



PARKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY

Dated: January 2024

Review date: January 2026

Headteacher.....

Chair of Governors.....

Embrace Opportunity. Nurture Success. Inspire Futures



Parkside Middle School Children Looked After Policy

Scope of this Policy

This Policy applies to all Children Looked After and Previously Children Looked After. It must be read in conjunction with the following government guidance documents:

- Promoting the Education of Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, February 2018)
- The Designated Teacher for Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children, Statutory Guidance on their roles and responsibilities (DfE, February 2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2018)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory Guidance for Organisations who work with and Support Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (DfE, 2015)
- Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England: A Guide for those with Legal Responsibilities in Relation to Exclusion (DfE, 2017)
- Ensuring a Good Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School because of Health Needs (DfE, 2013)
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England (DfE, 2014)
- Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance (2016)
- Elective Home Education; Guidelines for Local Authorities (2013)
- Alternative Provision (DfE, 2013)

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

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2023
- School Admissions Policy

- Behaviour for Learning & Positive Relationships Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Single Equality Policy

Background

There has been concern since the mid-seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. At the same time, attention was being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995, a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievements of children in care and drew attention to the following points.

- Poor exam success rate in comparison with the general population.
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements.
- Lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework.
- Underachievement in further and higher education.

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to set out how the school will meet the needs of CLA and PCLA to meet its statutory and educational responsibilities.

Statement of Intent

- To facilitate their integration into a new school.
- To monitor and evaluate their progress in all aspects of school life.
- 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 requirement of legislation.
- Plan appropriate support for CLA/PCLA and use the school's resources efficiently in order to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- Help pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.
- To support them during times of difficulty.

Definition of Children Looked After

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now refers to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'Looked-after' by the local authority.

Accommodated children also include those in respite care, if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days in a year.

It is important not to confuse a child's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- With parents, under the supervision of the Social Services Department.

An accommodated child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- Or even, very unusually, with parents.

The Designated Named Teacher

The designated named teacher for Children Looked After at Parkside is Mrs Rebecca Jenkin.

The role of the named teacher includes the following:

The designated named teacher is a named senior member and qualified teacher of the school who will act as central point of contact. This helps to make sure that the school plays its role to the full in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.

This role involves, working with Virtual School Head teachers to promote the education of Children Looked-after and Children Previously Looked-after learning needs of every Child Looked-after and Previously Looked-after matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

The designated named teacher takes lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after 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 learning of Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after 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 Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after 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, Virtual School Head teachers 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 Children Previously Looked-after, 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.

The designated teacher also has a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after, either directly or through appropriate delegation. This is achieved by:

- having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of Children Looked-after's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary;
- contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that: they do not unintentionally put Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after at a disadvantage;
- ensuring that there is effective induction for Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after starting school, new to the school and new to care;
- ensuring that there are effective procedures in place to support Looked-after'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;
- transition to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from first to middle 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 Children Previously Looked-after are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract Pupil Premium Plus (PP+);
- there are no barriers to Children Looked-after 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 Children Looked-after to attend meetings).

At Parkside Middle School we promote a culture where the educational achievement of Children Looked-after and Children Previously Looked-after is promoted. This is achieved by:

- enabling pupils 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;
- prioritising in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support;
- ensuring pupils are encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system;
- ensuring pupils believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs; and
- creating an environment where pupils feel confident to discuss difficult issues (such as SEND, bullying, attendance).

The designated teacher supported by the Curriculum and Inclusion Teams will provide information, advice and guidance to staff about:

- differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are Looked-after or Previously Looked-after; and
- the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after, 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;
- promote good home-school links;
- support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians;
- ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy; and
- safeguarding concerns regarding Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after are quickly and effectively responded to by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

When supporting Children Previously Looked-after, the designated named teacher may liaise with the Previously Looked-after Advisor within the Local Authority to provide information and advice to parents, carers and designated teachers on how to meet the needs of these children. This may be general information, including training opportunities or advice that is child specific. The designated teacher will involve parents and guardians in decisions affecting their child's education.

