

**THE EDUCATION VILLAGE ACADEMY
TRUST**

Education Village
Academy Trust 

**CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER
POLICY**

EVAT Version Control Document

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Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Policy Owner: **Adrian Lynch** unless there is new guidance or legislative changes to consider earlier. The scheduled review date for this policy is **February 2024**.

Values and Ethos

Our values and ethos are inclusive and child centred. Our Trust is founded on the principles of inclusivity, diversity and fairness, and they are fundamental to our delivery of exceptional learning experiences.

EVAT stands for:

- **E**xcellence and high standards
 - a can-do culture and no-excuses ethos
- **V**alues driven with a deep sense of purpose
 - putting children and young people first
 - behaving ethically
- **A**mbitious and aspiration for all
 - irrespective of background or barriers – being truly inclusive
- **T**eamwork
 - we do more, better and faster, together

We are a village. We collaborate, with our learners, their families and our communities, to provide exceptional education so that all the children and young people we serve achieve the best possible outcomes.

Our Ethos is to:

- Create a nurturing and friendly atmosphere and provide an environment where everyone feels valued for who they are
- Bring out the best in every child and young person and meet the full range of their individual needs
- Provide different and unique experiences, challenges and activities
- Show tolerance and respect for each other
- Prepare our children and young people for lifelong learning
- Improve the life chances of every child and young person we serve.

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, are based on these key principles.

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N.B. Where reference is made to an 'Academy' or a 'School' the intention is that the policy is universal and applies to both. Any reference to Principal may also include Executive Principal, Head of School or another member of ELT or SLT

Looked After Children Policy

The Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT Statement of intent)

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after children (LAC) and previously LAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after require special treatment and additional attention in order to improve their situation.

The Trust 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 using each academy's resources efficiently in order to ensure the academy meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of academy 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
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2021) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England'
- DfE (2020) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code Mandatory requirements and statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeals panels'
- This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust and academy Policies and documents:
 - Admissions Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Home Academy Agreement
 - Pupil Premium Policy
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

2. Definitions

“Looked-after children (LAC)” are defined as:

- Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- Children who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, as the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

“Previously-LAC (PLAC)” are defined as:

- Children no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive (CEO) and Board of Trustees are responsible for:

- Ensuring the Trust has a coherent policy for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Ensuring the Trust's policies and procedures are reviewed regularly in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from each Principal regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis.

The Virtual Headteacher is responsible for:

Each Local Authority appoints a Virtual Headteacher. The core purpose of the Virtual Headteacher is to be relentless in driving up improvements in the educational progress and attainment of all Looked After Children (LAC), including those that have been placed in schools in other Local Authority areas. They also have an important role in working in partnership with Virtual Headteachers and/or Virtual School Heads in other Local Authorities to support the educational progress of children who are in their schools but looked after by other Local Authorities. Because Looked After Children are

being educated across a large number of schools, the Virtual Headteacher has a powerful role in tracking their progress as if they were in a single school.

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's LAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the designated teachers understand the support available to LAC and PLAC children.
- Working with the academy to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of PLAC as effectively as possible.
- Managing the school's allocation of pupil premium plus (PP+) for LAC.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in academy settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the principal and designated teacher if they have a pupil on roll who is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP.
 - Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC.
 - Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
 - Ensure the education achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and academy attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC and ensuring they are appropriately trained and training is cascaded
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child'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) and 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.
 - *Policy Owner* - Reviewing the Trust's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
 - Ensuring LAC and previously-LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
 - Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC in the academy.
 - Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
 - Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
 - Promoting and actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.
 - Overseeing this policy, monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Chief Executive (CEO) and Education Standards Committee (ESC) on the following:
 - The number of LAC and PLAC in the school
 - An analysis of progress as a cohort, compared to other groups
 - The attendance of LAC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups
 - The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
 - Destination data for LAC and PLAC
- Ensuring Pupil Premium+ for previously-LAC is managed effectively.

- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst LAC and PLAC.

The designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC is responsible for:

- 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 previously-LAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and previously-LAC at the academy.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the education department.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and support.
- Leading on how the child's personal education plan PEP is developed and used in academy 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.
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be used to support the child's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the Principal to submit an annual report to the Education Standards Committee, which details the progress of all LAC and PLAC.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.

- Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and PLAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

The Academy SENDCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously-LAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-LAC.

All staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and previously-LAC in their classes and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of peer-on-peer abuse 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 previously-LAC.

The Education Standards Committee is responsible for:

- Nominating a link ESC member (Safeguarding & Child Protection Link member) who will liaise with the designated teacher, receive regular progress reports and provide feedback to the ESC.
- Ensuring the academy's policies and procedures mean all Looked After Pupils have equal access to the national curriculum, public examinations, careers guidance, additional educational support, extra-curricular activities and work experience.
- Ensuring the academy's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines.

- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC has received the appropriate training, ensuring looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum, reviewing the Annual Report produced by the Designated Teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC in the school.

4. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- All LAC children must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.
- The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a pupil to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential.
- The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.
- The school with other professionals and the child's carers will use the PEP to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and improve their life chances.
- All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.
- The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:
 - [Primary academies only] access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
 - On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
 - Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in academy because of suspension or exclusion.
 - Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new academy.
 - Academy attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
 - The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a LAC or PLAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.
 - Any interventions supported by Pupil Premium+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the pupil.
 - 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.
- Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Out-of-academy hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.
-

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

- The academy will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- The academy will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of LAC with their statutory care review.
- The academy will work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues.
- Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the academy, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.
- The designated teacher for LAC and previously-LAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.
- Through the designated teacher, the academy 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 child's PEP are implemented without delay.
- The designated teacher will communicate with the VSH and agree on how pupil premium plus (PP+) can be used effectively to accommodate the child's educational attainment and progress.
- PP+ for previously-LAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the academy.
- The academy will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or previously-LAC, and according to their needs.
- If deemed necessary, the academy will allocate an amount of funding to an individual to support their needs.

- The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.
- The academy will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and previously-LAC.

6. Training

- The designated teacher and any other academy staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:
 - Academy admissions arrangements
 - SEND
 - Attendance
 - Exclusions
 - Homework
 - GCSE options (secondary only)
 - Managing and challenging behaviour
 - Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
 - Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
 - Safeguarding
- All training will ensure staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep LAC and PLAC safe.

7. 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 unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead 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.
- Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher 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. Pupil mental health

- LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues, which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated teachers will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.
- The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the academy is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.
- To regularly measure the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by LAC and previously-LAC, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire will be used to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about LAC's emotional wellbeing. Teachers will regularly complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.
- The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and previously-LAC, 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.

9. Exclusions

- Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the academy's Behaviour Policy.
- The academy will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.

- Where the academy has concerns about a child'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.
- Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort; where exclusion is considered, the academy will work with the VSH, and others, to consider what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements that can be made to support the pupil's education in the event of exclusion.
- The academy will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.
- 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.

10. Pupils with SEND

- 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.
- The SENCo, class teacher, designated teacher 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 designated teacher and the SENCo will ensure that LAC and PLAC with SEND are supported in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (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. Information sharing

- Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met.
- The arrangements set out:
 - Who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured.

- 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 academy and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the academy when pupils move.

12. Monitoring and review

- This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Trust's designated Policy owner and the Executive Leadership Team.
- The next scheduled review date for this policy is February 2023. All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

13. Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In preparing or amending this policy, the author has given due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; that is, they have considered any potential impact on people who share certain protected characteristics. These protected characteristics are defined as: race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

Appendix 1 – Key Contacts

Designated Teachers

The Trust is committed to ensuring that Designated Teachers and staff are enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Designated Teachers are:

Beaumont Hill Academy – Nicole Gilbert

Haughton Academy – Lianne Miller

Springfield Academy – Kathryn White

Gurney Pease Academy – Jo Gartland

Marchbank Free School – Nicole Gilbert

Darlington Borough Council Virtual School Head

Mr Calvin Kipling, Darlington Borough Council – 01325 405581