Staffordshire University Academies Trust

Education of Looked After Children Policy

Last reviewed	**September 2026**
Reviewed by	**DCEO/DLSI**
Approved by	**Internally – DLSI & CEO**
Date of approval	**September 2026**
Policy owner	**DCEO/DLSI**
Location	**MS Teams**

This is a Trust model policy template. Academies must: - Insert school-specific details where indicated - Ensure all referenced policies reflect local titles - Seek appropriate local approval prior to implementation

Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for LAC and PLAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.

Horton St Michael's CE First School 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 use the school's resources efficiently to ensure the school meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life.
- The school recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff will maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" and, where appropriate, "it could happen here to this child". Decisions affecting looked after and previously looked after children will always be made in their best interests, recognising that these pupils may be at greater risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation and poor educational outcomes.
- Help pupils develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

The school recognises that looked after and previously looked after children may also have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where required so that no child is disadvantaged because of disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

Corporate Parenting Principles

Although the school is not a corporate parent, it recognises the Corporate Parenting Principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (including the Corporate Parenting Principles) and will work collaboratively with local authorities, the Virtual School Head, carers, social workers and other partner agencies to promote the educational achievement, stability, safety, health and wellbeing of looked after children. The school is committed to maintaining high aspirations for every looked after child, listening to and acting upon their views, promoting positive relationships, helping them to access opportunities, and supporting successful transitions into adulthood.

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
- Academies Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 (including the Corporate Parenting Principles)
- 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 (2026) Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement
- DfE (2026) Keeping Children Safe in Education (Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges)
- DfE (2026) Working together to safeguard children

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

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Remote Learning Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

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, part 4.
- Children or young people who are placed in foster care, children's residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under the Children Act 1989, sections 20 and 21.
- Children or young people subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- Children or young people who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.
- Children or young people who are subject to a placement order.

Previously looked-after children (PLAC)" are children who were looked after by a local authority in England or Wales, but ceased to be looked after because they became subject to an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangements order. This also includes children who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.

The school recognises that previously looked-after status may only be known where parents or guardians choose to disclose it. Any disclosure will be handled sensitively and confidentially, and information will only be shared with staff who need it to support the child's education, welfare or safeguarding.

2 Roles and responsibilities

The Academy Trust, as proprietor, retains overall responsibility for ensuring statutory duties relating to looked-after and previously looked-after children are fulfilled. In accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, Local Academy Councils provide local oversight and challenge regarding the implementation of this policy.

In accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, the Local Academy Council is responsible for local oversight and challenge, including:

- Complying with their duties under legislation, having regard to KCSIE guidance and ensuring that policies, procedures and training in the school are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- Adopting a whole-school approach to safeguarding arrangements and child protection, ensuring it is central to the school's processes.
- Holding the school to account on how it supports LAC and PLAC, including how the Pupil Premium+ (PP+) is used and their level of progress.
- Working with the LA to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are LAC or PLAC.
- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of LAC and PLAC.
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring that there are no unintended barriers to the admission of LAC and PLAC either at normal transition or any other point of the school year.
- Appointing a designated teacher (DT), who is appropriately qualified to support the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC has access to appropriate training, resources and support.
- 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.
- Ensuring that there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying and reporting possible safeguarding or mental health concerns amongst LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC 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 school.
- Ensuring they receive feedback from the headteacher regarding the effectiveness of the policy on an **annual** basis.

The virtual school head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance, attainment, progress and educational provision of children looked after by their local authority, including those placed outside the authority, as though they attended a single school.
- 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.
- Working with the school to ensure looked-after children in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for looked-after children for whom the authority is responsible.
- Acting as a source of advice and information for parents and guardians of previously looked-after children.
- Managing Pupil Premium Plus funding for looked-after children in consultation with the child's school and ensuring its use is linked to the child's identified needs and Personal Education Plan.
- Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
    - Maintain an up-to-date roll of looked-after children for whom the authority is responsible and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
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    - Inform the headteacher 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 independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's personal education plan (PEP) and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP.
    - Ensure that up-to-date, effective and high-quality PEPs, focused on educational outcomes, are maintained for all looked-after children.
    - Avoid drift and delays in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive, multi-agency co-operation.

  - 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 school attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.
- In respect of previously looked-after children, the VSH will:
  - respond to parental requests for advice and information
  - respond to requests for advice and information from the DT, and build a good working relationship with the DT
  - make general advice and information available to the school to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of PLAC, including promoting good practice on identifying and meeting their needs, and guidance on effective use of the PP+

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC.
- Allowing the designated teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.

Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, and reporting annually to the Academy Trust and the Local Academy Council in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation on the following:

- The number of looked after and previously looked after children on roll (where disclosure has been made for previously looked after children).
  Educational attainment and progress compared with other pupil groups, where appropriate.
- Attendance, persistent absence and severe absence trends. Suspensions and permanent exclusions, together with any emerging behavioural themes.
- The quality and timeliness of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for looked after children.
- The use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding, ensuring expenditure has supported improved educational outcomes.
- Safeguarding, wellbeing and attendance themes or trends, whilst maintaining pupil confidentiality.
- The effectiveness of multi-agency working with the Virtual School Head, social workers and other relevant agencies.
- Training undertaken by the Designated Teacher and other relevant staff during the year.
- Any significant strengths, areas for development and planned actions to further improve outcomes for looked after and previously looked after children.
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring Pupil Premium Plus for previously looked-after children is managed effectively as part of the school's wider pupil-premium strategy, taking account of the individual and collective needs of the eligible cohort.
- Promoting the advantages of actively challenging negative stereotypes of LAC.

- Understanding the role of the VSH and working with them to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.

The designated teacher for LAC and PLAC is responsible for:

Working with the parents or guardians of previously looked-after children, where they have chosen to disclose the child's status, to identify educational needs and agree appropriate support.

  - Promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC.
  - Working with the VSH and social worker to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children and to develop, implement and review their PEP.
  - Discuss how funding can be used to support the pupil's progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.

- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies affecting LAC and PLAC to ensure the policies meet the needs of LAC and PLAC.
- 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 PLAC.
- Taking lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand what can affect how LAC and PLAC learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils.
- The Designated Teacher and DSL will meet regularly to review educational progress, attendance, safeguarding concerns, wellbeing, PEP actions and emerging risks affecting looked after and previously looked after children to ensure a coordinated safeguarding response.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC 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 school's main educational point of contact for social workers, the Virtual School Head (VSH), carers, parents (where appropriate) and other relevant professionals in relation to the education, progress and welfare of looked after and previously looked after children.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC and PLAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring that LAC and PLAC 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 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 child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- 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 headteacher to prepare an annual report on the implementation of this policy and the educational outcomes of looked-after and previously looked-after

children. The report will be provided to the Academy Trust and the Local Academy Council in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, to support Trust-level assurance and local oversight and challenge.

- Working alongside the Attendance Lead to ensure attendance concerns are identified early and addressed through a safeguarding-led approach.
- Ensuring persistent absence, severe absence and patterns of absence are considered alongside safeguarding information when assessing risk.

The Designated Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Attendance Lead will review attendance information for looked after and previously looked after children on a regular basis to identify emerging patterns of absence, persistent absence, severe absence, lateness or other indicators of vulnerability. Attendance information will be considered alongside safeguarding, wellbeing, behaviour and educational progress to ensure that concerns are identified early and appropriate intervention is implemented in collaboration with carers, social workers, the Virtual School Head and other relevant professionals.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC and PLAC'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 SENCO is responsible for:

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

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and PLAC and providing them with support and encouragement, including being 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.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Developing an understanding of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the LA looking after the pupil.
- Understanding the importance of involving the pupil's parents, guardians or carers in decisions affecting their child's education.
- Being a contact for parents, guardians or carers who want advice or have concerns about their pupil's progress at school.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying 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 PLAC.
- Understanding that online safety forms part of safeguarding and considering online risks, including online grooming, coercion, exploitation, harmful content, online abuse and misuse of technology when supporting looked after and previously looked after children.

[Note: LAs are required to employ a VSH to ensure its duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged. The school is not responsible or accountable for the actions and responsibilities of this person. The following information therefore provides summary information on the role of the VSH and what level of support the school can expect when working together to promote the educational achievement of this LAC and PLAC.]

3 Best Interests of the Child

In all decisions relating to looked after and previously looked after children, the school will place the child's welfare and best interests at the centre of decision making.

Staff recognise that safeguarding, educational achievement, emotional wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and inclusion are intrinsically linked and decisions will take account of the child's lived experiences, voice and individual circumstances.

The school will ensure that looked after and previously looked after children are given meaningful opportunities to express their wishes, feelings and views about decisions affecting them, in a manner appropriate to their age, understanding and communication needs. Staff will take these views into account alongside professional advice and statutory responsibilities when planning support, reviewing progress and making decisions in the child's best interests.

4 Personal education plan (PEP)

All LAC must have a care plan or a detention placement plan where the child is remanded to youth detention, and that PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.

