



# Poplar Adolescent Unit Education Provision

## Looked After Children Policy

Accepted by the Management Committee

Review Date

March 2022

September 2022

# Poplar Adolescent Unit

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

### Purpose:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of looked after children within Poplar Adolescent Unit.

### Rationale:

- Looked after children (LAC) are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of looked after children have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists when compared to their peers.
- Under the Section 22 of 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 under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects 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 Court 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.

All these groups are said to be '**Looked After Children**' (LAC).

### Previously looked-after children:

Following amendments made by the 2017 Act, section 20A of the 2008 Act and Section 2E of the Academies Act 2010 place duties on the management committee of a maintained school in England to:

- designate a member of staff to have responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after pupils who are no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order, or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales;
- ensure the designated person undertakes appropriate training; and

- ensure they and the designated teacher has regard any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This currently is, *'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children - Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities'* February 2018.

### **Introduction and ethos of Poplar Adolescent Unit:**

We aim to promote the educational attainment; achievement and welfare of looked after children and previously looked after children (henceforth referred to as 'looked after children in our policy). Our 'Ethos' states, *"we aim to prepare young people for re-integration by identifying their individual curriculum requirements and supporting their personal, social, health and emotional needs within a safe and nurturing environment"*.

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is: **Steph Yates**

The Assistant Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is: **Clare Varley**

### **The role of the Management Committee:**

The Management Committee is committed to providing a quality education for all its students based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of looked after children, particularly; "The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children" - Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities DfE, February 2018.

- **Allocation of Resources:**

The Management committee will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. We will work in partnership with Virtual Schools for students who are from home Local Authorities, to ensure that looked after children receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

The Management Committee must ensure the Designated teacher is an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff who accesses regular training opportunities.

### **Aims of the school. To:**

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for looked after children as for all children
- ensure that all looked after children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability
- ensure that looked after students take as full a part as possible in school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of looked after students are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment ensure that looked after students are involved, where possible, in decisions affecting their future provision.

## Role of the Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children

The designated teachers:

- Should be the central point of contact within the school
- Work with VSHs to promote their education
- Should take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils. This means making sure that all staff:
  - have high expectations of looked-after and previously looked-after children's 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 behaviour;
  - 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; and
  - 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 school.
- Designated teachers are also likely to have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation.
- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that:
  - they do not unintentionally put looked-after and previously looked-after children at a disadvantage;
  - there is effective induction for looked-after and previously looked-after children starting school, new to the school and new to care;
  - there are effective procedures in place to support a looked-after child's learning;
  - particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve;
  - 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;

- thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment;
  - when enrolling at the school, parents and guardians of previously looked-after children are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+; and
  - there are no barriers to looked-after children accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its pupils (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for looked-after children to attend meetings).
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children thrive.
  - Being a source of advice for teachers.
  - Working directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their parents, carers or guardians.
  - Having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary.
  - Working closely with the school's designated Safeguarding lead to ensure concerns are quickly and effectively responded to.

### **Monitoring the progress of Looked-After Children:**

This school assesses each looked after student's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The social worker for the looked after child initiates a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of the student joining the school, or of entering care, and ensures that the young person is actively involved. Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP review meetings and provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, or Virtual School and other agencies. The allocation and purpose of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) will be included within the PEP. Decisions should be jointly made about how PP+ will support improving the child's educational outcomes.

All PEPs are completed electronically through the online system provided by Welfare Call.

### **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are significantly more likely to have SEN than their peers. Of those with SEN, a significant proportion will have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC plans). It is vital that designated teachers are aware of the SEN needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children. Most children with SEN do not have an EHC plan. Instead, the school undertakes to meet their identified needs through SEN support. However, children with higher levels of need will have EHC plans. A significant proportion of looked-after and previously looked-after children fall in to one of these groups.

In respect of looked-after children, the designated teacher should ensure that:

- the special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice 0 to 25 years, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed; and
- children's PEPs work in harmony with their EHC plan to, coherently and comprehensively, set out how their needs are being met. Professionals should consider how the EHC plan adds to information about how education, health and care needs will be met without duplicating

information already in a child's care plan or PEP. Equally, the child's care plan, including PEP, should feed into the care assessment section of the EHC plan.

- Ensure that, with the help of the VSH, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable

### **Mental Health:**

Looked-after children and previously looked-after children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues than their peers. For example, they may struggle with executive functioning skills, forming trusting relationships, social skills, managing strong feelings (e.g. shame, sadness, anxiety and anger), sensory processing difficulties, foetal alcohol syndrome and coping with transitions and change. This can impact on their behaviour and education.

Designated teachers are not expected to be mental health experts; however, they have an important role in ensuring they and other school staff can identify signs of potential issues and understand where the school can draw on specialist services, such as CAMHS and educational psychologists. In addition, many schools have an officer responsible for making links with mental health services, with whom designated teachers can work closely. Where such an officer is available designated teachers should work with them, and the VSH to ensure that they, and other school staff, have the skills to:

- identify signs of potential mental health issues, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary, making full use of the SENCO and local authority support team where applicable; and
- understand the impact trauma, attachment disorder and other mental health issues can have on looked-after and previously looked-after children and their ability to engage in learning. It is also important that the designated teacher, officer with responsibility for links with mental health services, where the school has one, and other school staff are aware that these issues will continue to affect previously looked-after children, and that the school will need to continue to respond appropriately to their needs.

It is important to have a means of regularly measuring the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by looked-after and previously looked-after children. Currently, this is often done through:

- The Mental Functioning in Education assessment
- Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)
- Health of the Nation Outcome Scales for Children and Adolescents (HoNOSCA)

For previously looked-after children, designated teachers should work with senior leaders in the school, the officer responsible for links with mental health services where the school has one, and parents and carers to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of this group of children.

## **Record Keeping:**

The Designated Teacher knows all the looked-after children in school and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Virtual School specialist staff, teacher/support worker and social workers. The status of looked after children is identified within the school's information systems so that information is readily available to all key teachers and relevant associate staff. LAC are identified as a vulnerable group when tracking, monitoring and reporting on attainment and progress.

## **Links with external agencies/organisations:**

- We recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting LAC. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual LAC:
- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker
- Virtual School for Looked After Children (Looked After Children in Education Team)
- Other Virtual Schools for looked after children from other Local Authorities
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- CAMHS
- Education Welfare Officers
- Youth Offending Service
- External Learning Providers

## **LAC Policy Review and Evaluation:**

The Designated Teacher for LAC will undertake a thorough review and evaluation of the impact of the looked-after children policy and practice each year and report to the Management committee.

## **Sources of Additional Advice and Information:**

- *Promoting the education of looked after children* - Statutory guidance for local authorities DfE, July 2014
- *Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers*. Statutory guidance for local authorities, February 2018
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, DfE, 2019.
- *Mental health and behaviour in schools* DfE, June 2014
- *Promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children* DfE and DoHSC March 2015
- *Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care* NICE, November 2015
- *Improving mental health support for our children and young people* MySCIE, November 2017
- *Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper* DoHSC; DfE March 2018

**Date of Policy: February 2022**

**Next Review Date: September 2022**