- To ensure that all staff, teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children who are 'Looked-after' and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome these.
- To inform members of staff of the general education needs of children who are Looked-after, and to promote the involvement of these pupils in the full range of school activities.
- To hold a supervisory brief for all pupils who are Looked-after.
- To monitor the educational progress of all pupils who are Looked-after.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with education services, carers and Social Services Departments (SSD).
- To ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan and to their PEP.
- To liaise with staff and outside agencies regarding any child protection issues.
- To attend or contribute to SSD care planning meetings.
- To develop knowledge of SSD/Education procedures by attending training.

Governing Body

The Governing body should, through the designated teacher, hold the school to account on how it supports its Children Looked-after and Previously Looked-after (including how the PP+ is used) and their level of progress.

The Named Governor

The named Governor is Mr Adrian Jewell. The named Governor should report to the Governing Body annually.

- The number of pupils who are Looked-after in the school.
- A comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group compared with other pupils.
- The level of suspensions/permanent exclusions.

The named Governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that pupils who are Looked-after have equal access to:

- The National Curriculum;
- Extra-curricular activities;
- Additional educational support if needed.

Responsibility for CLA in School

It is important that all staff who are in contact with the child are aware that they are being Looked-after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer

of this information should be that of the Headteacher and/or the designated named teacher. This would include classroom support assistants if they are working directly with the child and teachers covering absences where this is deemed necessary by the Headteacher or the designated named teacher.

All staff are responsible for:

- being aware of CLA and PCLA 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 bullying towards CLA and PCLA;
- promoting the self-esteem and general well-being of CLA and PCLA.

Confidentiality

Information on children who are Looked-after will be shared with school staff on a “need to know” basis.

Virtual School for Looked-after Children

All local authorities must have a virtual school head (VSH) who is in charge of promoting the educational achievement for CLA/PCLA. The Virtual Headteacher’s role is to know how CLA are doing and to help school staff and social workers to find out about extra needs of these children and any additional support available to them. The Virtual School ensures that schools, social workers, carers and other professionals understand the statutory responsibilities they all have and are aware of best practice.

Safeguarding

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by familiarizing themselves with Parkside Middle School’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023).

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records should be requested from the pupil’s previous school. A meeting will be held with the carer/parent/Social Worker to share the information and clarify contact arrangements. Normal procedures should be followed regarding home/school agreements and induction.

The pupil should be involved in the arrangements made regarding them, as appropriate to their age and understanding. It should be emphasised that the school, social workers and carers are all working together to promote their education. It is important to consider the child’s view of what they would like others to know about their circumstances.

On admission, the child will meet with the designated named teacher and their class teacher. Staff will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure that every effort is made to ensure that the child feels comfortable at the school.

In the first PEP meeting. The designated named teacher will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book).

Communication with other Agencies

The Social Worker and the named teacher should, ideally meet when the child becomes Looked-after or when the child enters the school. This will enable information to be shared concerning the child's progress.

School should ensure that copies of all reports are forwarded to the Social Worker in addition to the carer. All agencies should try to co-ordinate their review meetings and to combine them where possible. Agencies need to exchange information between reviews if there are significant changes in the child's circumstances. This could include a school exclusion, change of care placement or attendance issues.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each pupil who is Looked-after will have a Personal Education Plan. This will identify specific areas of concern and achievable targets.

Areas for consideration could include:

- Attendance;
- Achievement;
- Behaviour;
- Homework;
- Involvement in extra-curricular activities;
- Special needs;
- Relationships with care plan;
- Development needs (skills, knowledge, subject areas);
- Long term plans and aspirations.

Celebrating and Recording a Child's Achievements

Children's educational (and other) achievements must be acknowledged at one or more of the following times: at Looked-after Reviews; in the PEP, at school-based meetings; in school reports; and after exams. A CLA's educational attainment at all stages must be recorded, including on the electronic record and in the PEP. The Virtual School Head will hold annual celebration events for Looked-after children and staff working with Looked-after children, who have been nominated under the different categories.

Liaison with all appropriate outside agencies will be undertaken in the assessment and review processes as necessary.

When a Child is Absent from School

There should be clear communications in place in order to safeguard the child and this should be evidenced and reviewed on a regular basis. This must be in conjunction with the child's wider care plan and local and national guidance.