There is no statutory requirement for previously looked-after children to have a PEP. Where appropriate, and with the agreement of the child’s parents or guardians, the school may use a separate education plan or review process to identify needs, agree support and monitor progress.

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 school is aware that, wherever a pupil is placed, it is the responsibility of their social worker, supported by the authority’s VSH, to initiate a PEP and arrange to meet with the school and the pupil’s carer.

The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child. The PEP will be reviewed termly.

For children looked after by Staffordshire County Council, the school will follow Staffordshire Virtual School PEP arrangements and quality expectations, including the completion and review of appropriate SMART educational targets and evaluation of the impact of previous targets.

The DT will liaise with the VSH and social workers to share information and act as the in-school lead on how the PEP is developed and used to make sure the pupil's progress towards education targets is monitored.

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 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 pupil's PEP are implemented without delay.

The school is aware that PP+ for PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school, and will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of the cohort of LAC, or PLAC, and according to their needs.

PP+ is not a personal budget for an individual pupil. PP+ will be used in accordance with current conditions of grant and evidence-informed approaches to address identified educational needs. Funding may support individual, small-group or wider provision where this represents the most effective use of the grant. For looked-after children, funding may be managed or pooled by the local authority or Virtual School Head and should be linked to identified PEP outcomes. For previously looked-after children, the school will use the grant to support the educational needs of the eligible cohort.

The DT will communicate with the VSH and agree on how PP+ can be used effectively to accommodate the pupil's educational attainment and progress.

The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:

- Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age and meets their identified developmental needs.
- On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with school work.
- Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in 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 designated teacher will ensure that the PEP of each looked-after child records how any PP+ funding is being used and how the child is benefiting from the funded provision. For previously looked-after children, the school will evaluate the impact of PP+ through its pupil-premium strategy and appropriate individual monitoring, without identifying individual pupils in published information.

5 Transition Planning

The school recognises that educational transitions can be periods of increased vulnerability for looked after and previously looked after children. Particular attention will be given to supporting children through key transitions, including admission to the school, changes in care placement, in-year school moves, transition between key stages, transition to post-16 education and any return to school following a period of absence.

The Designated Teacher will work collaboratively with the Virtual School Head, social worker, carers, parents (where appropriate), receiving schools and other relevant professionals to ensure that transition arrangements are carefully planned, information is shared appropriately and support is put in place to minimise disruption to education, safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing and emotional health.

Where appropriate, transition arrangements and agreed actions will be reflected within the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) or other relevant support plans to ensure continuity of educational provision and promote positive outcomes.

6 Working with agencies and the virtual school head (VSH)

The school is aware that strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of LAC and PLAC.

The school will work proactively and collaboratively with other professionals in other agencies and organisations in line with the framework of expectations outlined in the government's Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance document by:

- Collaborating with services to achieve shared goals and share information.
- Learning from evidence and sharing perspective to evaluate provision.
- Prioritising and sharing resources depending on pupils' needs.
- Celebrating inclusivity and diversity and challenging discrimination.
- Mutually and constructively challenging others' assumptions in a respectful manner.

Where there are differences of professional opinion regarding the safety, welfare, educational provision or support for a looked after or previously looked after child, the school will respectfully and professionally challenge decisions where necessary. The school will follow the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership escalation and resolution procedure, the Staffordshire Continuum of Need or current threshold arrangements, and other applicable local multi-agency safeguarding procedures.

Where appropriate, the school will work with Early Help, Family Help where locally implemented, and other relevant multi-agency services and partners to identify emerging

needs, provide coordinated support and reduce the risk of concerns escalating. The school recognises that providing timely help at the earliest opportunity can improve outcomes for looked after and previously looked after children and will contribute to multi-agency planning, assessments and reviews where appropriate.
The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the social workers of LAC and PLAC, in addition to carers or residential social workers.

The school will coordinate their review meetings; for example, align school review processes with statutory care planning and PEP review arrangements wherever possible.

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 LAC and PLAC.

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed between the VSH and the school, to ensure challenging behaviour is managed in the most effective way for that individual child.

The designated teacher for LAC and PLAC 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 PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. The school will work with the VSH to manage allocation of PP+ for the benefit of our cohort of LAC, or PLAC, and according to their needs

PP+ is not a personal budget for an individual pupil. PP+ will be used in accordance with current conditions of grant and evidence-informed approaches to address identified educational needs. Funding may support individual, small-group or wider provision where this represents the most effective use of the grant. For looked-after children, funding may be managed or pooled by the local authority or Virtual School Head and should be linked to identified PEP outcomes. For previously looked-after children, the school will use the grant to support the educational needs of the eligible cohort.
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For a looked-after child, the designated teacher will work with the VSH and social worker to agree how PP+ may be used to meet identified PEP outcomes. For a previously looked-after child, the school will determine the use of PP+ in consultation with the child's parents or guardians where appropriate.

