Kew Green Preparatory School

Looked After Children Policy

(including the Early Years Foundation Stage)

Most recent update and review DDSL September 2025

Next review: September 2026

CONTEXT

The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' are often used to define the same group of young people. In this policy the use of 'Looked After Children' is the preferred term as defined in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Families Act 2014. When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then

undertaken by the local authority which appoints an officer to ensure that the duty to promote the educational achievement of the child or young person is properly discharged. The officer/s from the Local Authority is known as the Virtual School Head (VSH).

Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most children in care will be living in foster homes but some may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). It is important the school attended by the child is aware of their Care status, as many children and families are supported by social care without the use of Care Orders. Foster carers will very rarely hold parental responsibility – this is assumed by the social worker. Children placed for adoption remain looked after by the local authority until the Final Order.

We are aware that some children are looked after by individuals other than their parents. The charity Kinship describes kinship carers as 'family or friends who step up, often during an unexpected crisis, to care for a child when their parents aren't able to'. We will seek and follow the advice from the Virtual School on how to best support children and their families who are under formal or informal kinship arrangements.

A Personal Education Plan (***PEP***) is required for every Looked After Child and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed at least every six months.

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

The Children and Families Act (2014) places a duty on the local authority to safeguard Looked After Children, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'achieve to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under the following six principles;

- Prioritising education
- Having high expectations and aspirations
- Inclusion – changing and challenging attitudes
- Achieving continuity and stability
- Early intervention – priority action
- Listening to children

Every Local Authority has an officer known as 'Virtual School Head' (VSH) to ensure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its Looked After Children is properly discharged. The role of a VSH for Looked After Children is statutory for every local authority. The VSH will scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all children in care and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

Helping Looked After Children succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority for the School. This policy takes account of the following statutory guidance:

- Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (February 2018)
- Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (February 2018).

This statutory guidance only applies to maintained schools in England. However, the latest guidance from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (***ISI***) in relation to responsibilities of independent schools on this matter (2023) states:

"Proprietors should also ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep safe children who are looked after by a local authority, if they have such children on roll. This would include ensuring that a designated member of staff has responsibility for their welfare and progress and has up-to-date assessment information from the relevant local authority, the most recent care plan and contact arrangements with parents, and delegated authority to carers." (ISI Handbook: Commentary on Regulatory Requirements 2018 para 151).

As such, the School will, so far is as possible given the School's status, work within the framework established by the statutory guidance for maintained schools in supporting any Looked After Children on the School roll. It is expected that in doing so, the School will be able to demonstrate compliance with the regulatory requirements outlined in the ISI guidance.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

A. THE DIRECTOR WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING

- ensures the appointment of a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children;
- ensures the Designated Teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role;
- monitors the School's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of Looked After Children;
- ensures all Directors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children;
- monitors the effectiveness of the role, and should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher;
- examines whether the School is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for Looked After Children to achieve in line with their peers;
- scrutinises the School's Admission Policy to ensure Looked After Children are admitted into the School as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability;

- The Director responsible for Looked After Children is: Theo Brehony

B. HEAD AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (*SLT*)

- promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out;
- appoint a Designated Teacher from SLT for Looked After Children;
- empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities including the provision of time to undertake the role, supporting training needs and providing opportunities for the cascade of training to all staff and governors in the School;
- ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them. A young person's ability to engage in learning can be undermined by feelings of loss, rejection, confusion, insecurity and low self-esteem – being or becoming 'in Care' has a major impact on children's lives)
- recognise the particular circumstances and needs of Looked After Children and provide for these in all other School Policies, including:
    - Admissions Policy

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy

- ensure that the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for, individual children.
  Sufficient access means ensuring staff who are in contact with the child are aware of their care status on a need-to-know basis, including staff cover where appropriate and day-to-day arrangements such as the collection of younger children from school and automated texting to carers from school information systems;
- are committed to working with the VSH from the local authority to promote the achievement of children in care. (See Further Guidance below).

C. THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- has high expectations of the involvement of Looked After Children in learning and educational progress;
- monitors the educational progress of all Looked After Children in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community;
- intervenes if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible;
- acts as an advocate for Looked After Children;
- informs members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After Children;
- promotes the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning;
- is the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School Head of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners;
- ensures every Looked After Child has a current Personal Education Plan (***PEP***) that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard. (Refer to the document Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (February 2018) for more information about the PEP content)
- attends, arranges for someone else to attend, or contributes in other ways to care planning meetings;
- provides a programme of transition support, as appropriate;
- presents regular Reports to School Governors, including an Annual Report;
- accesses training events;
- cascades training to school staff and governors as appropriate, including ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in the Policy.
- The Designated Teacher responsible for Looked After Children is:
  Amy Kinross (DDSL)

D. ALL STAFF

- have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all.

- maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
- respond positively to a request to be the named member of staff whom they can talk to when they feel it is necessary.
- respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
- work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within School.
- promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children.
- have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children.
- are aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the School's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- read, record and act upon, as necessary, all relevant information shared with them by the Designated Teacher.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Advice and support is available from AFC's Children's Services LACs team. The website has a LAC Education section, which includes relevant guidance and strategy documents
https://www.afcvirtualschool.org.uk/