- The school must notify the carers/social worker if a child is not in school no later than the close of register (or agreed time) for the relevant session.
- If the child has planned absence, then this must be shared and agreed with in advance and with relevant professionals.
- If the child has gone 'missing' the police must be immediately notified by the person who has first discovered the missing episode and this must be in accordance with the wider care plan. Any child who has gone missing must be offered a Missing Person's Return Interview.
- Where the absence is unauthorised there must be an immediate meeting with all relevant persons, including the child and should then be convened to address:
 - The reasons for the absence;
 - How to ensure the child returns to education as soon as possible;
 - What additional support the child may need.
- Where the child has been absent for 10 consecutive days or more the school must inform the Local Authority via the Children's Services Portal.

School Exclusions

Where the school has concerns about a child who is Looked-after's behaviour, the Virtual School Education Coordinator must be informed and, where necessary, involved at the earliest opportunity. This is to enable the Virtual School Education Coordinator and Virtual School Head teacher, working with other professionals to help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion being necessary.

Consideration must be given to any additional assessment and support (such as additional help for the classroom teacher, one-to-one therapeutic work or a suitable alternative placement) to meet the needs of the child. Additional arrangements must be identified within the child's PEP actions taken if the child is at risk of exclusion to minimise any disruption to the child's provision and to ensure it remains suitable.

Where a child who is Looked-after is excluded from school, the child's social worker must inform the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

Suspensions

Suspension from school must be a last resort for children who are Looked-after;

therefore, it is important to work with the school and carers to intervene as soon as a child's behaviour becomes a cause for concern.

Where a child is suspended from school, the school will provide work for the child for the first five days of the suspension.

- The social worker must liaise with the residential staff/carers about suitable arrangements for supervising the child doing the schoolwork during the day and ensuring the child does not go out during school hours.
- With effect from the sixth day the school must provide a place for the child to be educated.
- The school will communicate the reasons for the suspension to the residential staff/carer and the social worker. Whoever is the most appropriate one to do so, will discuss this with the child.
- The social worker must inform the parents, if appropriate.
- The social worker, in consultation with the child and parents, must seek advice as to whether to appeal against the decision to exclude the child.
- If the child receives a suspension and is suspended for more than five days, the social worker must ensure a reintegration meeting is held within the five days to discuss his/her return and how best this can be supported.

Permanent Exclusions

When a child is permanently excluded but is remaining in the same foster or residential placement, the social worker will liaise urgently with the local education service in which the child is living to find an alternative school placement. Again, for the first five days of the exclusion the school will provide work and the child must not be out unaccompanied in public during school hours. From the sixth day the local authority will arrange for a place for the child to be educated.

In the case of permanent exclusion or where a suspension exceeds 15 days or more per term, the Governing Board of the school must be held within fifteen days to review the decision made by the Headteacher to suspend or exclude the child. If the Governing Board decides to uphold the decision to permanently exclude, an Independent Review can be made within fifteen school days. The request for review can be completed by a foster carer or anyone who has Parental Responsibility for the child as determined in the Children's Act 1989 and Education Act 1996.

Alternative Provision

The use of alternative provision must only be used in the following circumstances:

- to improve behaviour (direction to off-site provision to modify behaviour does not require consent of parents/carers under s29A Education Act 2002 or in the case of an academy their general powers in their Articles of Association);

- to add value to the child's existing provision (in such cases it is expected that the child will be attending their home school for a set subjects).

In each case there must be effective monitoring arrangements in place by schools to ensure attendance is regular and the child is progressing as well, or better than expected to be. Reviews of the provision must be no less than 30 school days.

The objectives of the provision, days/times of attendance and duration of provision must be clearly set out from the start as part of the PEP review. Those persons responsible for arranging the provision must ensure that the provision is compliant with regulations underpinning 'illegal schools' and that there are appropriate safeguards in place.

Part-Time Educational Arrangements

Part-time education, as a whole, is illegal, as children are expected to be in full-time (25 hours per week); however, there are exceptional circumstances where a short-term reduction may be appropriate. Where a school plans to reduce a child's timetable an immediate review of the PEP is required, and corporate parent consent from the Virtual School must be sought prior to initiating the arrangement.