The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and PLAC.

7 Training

The designated teacher will undertake appropriate induction and receive regular updated training to maintain the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role effectively in

accordance with statutory guidance. Other school staff involved in supporting looked after and previously looked after children will also receive appropriate safeguarding and role-specific training, including information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- GCSE options
- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding
- Attachment and trauma-informed practice
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Online safety risks and digital safeguarding
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Attendance as a safeguarding issue
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Professional curiosity and recognising disguised compliance.

The Academy Trust will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for relevant staff to receive the training, knowledge and support necessary to safeguard and promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. The Local Academy Council will provide local oversight and challenge regarding the implementation and effectiveness of these arrangements, in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.

8 Safeguarding

The school is aware that LAC and PLAC most commonly become looked after because of abuse and/or neglect and because of this, they can be at potentially greater risk in relation to 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.

The school recognises that safeguarding responsibilities extend across all aspects of school life. Robust safer recruitment procedures, appropriate staff induction, safeguarding training, staff supervision, professional conduct, whistleblowing arrangements and procedures for managing allegations or concerns about adults working with children all contribute to protecting looked after and previously looked after children. These arrangements are set out in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school recognises that looked after and previously looked after children may also be at increased risk of child-on-child abuse, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, serious

violence, county lines involvement, online abuse, inappropriate use of technology, mental health difficulties, missing education and attendance concerns. Staff will maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and report concerns immediately in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will also consider the protective factors that promote resilience, emotional wellbeing and positive outcomes for looked after and previously looked after children. This includes recognising trusted relationships, positive school engagement, stable placements, supportive peer relationships and participation in extracurricular activities, whilst ensuring these strengths do not reduce professional curiosity where safeguarding concerns exist.

The school recognises that safeguarding risks may occur outside the home and school environment. When assessing concerns relating to looked after and previously looked after children, staff will consider contextual safeguarding risks, including peer groups, friendships, neighbourhoods, transport, community settings and online environments. The school will work with social workers, carers, the Virtual School Head and other relevant agencies to identify and respond to extra-familial harm, recognising that abuse and exploitation can occur in a range of contexts.

Staff understand that looked after and previously looked after children may be more vulnerable to experiencing or displaying harmful behaviours because of previous trauma or adverse childhood experiences. Allegations or concerns involving child-on-child abuse will never be dismissed as banter, part of growing up or isolated incidents and will always be investigated appropriately.

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.

Staff will recognise that safeguarding incidents and concerns can occur both online and offline. Online safety will be considered as part of the school's wider safeguarding responsibilities and when assessing the needs of looked after and previously looked after children.

The school recognises that developments in technology, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), may increase safeguarding risks through the creation, manipulation or sharing of harmful content, online exploitation, cyberbullying, image-based abuse and misinformation. Staff will remain vigilant to emerging risks and respond in accordance with the school's Online Safety and Safeguarding Policies.

Where a LAC or PLAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, attendance and wellbeing. The school recognises that absence from education is a potential safeguarding indicator and will work proactively with social workers, carers, the Virtual School Head and other agencies to identify, investigate and address any attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Safeguarding risk assessments for looked after and previously looked after children will remain dynamic and will be reviewed whenever new information becomes available or where there is a significant change in circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in care arrangements, placement moves, attendance concerns, safeguarding incidents, disclosures, changes in behaviour, online safety concerns, mental health concerns, contextual safeguarding risks, or any other factor which may increase or reduce the child's level of vulnerability. The Designated Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead will work collaboratively with the Virtual School Head, social worker and other relevant professionals to

ensure that risk assessments remain current, proportionate and reflective of the child's individual needs.

9 Children Missing Education

The school recognises that children missing education are at significant risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), serious violence, county lines involvement, mental health difficulties and becoming missing from home or care.

Looked after and previously looked after children who are absent from education will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern. The school will work proactively with parents, carers, social workers, the Virtual School Head and other relevant agencies to establish the reasons for absence, identify any safeguarding risks and ensure appropriate support and intervention are implemented without delay.

The school recognises that changes in care arrangements, placement moves, school moves or other significant changes in a child's circumstances may increase safeguarding risks and disrupt educational progress. The Designated Teacher will work collaboratively with the Virtual School Head, social worker, carers and receiving or previous educational settings, where appropriate, to minimise disruption, support effective transitions and ensure continuity of education, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Any unexplained absence, persistent absence or severe absence will be managed in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and statutory guidance, recognising that improving attendance is everyone’s responsibility and forms part of the school’s safeguarding duties.

