

School Policy	
School	St Martins school
Name	Looked after Children Policy
Statutory Policy	yes
Members of Staff Responsible	Headteacher /SLT.
Date of Review of current document , term / year	Spring 2022
Review Cycle	2 Years
Website	Yes
Approval body.	Local Governing Body
Legislation/ dfe guidance doc.	Keeping children safe in education dfe 2021. Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children feb dfe 2018
Trust policy	No
Stakeholders; staff / students / parents / community	staff / students / parents / community
Other policy to be taken account of	Behavior, teaching and learning. Addendum to Safeguarding jan 2021

Introduction:

This policy expresses the commitment of St Martins School, the Shropshire Virtual School and social care team, and Virtual School/ social care teams from the local authorities working with St Martins to achieve excellent education outcomes for Looked after Children.

Why do we need a policy and standards? The neglect and abuse that have brought our children into care provide a moral, legal and pragmatic drive for us to work together as corporate parents or in loco parentis to repair the damage. We know that a secure and successful education experience is a major factor in improving the life chances of our children in care.

'Parents want their children to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential. As corporate parents, local authorities should have equally high aspirations for the children they look after.' **Promoting the education of Looked after Children statutory guidance for Local Authorities - July 2014**

Basis in legislation: The policy and standard is based on the legislation below:

1. *Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 ("the Act") and The Designated Teacher (Looked-after Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009.*
2. *The Local Authority statutory duty under 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked after children [includes those LAC placed out-of-authority].*
3. *The Children and Families Act 2014, which requires every local authority in England to appoint an officer to make sure that its duty is properly discharged - referred to as the Virtual School Head.*

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education to all looked after children

- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked after children
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and truancies for all looked after children
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children
- Develop systems of communications and protocols
- Promote the attendance of looked after children

Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

Furthermore, the term “looked after”, which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term “in public care”, was adopted by the DfES in their publication, “The Education of Young People in Public Care”. Care Matters (2006 & 2007) uses the term “children in care”, for all children who are accommodated by Local Authorities, whether on an agreed basis or subject to a care order.

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child’s care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.

- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LEA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care, and the 2006/7 Care Matters agenda.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavor to support all children in care educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

Many children in care do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children.

The **named Governor** should be satisfied that :

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after children
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- Children in care have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- the Governing body receives an annual report

The name of the **Governor** with special responsibility for children in care

is: Ms Vicki Silver

The **Head Teacher** will:

- Consider LAC in developing strategy as appropriate.
- Ensure that resources targeted at LAC [Pupil Premium Plus, money for special needs etc.] are used directly to benefit them.
- Ensure LAC have access to the best of what the school has to offer and that barriers to do with being in care, which might make this difficult, are overcome.
- Work with, support and challenge wider partnerships in providing the best possible educational provision and support for LAC.
- appoint the **designated teacher**, who will be experienced, & empathetic

- ensure that the **designated teacher** has received appropriate training
- oversee the development of the policy on children in care
- be responsible for all systems to support children in care
- report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after pupils in the school
 - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
 - the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils
 - the number of complaints

The Designated Teacher and LAC Coordinator

The **designated teacher** will serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all children in care in the school.

The **designated teacher** will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding looked after children of the school by:

- maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all children in care and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
- acting as an advocate for children in care in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances

The **designated teacher** will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children in care. S/he will:

- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after
- maintain records regarding all children in care, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
- monitor the educational progress of all children in care and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern

The **designated teacher** will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP

- playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of children in care
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties
- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The **designated teacher** will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- by meeting with the child to discuss who needs to know they are in care and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role
- by ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (this maybe the class teacher in a primary school)
- by ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan
- by requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies, including the Shropshire Looked After Children Team, if a child in care requires additional academic or behavioural support
- by working closely with the SENCO to ensure all children in care with special educational needs are getting appropriate resources to support their learning
- by having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions
- by ensuring the involvement of careers advice agencies with children in key stage four.
- by encouraging all children in care to continue on to further or higher education
- by ensuring all children in care feel that they belong to the school community

The name of the **designated teacher** is: Ms Katherine Mooney ,
assisted by Angela Herbert. Inclusion Manager/LAC Coordinator.

Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strength's and weaknesses
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child
- IEP for pupils with SEN

SMART targets to be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children in care are a priority for admission. We will follow the LEA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school. Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that children in care may experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that they enjoy the same extra curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

Complaints

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

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issues that remain unresolved at this stage should 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 Head teacher's response.