School Transport

In order to maintain continuity of school, those with responsibility for school transport must be approached to provide assistance with transport. A decision will be made taking into account the child's age and the distance from the child's address to the nearest suitable school.

Where the child does not qualify for transport in accordance with the Local Authority's Education Transport Policy, consideration should be given to other possibilities e.g. funding from other agencies etc.

Educational establishments which are not easily accessible should not be chosen. Where they are, transport arrangements and assessment of viability must be completed on a regular basis.

Pupils with SEND

Support for CLA with SEND, who do not need an EHC Plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews. The SENDCo, class teacher, designated named teacher and specialists will involve parents/carers/ social workers as appropriate when considering interventions to support the child's progress. If appropriate, the Virtual School Head teacher will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for PCLA.

All staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and PCLA with additional educational needs by:

- having high expectations;
- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria (in line with the DfE Designated Teacher for Looked-after and Previously-Looked-after children, 28th February 2018);
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the expectation of progress in each academic year, as agreed in the PEP.

Pupil Mental Health

CLA and PCLA are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues, which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated named teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

Children and Young People with Medical Conditions

From 1 September 2014, Governing Boards have a statutory duty to make arrangements to support pupils at school with medical conditions. For more information see Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions (2014): Statutory Guidance for Governing Board of Maintained Schools and Proprietors of Academies in England (DfE).

Where Governing Boards are unable to make suitable arrangements, the Local Authority has a duty to intervene if a child is to miss 15 days or more regardless of whether this is consecutively or not.

The Senior Education Adviser for Vulnerable Learners is the named officer responsible for identifying children with medical needs who wouldn't otherwise receive a suitable education, unless alternative arrangements are made for them.

Member of staff responsible: Mrs Rebecca Jenkin

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Useful Resources and Further Reading

Useful resources and external organisations:

- A good practice guide for parents: Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children (Adoption UK);
- A good practice guide for schools: understanding and meeting the needs of children who are Looked-after, fostered, adopted or otherwise permanently placed (PAC, 2013);
- Become (formerly The Who Cares Trust);
- National Association of Virtual School Heads;
- National Network for the Education of Care Leavers - Higher education activities and resources for care leavers, children in care and those who support them;
- The National Children's Bureau Research;
- The impact of virtual schools on the educational progress of Looked-after children (Ofsted, 2012);
- Education Matters in Care: A report by the independent cross-party inquiry into the educational attainment of Looked-after children in England;
- Information on attachment awareness for schools – Bath Spa University;
- The Educational Progress of Looked-after Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data – Rees Centre;
- Looked-after children: good practice in schools (Ofsted report 2008) Practice Tools;
- Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) teaching-learning-toolkit. This provides useful information and evidence on effectiveness of types of support which can be facilitated by pupil premium funding;
- National Consortium for Examination Results (NCER): VSH management information tool;

The NCER NOVA CLA Reports is a new national system to measure the educational performance and progress of children and young people whilst in care at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. The system matches social care and educational data from the 2016 SSDA903 national database and National Pupil Database; and reports on some of the factors that are shown to make the most difference in improving the outcomes of children in care. The tool operates across local authority boundaries to ensure that children placed in one local authority and educated in another are included in the reporting functionality.

Mental Health

- **Adoption Support Fund (ASF)**
The ASF was established to help pay for essential therapeutic services for adoptive families as and when they need it. It is available for children up to, and including, the age of 21 (or 25 with an EHC Plan) who have been adopted from local authority care in England or adopted from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland but living in England. From 1 April 2016, the Fund became available for intercountry adoptions (once the placement has been made and the child is in England) and for Special Guardians who care for children who were Looked-after immediately prior to the Special Guardianship Order.
- **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 guideline, 2015).** This guideline covers the identification, assessment and treatment of attachment difficulties in children and young people up to age 18 who are adopted from care, in special guardianship, Looked-after by local authorities in foster homes (including kinship foster care), residential settings and other accommodation, or on the edge of care.
- **Mental health and behaviour in schools guidance (Department for Education, 2016).**
- **Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire.** Information for researchers and professionals about SDQs.
- **MindEd.** Online training materials on mental health for families and professionals working.
- **Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health: A Green Paper.** A green paper setting out measures to improve mental health support for children and young people.