



Designated Teacher Policy (Looked After and previously Looked After Children)

This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees with reference to the academy's Equality Policy. The aims of the Equality Policy are to ensure that Plume Academy meets the needs of all, taking account of gender identity, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability and social circumstances. It is important that in this academy we meet the diverse needs of students to ensure inclusion for all and that all students are prepared for full participation in a multi-ethnic society.

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1. Aims

The academy aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the Designated Teacher for Looked After and previously Looked After Children (LACs).
- The Designated Teacher promotes the educational achievement of LACs, and supports other staff members to do this too.
- Staff, parents, and carers are aware of the identity of the Designated Teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.
- Every looked after child is provided a Lead Person and Assistant Lead Person to assist with the lead and arrangements of their Team Around the Child meetings, PEP meetings on a termly basis and any other academic or pastoral support they may require under the guidance of the Designated Teacher.
- The LAC Administrator will ensure that all paperwork is completed in line with the expectations of both the Local Authority and Virtual Schools and prior to any pre-set deadlines.
- To ensure all Post-LACs are given the relevant guidance and access to support on an annual basis that allows them to access their Pupil Premium Plus funding if they feel this will benefit their progress or engagement with attendance, education or mental health and wellbeing.

2. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on the Designated Teacher for looked after and previously looked after children

It also takes into account section 2E of the Academies Act 2010.

3. Definitions

Looked After Children are registered students that are:

- in the care of a local authority; or
- provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

Previously LACs are registered students that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
 - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
 - A special carership order.
 - An adoption order.
- They appear to the Board of Trustees to have:
 - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately
 - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted.

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a LACs care plan that is developed with the academy. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual School Head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's LACs, working across schools to monitor and support these students as if they were in a single academy. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and carers in respect of previously LACs

4. Identity of our Designated Teacher

Our designated teacher is the Deputy Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mr Stoneman.

You can contact him - a.stoneman@plume.essex.sch.uk

Our Designated Teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of LACs at our academy. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

The LAC administrator works under the guidance of the Designated Teacher as do the Lead Person and Assistant Lead Person.

The Lead Person will be a senior leader or a key member of the pastoral team that has Qualified Teacher Status. The Assistant Lead Person will be a non-teaching member of staff that will be a fundamentally important person in the LAC students' time at the academy e.g. an Assistant Head of Year.

5. Role of the Designated Teacher

The following is based on the responsibilities listed in the DfE's statutory guidance. Although the Designated Teacher always has the lead responsibility, the academy has varying layers of support and individuals who assist with pastoral and administrative tasks. Tasks are appropriately delegated by the Designated Teacher to ensure that we are compliant and providing the highest level of support for the stakeholders of our academy.

5.1 Leadership Responsibilities

The role of the Designated Teacher for LACs:

- Our Designated Teacher should be a central point of initial contact within the academy. This helps to make sure that the academy plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.
- Our Designated Teacher has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every LAC on the academy's roll. This involves, working with VSHs to promote the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children and promoting a whole academy culture where the personalised learning needs of every LAC matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.
- The Designated Teacher at Plume Academy takes a lead responsibility for ensuring academy staff understand the things which can affect how LACs learn and achieve and how the whole academy supports the educational achievement of these students. This means making sure that all staff:

- Have high expectations of LACs learning and set targets to accelerate educational progress.
- Are 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, and how this might affect the child's behavior
- Understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their looked-after or previously looked-after status.
- Appreciate the central importance of the looked-after child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported.
- Have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child.
- For previously looked-after children, understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress at the academy.

Our Designated Teacher has a direct role in the day-to-day promotion of the educational achievement of our LACs, either directly or through appropriate delegation.

This is achieved by:

- Contributing to the development and review of whole academy policies and procedures to ensure that:
 1. They do not unintentionally put our LACs at a disadvantage;
 2. There is effective induction for our LACs starting school, new to the school and new to care;
 3. There are effective procedures in place to support a LACs learning.
 4. Particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the academy and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve.
 5. Transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion
 6. Thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment.
 7. When enrolling at the academy, parents and carers of LACs are reminded that they need to inform the academy if their child is eligible to attract PP+ funding.
 8. There are no barriers to our LACs accessing the general activities and experiences the academy offers to all its students (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for our LACs to attend meetings).

- Promoting a culture in which our LACs are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning:
 1. Are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-on-one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support.
 2. Are encouraged to participate in academy activities and in decision making within the school and the care system.
 3. Believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs.
 4. Can discuss difficult issues (such as SEN, bullying, attendance) in an honest manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult.
- Being a source of advice for teachers about:
 1. Differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are LACs.
 2. The use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of our LACs, and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning (including any knowledge gaps), where they need to go, and how to get there.
- Working directly with our LACs and their carers, parents or guardians to:
 1. Promote good home-academy links.
 2. Support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers or parents.
 3. Ensure carers or parents understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home.
 4. Ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the academy teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy.
 5. Encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment.
- Having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of our LACs PEP within the academy in partnership with others as necessary; and by being in the post of Designated Safeguarding Lead means the Designated Teacher can effectively ensure the safety of every LAC.

When supporting LACs, our Designated Teacher is aware of the following:

- The VSH must provide information and advice to parents/carers
- Ensures the academy is meeting the needs of these children - this may be general information, including training opportunities, or information and advice on individual children at the request of their parents or Designated Teacher.
- Our Designated Teacher is fully involved with parents and carers in decisions affecting their child's education, including any requests to the VSH for advice on meeting their individual needs.

5.2 Supporting Looked after Children

The Designated teacher will:

- Make sure LACs PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs.
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs.
- Monitor and track how looked after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs.
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place.
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the academy and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for students.
- Ensure that:
 - A LACs PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered.
 - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
 - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan.
- Transfer a LACs PEP to their next academy or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version.

5.3 Supporting both Looked after Children and Previously Looked after Children

The Designated Teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of our LACs are understood by staff and reflected in how the academy uses student premium funding.
- Work with VSHs to agree how student premium funding for LACs can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.
- Help raise the awareness of parents and carers of LACs about student premium funding and other support for these children.
- Play a key part in decisions on how student premium funding is used to support LACs.
- Encourage parents and carers involvement in deciding how student premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use.
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of LACs in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning.
- Be aware of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of LACs, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this.
- Ensure the SEND Code of Practice, as it relates to LAC, is followed.

- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans that a LAC may have.
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEND issues in any of our LACs, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary.
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in any of our LACs and understand where the academy can draw on specialist services.
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for LACs, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs.
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of LACs.

5.4 Relationships beyond the Academy

The Designated Teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the academy to respond effectively to the needs of our LACs.
- Discuss with social workers how the academy should engage with birth parents, and ensure the academy is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom.
- Be open and accessible to parents and carers of our LACs and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education.
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments.
- Consider how the academy works with others outside of the academy to maximise the stability of education for LACs, such as:
 - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans.
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when LACs are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action.
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions on changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption.
 - Making sure that, if a LAC moves academy, their new Designated Teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process.
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual LACs, but only with the agreement of their parents or carers.
- Make sure that for each LAC:
 - There is an agreed process for how the academy works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress.

- Our academy policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents.
- Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips.

Where a LAC is at risk of fixed term or permanent exclusion:

- Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the academy decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour.

Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or carers before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

6. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.

7. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- First Aid Policy