

Looked After Children Policy

2023/24

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Consilium
Academies

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1.0 Policy statement

At Armthorpe Academy, we believe that all Looked After Children, and those previously Looked After, should have equitable access to excellent educational provision. We aim to ensure that we are a champion for our Looked After Children and we are committed to ensuring that they reach their potential in all areas. We take a proactive approach to support their success recognising the role of the Academy in supporting students in their educational, social and emotional development.

2.0 Policy Rationale

Armthorpe Academy recognises that Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children can have a range of experiences and may have experienced abuse or neglect. Despite having a broad range of abilities, similar to their peers, we recognise that Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children are at greater risk of exclusion compared to their peers. We recognise that, from national attainment and progress data, Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children are vulnerable to underachievement. Helping these students to fulfil their potential, academically, socially and personally is a key priority at Armthorpe Academy. We aim to provide a learning environment where all of our Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children can thrive academically, personally and socially to support students fulfil their potential and aspirations and we believe that we have a major part to play in supporting our students to achieve this.

3.0 Legal Definitions

Most Looked After Children will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or may be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the local authority.

The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the care of the Local Authority if they are provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child.

Previously Looked After Children are defined as those children who:

- Are no longer looked after by a local authority in English and Wales (as defined above) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship order or child arrangement order; or
- Were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

The Designated Teacher will satisfy themselves that a child is eligible for support by asking the child's parents/carers for evidence of their previously looked after status.

3.1 Legal Framework

From 1st September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children.

The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Looked After Children was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes.

Previous Legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Looked After Children.

Schools are required to:

- Ensure access to a broad and balanced education for all Looked After Children
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of Looked After Children
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusion for Looked After Children
- Ensure there is a qualified Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of all Looked After Children who are on the school roll
- Develop effective communication systems and protocols
- Promote the attendance of Looked After Children

4.0 Policy Aims and Objectives

At Armthorpe Academy, to ensure support for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children we will:

- Create a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of the Corporate Parent
- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children
- Make sure that students have access to a curriculum and education that is appropriate to their age and ability.
- Ensure that students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- Balance high levels of support with challenge and high expectations to ensure rapid progress
- Have a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them by liaising with carers, parents (as appropriate), Social Workers and other appropriate professionals as required to support educational and care issues
- Work alongside the Social Worker, Virtual School and other professionals to ensure that each Looked After Child has a personal educational plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person to make excellent progress
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the PEP

- Closely monitor each child's attendance and academic progress, working collaboratively and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes
- Ensure there is a well planned and coordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented
- Plan for future transitions effectively including factors such as transport

All staff and Governors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Looked After Children by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to complete tasks and responsibilities. Also, to establish and maintain appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures, both within the school and with other agencies.

In addition, Armthorpe Academy will:

- Challenge negative stereotypes wherever these may occur within the Academy
- Closely monitor the social and personal progress of all Looked After Children
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's Care status and the background and family history of children who are in Care, especially surrounding teaching and learning relating to the family
- Ensure a clear protocol is followed in the sharing of information, both within school and with outside agencies

5.0 Responsibilities of the Governing Body

All Governors should be fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. The governing body will:

- Appoint a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009 (DCSF, The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies [2009])
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that Academy staff and Governors are aware of the DfE Statutory Guidance
- Have knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Children Looked After, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance 2015 (Promoting the Education of Looked After Children)
- Appoint a Governor with specific responsibility for Looked After Children
- Take a proactive approach in cooperating with, and supporting, the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of Looked After Children attending the Academy
- Ensure that Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for and attainment of Looked After Children

The governing body should receive an annual report setting out:

- The number of Looked after and Previously Looked After Children on the Academy's roll
- Their attendance as a discreet group compared to other students
- Their progress and attainment, as a discrete group, compared to other students
- The number of suspensions and permanent exclusions
- The destination of Looked After Children who leave the Academy

This information should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

6.0 Responsibilities of the Headteacher

- Ensure that, in partnership with the Governing Body, the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of Looked After children
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting Looked After Children to achieve
- In partnership with the Governing Body, monitor the effectiveness of the role of the Designated Teacher
- Oversee the development of the policy on Looked After Children
- Wherever possible allocate Looked After Children a key worker
- Evaluate the attainment and progress of Looked After Children, discuss them at Senior Leadership Meetings and report these termly to the Governing Body and Virtual School

7.0 Responsibility of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

The name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children is Mrs Beth Donkin.