The headteacher 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 Safeguarding Policy.

Where parents or carers of a previously looked after child notify the school that they intend to educate their child otherwise than at school, the school will respond in accordance with its Attendance Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance. The school will work with the family and, where appropriate, seek advice from the Virtual School Head and other relevant professionals to ensure the child's educational and safeguarding needs continue to be considered.

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.

10 Pupil mental health

All staff will be made aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

LAC and PLAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated

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.

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 LAC and PLAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary. This includes being "attachment aware" whereby school staff understand the impact of attachment disorders on a child's emotional development and learning. A whole school approach will be adopted to identify and support pupils with attachment difficulties.

The school adopts a trauma-informed and attachment-aware approach when supporting looked after and previously looked after children. Staff recognise that behaviour may be a communication of unmet need and will seek to understand the underlying causes of behaviour before considering sanctions wherever possible. Adults will respond with curiosity, empathy and appropriate professional challenge, recognising that early adversity and trauma can affect emotional regulation, relationships, attendance, learning and behaviour. Support strategies will focus on building positive relationships, emotional regulation, resilience and a sense of belonging whilst maintaining high expectations for all pupils. Decisions regarding behaviour will always take account of the child's individual circumstances, safeguarding needs and any identified vulnerabilities.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and PLAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or PLAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

Where requested as part of statutory care planning or health and wellbeing arrangements for a looked-after child, school staff will contribute relevant educational information, including to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) process where appropriate.

The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and PLAC, 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.

The school's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be adhered to when dealing with all potential or explicit mental health issues that LAC or PLAC may face.

11 Suspension and exclusion

Past experiences of LAC and PLAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy and Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement' and recognises that suspending or excluding LAC can make them more vulnerable to harm due to not having the protection and opportunities school provides. The headteacher will balance this recognition alongside the need to ensure calm and safe environments for all staff and pupils, devising strategies that take both into consideration.

Where the school has concerns about a LAC'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.

As part of the termly review of a pupil's PEP, any concerns about their behaviour will be recorded, alongside information on how they are being supported to improve this and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Suspension and permanent exclusion will only be used where lawful, reasonable, proportionate and necessary, having regard to the DfE's statutory guidance *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement*. Before any decision to suspend or permanently exclude a looked after or previously looked after child, the school will consider the child's care status, safeguarding needs, trauma history, SEND (where applicable), attendance, Personal Education Plan (PEP), and any reasonable adjustments or additional support that could safely reduce the need for suspension or exclusion. Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been a serious breach, 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.

Where a Staffordshire looked-after child is at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion, the Designated Teacher or headteacher will contact Staffordshire Virtual School before a decision is made, wherever circumstances permit. The school will work with the Virtual School, social worker and carers to identify additional support, reasonable adjustments and reasonable alternatives to exclusion. Where suspension or permanent exclusion exceptionally occurs, the school will work with the relevant agencies to ensure that suitable education is provided from day one.

The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

Where a looked-after child is excluded, the school will document the provision of immediate suitable education in the pupil's PEP.

12 Pupils with SEND

In cases where pupils have an EHCP, the DT will work with the VSH to ensure that their EHCP works in harmony with their care plan and PEP to tell a coherent and comprehensive story of how the pupil's needs are being met.

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 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.

13 Information sharing

The school recognises the importance of proactive information sharing between professionals and local agencies in order to effectively meet pupils' needs.

The school will comply with all statutory duties relating to safeguarding information sharing, including requirements arising from the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and associated statutory guidance.

Staff will be made aware that whilst the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place a duty on schools to process personal information fairly and lawfully, they also allow for information to be stored and shared for safeguarding purposes, as data protection regulations do not act as a barrier to sharing information where failure to do so would result in the pupil being placed at risk of harm.

Information will be shared in a timely, necessary, proportionate and secure manner where it is lawful and appropriate to do so, always with the aim of protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare. Staff will not allow uncertainty about information sharing to delay action where there is a safeguarding concern and will seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead where required.

If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will be encouraged to speak to the DSL.

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data will be put in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and PLAC and how data will remain secure.
- 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 school and relevant LA departments.
- How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.

School staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.

Staff members will ensure that fear of sharing information does not stand in the way of their responsibility to promote the welfare and safety of LAC and PLAC. If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will speak to the DSL.

The school will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the DT and the headteacher.

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.