



Designated Teacher for Looked After or Previously Looked After Children Policy

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**** This policy is being reviewed. This version will remain current until the review is complete ****

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1. Statement of Intent

QEGSMAT (the Trust and its schools) recognise that the educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after children (LAC) and previously LAC* are of real concern. Children who are looked after require additional support in order to improve their situation. QEGSMAT endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety and individual care and attention for all its pupils and students.

With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage children to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their educational, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils and students enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for LAC or previously LAC realistically and use the school's resources efficiently to ensure their needs are met.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils and students develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

This policy has been impact assessed in the light of all other Trust policies and the Equality Act 2010.

* For the remainder of the document LAC and previously LAC will be referred to as (P) LAC unless deliberately specified separately.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to 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 (2019) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after children's regulations'.
- DfE (2023) 'Exclusions from maintained academies, academies and pupil referral units in England'.
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school or Trust policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Home School Agreement
- Anti-Bullying Protocol
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Data Protection Policy

3. 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, where 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" are defined as:

- Children who have been but are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or 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).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Trust has a coherent policy for (P) LAC.
- Reviewing the Trust policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Receiving regular safeguarding reports; this includes the number of LAC in the school.

The **virtual school head (VSH)** is responsible for:

- 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 (P) LAC.
- Working with the school 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 previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the Headteacher and designated teacher if they have a pupil/student on roll who is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers and independent reviewing officers 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 educational achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of LAC through the authority’s corporate parenting structures.

Headteachers are responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for (P) LAC and ensuring they receive appropriate training.

- 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.
- Ensuring PP+ for previously-LAC is managed effectively.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each LAC'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 (P) LAC safe.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns against (P) LAC.
- Ensuring (P) LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
- Ensuring they feedback to the Director of Education regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an annual basis.

The designated teacher for (P) 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 (P) LAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of (P) LAC at the school; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
- 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 PEP is developed and used in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored.
- Liaising with the SENDCO to ensure all pupil/student needs are met.
- Being vigilant in observing any potential safeguarding concerns that could arise surrounding (P) LAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm and reporting these to the DSL as soon as they arise.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the Headteacher to submit an annual report to the governing board, which details the progress of all (P) LAC.

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 (P) LAC 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 SENDCO is responsible for:

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

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of (P) LAC and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards (P) LAC.
- Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding (P) LAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible.
- Promoting the self-esteem of (P) LAC.

5. Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All LAC 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 child 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 child's full range of education and development needs, including as appropriate:

- Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age (primary schools).
- 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 the school because of suspension or exclusion.
- Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
- 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-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a (P) LAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of pupil premium plus (PP+) funding to improve their attainment. Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the child.

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.

6. Working with Agencies and the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH)

- The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- The school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, hold their annual review of LAC with their statutory care review.
- The school will work with other agencies to exchange information, such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues, taking prompt action, where necessary, to safeguard (P) LAC.
- The designated teacher for (P) LAC will communicate with the VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP.
- Through the designated teacher, the school 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 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 school.
- The designated teacher will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.
- The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of (P) LAC.

7. Training

The designated teacher and other staff involved in the education of (P) LAC will receive the appropriate training, this includes information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities

- Supporting pupils/students to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment including GCSE options
- Safeguarding

8. Safeguarding

The Trust recognises that many (P) LAC 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 children 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 (P) LAC as soon as possible.

Where a (P) LAC 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.

Headteachers will implement appropriate pastoral support services throughout their school to ensure that the welfare of (P) LAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will report to the DSL any concerns they have over (P) LAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a (P) LAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils/students who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

9. Pupil/Student Mental Health

(P) 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 school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on (P) LAC, and know how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

10. Exclusions/Suspensions

Past experiences of (P) LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained academies, academies and pupil referral units in England'.

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity and as far as possible, schools 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 aim to improve this behaviour.

Exclusion will only be used as a last resort, after the school and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the child's education in the event of exclusion.

Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy and/or local procedures or where allowing the child to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

11. Information Sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of (P) LAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on (P) LAC and how data will remain secure.
- How pupils/students and parents/carers 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 school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils/students is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils/students move.