Mr Damon Gariff (DSL/Deputy Headteacher Pastoral)

Deputy Designated LAC Leader: Mrs Claire McGettrick

Hillcrest School recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad-based curriculum and aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care. The school and the governing body endorse the Birmingham City Council policy and welcomes LAC who may be looked after by our local authority or those who may be in the care of another authority but living in Birmingham.

Hillcrest School's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of LAC is based on the following principles:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all LAC.
- All LAC will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, and the child's social worker, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly-based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of LAC.

Section 2 - Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, LAC are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, LAC significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. 75% of LAC leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Hillcrest School recognises that LAC can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting and is committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that LAC may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances.

Hillcrest School recognises that LAC may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty. We believe that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Section 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility of the Headteacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for LAC, whose role is set out below.
- It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated LAC Leader leave the school or take sick leave.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of LAC and act where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
- Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of LAC to all parties involved.
- Ensure that staff in school receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibility of the Governing Body

- Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC:
- The Education (Admission of LAC England) Regulations 2006. Relevant DfE guidance to Governing Bodies (Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors).
- Ensure that the school has an overview of the needs and progress of LAC.
- Allocate resources to meet the needs of LAC.
- Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.
- Ensure that the school has a Designated LAC Leader, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
- Support the Head teacher, the Designated LAC Leader and other staff in ensuring that the needs of LAC are recognised and met.
- Receive a termly report setting out:

- The number of looked-after pupils on the school's roll (if any).
- Their attendance, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.
- Their Teacher Assessment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
- The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
- The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

The Role of the Designated LAC Leader

- Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met.
- This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.
- Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Maintaining an up-to-date record of the LAC in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required.
- Ensure LAC funding (including Pupil Premium Plus) is used appropriately to best support the needs of the child and measure the impact of funding and resource allocation.
- Ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated LAC Leader but should be based on the child's own wishes.
- Track attendance, behaviour and academic progress and target support appropriately to feed into the PEP.
- Co-ordinate any support for the LAC that is necessary within school liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage LACs may face.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need-to-know basis.
- Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage LAC to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning.
- Ensure appropriate careers advice and support is provided, as a priority, to LAC.
- Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of LAC.
- Set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of suspension.
- Ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and, if the pupil changes school, to a new school.
- Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
- Be aware that 60% of LAC say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Attend training as required to keep fully informed of the latest developments and policies regarding LAC.

The Responsibility of all Staff

- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC, as for all pupils.
- Maintain LAC's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- Respond promptly to the Designated LAC Leader's requests for information.
- Work to enable LAC to achieve stability and success within school.
- Promote the self-esteem of all LAC.
- Understand the key issues that affect the learning of LAC.
- Be aware that 60% of LAC say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the school's policy.

Section 4 - Confidentiality

Information on LAC will be shared with school staff on a "need to know" basis. The Designated LAC Leader will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Section 5 - Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The Designated LAC Leader will keep an up-to-date record of LAC and Young People in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff.

A Personal Education Plan will be initiated within 20 school days of the Looked After Child or Young Person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the LAC/YP. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that all relevant parties are informed accordingly. Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition.

It is vital that the Looked After Child or Young Person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

The Designated Teacher at Hillcrest School will lead PEP/LAC reviews for students attending Hillcrest on off-site direction or managed move placements but will require support from the Designated Teacher at the home school to complete PEP documentation. Our Designated Teacher will facilitate a meeting with the home school Designated Teacher prior to the placement commencing to ensure all relevant information is shared in a timely manner. The same process will apply to any LAC children on roll at Hillcrest School commencing similar placements at other host schools. The Designated Teacher will ensure that the Virtual School is fully aware of and involved in the transition and monitoring processes.

Section 6 - Suspensions

Hillcrest School recognises that LAC are particularly vulnerable to suspensions. Where a LAC is at risk of suspension, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. The Designated Teacher will contact the Virtual School immediately, and a multi-professional meeting will be arranged to bring together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of suspension. The child or young person's PEP will reflect strategies to support the child and, where relevant, those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. We will ensure the voice of the child always plays a role in the decision-making process. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and alternative educational packages to prevent exclusion. When considering what additional assessment and support may be required, we will assess how effectively the current PEP is being implemented and how the school is using Pupil Premium Plus funding to best meet the student's needs.

Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information.

Section 7 - Staff Development and Training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated LAC Leader is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of LAC. Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with LAC, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include EAL, being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs. Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs provision and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those LAC who have gifts, talents or learning needs and will work with them appropriately.

Section 8 - Support and Resources

The Governing body will ensure that the school allocates resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Section 9 - Home-School Liaison

Hillcrest School recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC to achieve their potential. Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working.

Section 10 - Admission Arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. The school recognises that LAC are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise LAC in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

Section 11 - Links with Other Agencies

Hillcrest School recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked After Child or Young Person including Social Care teams, Educational Psychologist, Health Services, Forward Thinking Birmingham and Youth Offending Teams.

Section 12 - School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that looked after children experience in getting parental/carer consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that looked after children enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities and using LAC funding to cover the cost of LAC children participating in these experiences.

Section 13 - Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. Hillcrest School is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

Section 14 - Complaints

If a young person, parent/carer or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the Designated LAC Leader, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved within ten days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and respond within ten working days.

Any issue that remains unresolved at this stage will be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Headteacher's response.