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- Promote the educational achievement of every child in Care on the Academy's roll
- Set up systems to regularly record the achievement of all Looked After Children, monitor their attainment and progress and, where progress is not being made, take appropriate actions to support the pupil
- Ensure effective expenditure of the Pupil Premium Plus funding
- Ensure the voice of the child is heard
- Build a good working relationship with the Virtual School, bringing to their attention any concerns
- Regularly report progress and attainment for every Looked After Child to the Virtual School
- Promote a whole school culture where personalised learning needs of every Looked After Child matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised
- Facilitate the training of school staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Looked After Children learn and develop
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Looked After Children at a disadvantage
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education
- Promote a culture in which Looked After Children are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken serious and are supporting to take responsibility for their own learning
- Be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual Looked After Children
- Ensure able students are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential
- Promote good home-academy links through effective communication with Carers
- Monitor the educational progress of Looked After Children and intervene and draw upon external agency support if required, when there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or other concerns
- Maintain records regarding all Looked After Children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child
- Establish a specific system for Looked after Children with regard to contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer

- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Looked After Children
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of all and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis
- Play 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 statutory reviews as required
- Serve as a named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and Social Care and ensure effective communication occurs between all relevant parties
- Ensure termly data requested by the Virtual School for Looked After Children is returned on time
- Ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between Key Stages and Year groups and schools where appropriate
- Ensure that each child who is in Care has where possible a carefully selected key worker

8.0 Admissions

We will:

- Prioritise the admission of Looked After Children, within our own admissions procedures in order to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Looked After Children
- Ensure that all Looked After Children meet the Designated Teacher who will identify any relevant issues whether these are pastoral or academic
- Ensure Looked After Children receive an appropriate induction to Armthorpe Academy so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers
- Ensure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are obtained and received
- Forward appropriate documentation, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition, where the receiving school is known
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience where possible

9.0 Attendance

We will:

- Implement a first day absence procedure for all Looked After Children
- Inform the carer, Social Worker and Virtual School, as well as any other appropriate parties, if there are any concerns around attendance or punctuality
- Acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success appropriately and setting relevant targets if these are required
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10.0 Personal Education Plans (PEP)

We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting in time for every Statutory Care Review that involves the Social Worker, Foster Carer, Child and parent (if appropriate) and any other appropriate and required professionals.
- We will seek the views of the child as to appropriate attendees in line with statutory guidance
- Have a high quality PEP for each Looked After Child which includes appropriate targets and has been quality assured by the Virtual School
- Contribute to the process to ensure that all Looked After Children have a high-quality PEP within 20 school days of starting at Armthorpe Academy. This will include educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other resulting appropriate assessment of the child.

- Make certain that educational recommendations in the PEP are followed by all staff and that Looked After Children have every available opportunity to be able to fulfil and achieve the targets they have been set
- Ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is carefully targeted to improve the educational outcomes of the Looked After Child as identified in the PEP

11.0 Pupil Premium Plus

Pupil Premium Plus will be used to support appropriate provision for individual Looked After Children. This will aim to meet the objectives set out in this policy and the individual child's PEP. We will work in partnership with the individual child's Virtual School to ensure that the child can receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve in all aspects of school life.

12.0 Exclusions

Wherever possible, we will try to avoid suspensions for Looked After Children. However, where this is unavoidable we will discuss it fully with the Social Worker, Virtual School and Carer to ensure that everyone is fully informed of the reasons for this decision.

If a suspension or exclusion is unavoidable, the re-integration meeting should consider all possible measures and resources that provide support and prevent further exclusions or suspensions.

13.0 Multi Agency Working

We will:

- Support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making
- The Designated Teacher will liaise closely with carers and the child's Social Worker on a variety of issues. It is important that positive messages around behaviour and achievement are shared
- There will be a clear understanding of the role and responsibility of staff in related to the child and the roles and responsibilities of other professionals involved
- Our staff will share positive perceptions and have high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child
- Be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of parents
- Our Designated Teacher will ensure that requests from the Local Authority for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned in a timely fashion to comply with statutory obligations
- Encourage each of our Looked After Children to access appropriate extra-curricular activities recognising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning
- Ensure that it is clear who can give permission for the child to participate in school trips and enrichment opportunities. This will be done at the first PEP meeting.

14.0 Confidentiality

Many Looked After Children do not want staff to be aware of their care status. We will maintain and respect their confidentiality in consultations with the social worker, carer, young person and other parties. Once this has been agreed, complete confidentiality is to be maintained and information of Looked After Children will be shared with staff on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff will do their utmost to maintain their confidentiality e.g. avoiding reference to their care status or PEP meetings in front of their peers.

15.0 Key Staff

There are a number of key staff who will be involved in supporting our Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. The names of these staff are below:

- Designated Teacher for Looked After Children – Mrs B Donkin – *Assistant Headteacher for SEND and Inclusion*
- Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr C Abraham – *Deputy Head Teacher for Personal Development*
- Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs T Brigden – Assistant Headteacher – Director of English
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs A Moulton - *Director of Pastoral Care*
- Pastoral Staff:
 - Mrs Rush - *Deputy SENCo*
 - Ms S Webb – *Head of House*
 - Mrs L Dawson-Uttley - *Head of House*
 - Mrs J Owen - *Head of House*

16.0 Training

Armthorpe Academy, will support the Designated Teacher in keeping up to date with development relating to the education of attainment of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. Our staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work effectively and productively with Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. This includes those who are underachieving or may be at risk of underachieving and those who may have other additional needs.

17.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is **January 2026**.

In between updates, the policy will be updated when necessary to reflect local and national changes.