Brighter Futures
Educational Trust

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY

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1. BRIGHTER FUTURES EDUCATIONAL TRUST VISION AND PURPOSE

Our vision and approach to the leadership and management of our pupils is underpinned by a philosophy that is guided by our pupils, parents, and staff. It is challenged and supported by our governing body. We also ensure that we are compliant with the various groups that we work with.

Our Pupils Will:

- Be encouraged in a variety of ways to engage in all activities to promote their progress, improve their behaviour, and make the necessary changes to engage in their own education. They will achieve!
- Experience consistent boundaries and expectation with staff trained in Hertfordshire Steps. We expect them to make changes!
- Value themselves and others and be able to set themselves realistic goals, and targets. We believe that our pupils can improve, and we aim to help them believe this as well!
- Develop a sense of pride in themselves, their work and being part of The Team! They know that we enjoy working with them and hope they enjoy working with us!
- Go onto become life-long learners!
- Become more resilient as young people, moving forwards to secondary schools and further/higher education.
- Have their work and achievements praised and rewarded in a variety of ways to help develop their own self-esteem, alongside their social and emotional development
- Experience success! They will achieve, believe, expect and enjoy!

Our Staff:

- Are encouraging, empathetic, well trained and love working with our pupils
- Will go the 'extra mile' to help pupils make the changes they need to make
- Appreciate that they are preparing pupils for jobs that don't even exist right now!
- Promote the values of respect, responsibility, honesty, hard work, equality, and appreciation of differences
- Provide pupils with the opportunity to express themselves in a safe, productive, and reassuring manner
- Will promote educational development in the widest sense including intellect, creativity, and physical development
- Promote the role of the family-whatever shape or form that may take

- Provide a well-resourced, safe, and welcoming environment for everybody
- Use Therapeutic Thinking as a behaviour management process to enable our pupils to become able to **develop** self-regulation **strategies** with **increasing** independence
- Enable and encourage a love **for** learning ~~for~~ **and** fun!
- Model the behaviour that we expect from pupils so that they can undertake the future roles that they would like and make a meaningful contribution to their communities and society
- Liaise with parents, and other professionals to promote the very best outcomes for all our pupils.

2. POLICY

To ensure the promotion of educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and children who have previously been Looked After, the trust will support the Responsible Local Authorities statutory corporate parenting of this vulnerable group, ensuring all required responsibilities are fulfilled.

3. PURPOSE

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of CLA and children within the trust who have previously been Looked After.

4. RATIONALE

CLA are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of CLA have suffered abuse or neglect and for all, becoming looked after is likely to have been a distressing experience. It is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists across this group when compared to their peers.

5. AIMS OF THE GUIDANCE

'Corporate Parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the whole local authority to achieve good parenting. We recognise that we are an essential partner in this process and as such, we aim to-

- Act as an effective advocate for any child in, or who has been in public care, attending our School.
- Implement the relevant statutory elements of the Guidance.

- Have high expectations of children in public care attending school.
- Develop and implement effective inclusive strategies.
- Intervene early and appropriately to support any child in public care who is experiencing difficulties, liaising promptly with other professionals.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and social workers to gather and share information to plan and monitor achievement.
- Listen to the child or young person and/or closely observe and aim to understand their behaviour and its communicative intent or function, respecting their rights of confidentiality.
- Support the statutory review process by providing reports and attending review meetings.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND VALUING DIVERSITY

We believe that children who are, or have been, in public care are individuals with distinct identities and needs shaped by their racial origins, religious beliefs, their sex identification and sexuality and, whether or not they are in any way disabled, they all have the right to achieve their potential and an equal right to succeed.

7. NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

In 2025, the number of children looked after (CLA) by local authorities in England was 81,770, down 2% (down 1,760 children) on last year, and down from a recent peak of 83,750 in 2023. This is a rate of 67 CLA per 10,000 children, down from 69 last year.

Numbers and rates per 10,000 children vary widely across local authorities, for example Blackpool has the highest rate at 184 CLA per 10,000 children and Richmond upon Thames has the lowest at 27 CLA per 10,000 children.

Number of children looked after on 31 March 2021 to 2026, England

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Number of children looked after	80,780	82,090	83,750	83,530	81,770	Due November 2026
Annual change	-	+1,310	+1,660	-220	-1,760	
Annual percentage change	-	+2%	+2%	< -0.5%	2%	

Rate per 10,000 children (<18 years)	69	70	70	69	67	
Table 1 Source: SSDA903						

For most children care is intended to be time limited with the aim of returning home as soon as possible. Although there are many reasons why children are looked after by local authorities, they are all likely to have undergone distressing experiences. It is important that schools, the Local Authority, health providers, carers and parents (where appropriate) work together, and intervene early on to support these particularly vulnerable children to achieve their educational potential, thus improving their life chances.

8. DEFINITONS

Children Looked After (CLA)

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20).
- Children who are the subjects of a Care Order (section 31) or Interim Care Order (section 38).
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46).
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

Children In Care

The term 'In Care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order made by the Court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with Foster Carers, in a Children's Home, in a Residential School, with relatives or with parents under supervision.

Accommodated Children

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989– they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.

All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' (LAC). They may be looked after by one Local Authority but may be living in another authority.

Adopted Children

In the year ending March 2023, 2,900 children looked after in England were adopted, continuing a trend of decline in adoption numbers over recent years. While adoption offers children permanent families, once a child is adopted, they are no longer classified as "looked after." Full parental responsibilities transfer to the adoptive parents. However, Local Authorities may still provide ongoing support, such as financial assistance, therapeutic services, or advice through post-adoption services, to help families navigate challenges that may arise.

9. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (**2026**) identifies previously looked-after children as a vulnerable group. This includes those who were adopted, became subject to a special guardianship order, or a child arrangements order after being in care. It emphasises that:

"A previously looked-after child potentially remains vulnerable, and all staff should have the skills, knowledge, and understanding to keep previously looked-after children safe."

Schools have a duty to ensure staff are trained to understand and address the specific needs of these children. This includes working with designated teachers and families to create environments that nurture their social, emotional, and academic development while mitigating any lingering vulnerabilities due to their early experiences.
This reflects the government's commitment to ensuring these children receive equitable opportunities for stability and success in education.

Under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (November 2005), local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. In order for them to implement this duty successfully, they will need the active co-operation of schools. School governing bodies have a major responsibility for helping children to succeed: they can champion their needs and raise awareness.

10. POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

The Social Exclusion Unit's report 'A Better Education for Children in Care' (SEU 2004) identified five key reasons why looked after children underachieve:

- Their lives are characterised by instability.

- They spend too much time out of school.
- They do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind.
- Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development.
- They have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education, Key Elements of Guidance to Local Authorities and Schools (2005/06).

11. REQUIREMENTS

- Every school must have a designated teacher to act as an advocate for children in care, at Larwood School this is the Headteacher and at Brandles is the Deputy Headteacher (for detailed responsibilities see Appendix 1).
- Every Local Authority must have a Virtual Head Teacher for Looked After Children. Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Each looked after child or young person must have a Personal Education Plan.
- Local Authorities must have a protocol for sharing information.
- Care placements are only to be made when education is secured - except in emergency situations
- All children in public care must have educational arrangements in place within 20 days of entering care.

12. SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY RESPONSIBILITIES

Statutory guidance for school governing bodies, (2018), states that:
The way in which the role of the designated teacher will be carried out will vary from school to school. It will depend on the number of looked after children on roll and their individual needs as well as, for example, whether the school caters for primary or secondary age children. If, for example, a secondary school had a significant number of looked after children on roll the Governing Body may decide to designate more than one qualified teacher, perhaps with one responsible for pre-16 and a second for post-16 pupils.

The designated teacher should be given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role. Some schools may never have had a looked after child on roll and the designated teacher may not, therefore, be familiar with some of the issues and processes they need to know about.

The Governing Body should, in partnership with the Headteachers, ensure that, through their training and development, the designated teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep

up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of looked after children.

Governing bodies and the School Leadership Team should also make sure that the designated teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting looked after children to achieve.

13. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES DESIGNATED TEACHER

In the statutory guidance of roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked-after and
previously looked-after children it states that all schools must designate a teacher for children in public care. This teacher must understand about care and its impact on education; they should preferably be a senior member of staff who will act as an advocate for looked after children, and who will be critical to tackling underachievement. They should ensure that the school contributes effectively to the statutory review process.

- To maintain a register of children in public care
- To act as an advocate for the children within school
- To attend any relevant training on children in public care and their needs, and passes on key messages to other school staff
- To ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan
- To encourage colleagues to have high expectations of the children, while also being aware of possible obstacles to achievement
- To ensure good liaison with Social Care and other agencies
- To ensure there is an induction meeting for every child, in order to support their transition
- To ensure that the school provides appropriate reports for statutory reviews and staff with a good knowledge of the child attend the meeting when invited.
- To ensure educational information is passed on promptly between schools/agencies with relevant personal information being shared sensitively and with the child's knowledge
- To promote good communication between teachers and carers
- To promote sensitivity in choice of curricular topics and approaches for children not living with their birth families
- To ensure that the child is encouraged and supported to access the full range of activities in an outside school that are appropriate to his or her needs
- To ensure that the child

14. PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPs)

It is a statutory requirement that every looked after child has a Personal Education Plan, this forms part of their statutory Care Plan. The child's Social Worker should initiate the PEP working with relevant teachers/education professionals. It is a record of what needs to happen for the child to enable him/her to fulfil their potential and it reflects any existing education plans, such as a statement of special educational needs and Individual Education Plan (IEP). The child should be involved in this process and the PEP should be reviewed regularly.

15. ATTENDANCE

The school will ensure that all pupils attend regularly; continuity and stability are known to promote educational success for children in public care.
Often school can be a lifeline when care placements are changing. However, where non-attendance is identified, early intervention is essential. Working in partnership with the Social Workers, Foster Carers, residential placements, Education Welfare Officers, and/or ECPC, the school will take positive action quickly to avoid unauthorised absences.

16. RAISING ACHIEVEMENT

The school sets challenging targets for looked after children and has high expectations of them, both with regard to attainment and also participation in broader school activities. It recognises however that there are often additional hurdles for them to surmount because of their early life experiences; support will be offered where appropriate to help them achieve their potential. Teachers recognise that sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum which deal with family values and experiences which are likely to either rekindle distressing memories or put the spotlight on the child.

17. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

- Behaviour policy
- Child Protection policy
- PSHE and RSE Policy
- Exclusion policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Admissions policy

Appendix 1

The role of the designated teacher for Children in Public Care (LAC, CLA):

- To maintain a register of children in public care
- To act as an advocate for the children within school
- To attend any relevant training on children in public care and their needs, and passes on key messages to other school staff
- To ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan
- To encourage colleagues to have high expectations of the children, while also being aware of possible obstacles to achievement
- To ensure good liaison with Social Care and other agencies
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- To promote good communication between teachers and carers
- To promote sensitivity in choice of curricular topics and approaches for children not living with their birth families
- To ensure that the child is encouraged and supported to access the full range of activities in an outside school that are appropriate to his or her needs
- To ensure that the child has a member of staff with whom they can communicate their needs, e.g. their key worker

Further information on the role of the Designated Teacher can be found in the statutory guidance on the role and responsibility of The Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children February 2018.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561
/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualsch