Trinity Academy Richmond

RESPECT PERSEVERANCE TRUST

'Though it is the smallest seed, yet when it grows, it is the biggest of all plants and becomes a tree, `so that the birds come and make their nests in its branches.'
Matthew 13: 31-32

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) and PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (PLAC) POLICY
Policy written: September 2026
Review Date: September 2027

Purpose

At Trinity Academy Richmond we will ensure that looked after children (LAC) and previously looked after children (PLAC) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the t through school-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the 'DfE Designated teacher for looked- after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th 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

To achieve that purpose we will work with NY Virtual School, who deliver their support in accordance with the DFE Promoting the Education of Looked After Children Raising the attainment of Looked After Children Feb 2018

Eligible children include those who:

- are in Local Authority Care in England
- have been Adopted from Care in England or Wales
- have left Care under a Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)
- have left Care under a Child Arrangement Order (formally known as a Residence Order).

Our school has a statutory duty to work with the Local Authority and other partner agencies in accordance with corporate parenting principles- see legal framework. The local authority has a statutory role to play for all Looked After Children in its care and acts as a Corporate Parent. The Children Act 2004 promotes co-operation between relevant parties and confers a duty on relevant parties to co-operate with the Local Authority. For further clarity, refer to the Legal Framework below.

Our school as part of its role as the Corporate Parent, will also promote the educational attainment, achievement, progression and welfare of Previously Looked After Children attending educational placements, regardless of where they live. The Designated Teacher's role extended to Previously Looked After Children in 2018.

Rationale

Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children are together, one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children have suffered a disrupted childhood and experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences. It is nationally recognised that this leads to a considerable educational underachievement; often lower exam success rates in comparison with the general population. Fewer Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children progress to Higher Education or follow progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and wellbeing.

School staff are committed to the values of supporting every Looked After Child and young people in our school

regardless of whichever authority is responsible for them. We endeavour to develop best practice in improving attendance, attainment and progress of their education and wellbeing by removing barriers to learning, understanding attachment and trauma needs, building resilience, self-esteem and providing a supportive school environment and evidence based interventions to support their outcomes.

We aim to remove any barriers and if Looked After Children or Previously Looked After Children have any have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as a school we will support as fully as possible.

Belonging

Our school will provide a "safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems" (Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2018 p13).

Every designated teacher and members of the wider school family will provide 'Love and a sense of belonging' to our looked after and previously looked after children; listening and advocating for them, 'good enough for my own child'.

Reasonable adjustments

We acknowledge that some pupils will need reasonable adjustments. We will work with the Virtual School and outside agencies to develop custom and practice, which serves to provide reasonable adjustments, a graduated response and equity for all members of the school community.

Developing Positive Relationships

We believe in developing relationship based practice which values the members of all of the school community, this is reflected in our school behaviour policy.

We are committed to enhancing the achievement and welfare of our pupils by prompting in the following ways:

- Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher, with a Senior Leadership role, is appointed to be responsible for all Looked After children.
- All pupils who are Looked After will have termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings each academic year. Those attending the PEP meeting will be the Designated Teacher from our school, the Virtual School representative, the child's social worker, the child's foster carer and where appropriate the child.
- A representative from the school who knows the child will attend the Looked After Care Reviews.
- At these meetings we will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require.
- It is best practice that all Previously Looked After Children also have a meeting similar to a PEP each term.
- Having high expectations for the staff to use Trauma Informed Practice to support and meet the needs of the children and young people.
- Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly based education.
- Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Prioritising reduction in exclusions, understanding the effects of unintentional re-traumatisation by using certain behaviour mechanisms and promoting attendance.
- We are mindful to avoid 'Informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending a pupil home 'to cool off', regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers, as this is unlawful. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, will be formally recorded (we will refer to the Exclusions Guidance for advice).
- Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible, but ensuring that necessary information is shared with all staff, including lunchtime supervisors (who support children in unstructured social times).
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children and seek the child's care 'story' from their Social Worker.

The Responsibility for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children in School

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with a Looked After Child or young person are aware that he/she is in the care of the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children.

It is entirely appropriate for Teaching Assistants, Midday Supervisors and Wrap Around Care staff, to have knowledge that the young person is being looked-after only when they are directly involved in the teaching of the young person or the direct supervision of them during breaks and lunch times. They should be made aware that this is confidential information and should not be discussed with non-school staff members.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

The Designated Teacher for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children is the Executive Headteacher.

Within School for Individual Looked After Children:

- To monitor and have high expectations of the possible educational progress, attainment and attendance of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children.
- To include targets on the performance of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children within the School Development Plan and to deliver a report annually on the performance of the cohort to the governing body.
- Ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus+ is targeted at improving attainment and achievements. The impact of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children should not be contained within the school's website document due to the confidential nature of the cohort involved.
- To help ensure that each Looked After Child has a Personal Education Plan (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's social worker from the Authority responsible for them). The PEP sets out appropriate targets and support available;
- To care and provide support for the Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, as a good corporate parent, 'good enough for my own child?'.
- To act as an advocate for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children;
- To ensure that **all** staff, both teaching and non-teaching (including Midday Supervisors and Wrap Around Care staff), have an understanding of the difficulties, educational disadvantage, trauma, attachment disorder, anxiety and other mental health issues faced by Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and that staff understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them;
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible, but ensuring that necessary information is shared with all staff, including lunchtime supervisors (who support children in unstructured social times).
- Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children and seek the child's care 'story' from their Social Worker.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc., in order to extend their support network and life experiences.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with the team around the child; forming close working relationships with parents, guardians, carers, social workers, health professionals and the Virtual School;
- To hold a supervisory brief for all Looked After Children and, where appropriate, Previously Looked After Children, e.g. to ensure that they are aware of the 'story' of the Child and their subsequent needs. It is important to be aware that some Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children do not want all adults or peers to know about their accommodation or care status and we need to be sensitive about the individual's situation;
- To celebrate the success of all Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children.

- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their care plan;
- To support the child or young person in ensuring they have an appropriate adult who will attend school events e.g. parents' evenings, sports, drama events to provide support and encourage them to be part of the school community.
- To support the child or young person in completion of homework tasks; for example to provide time, support and space in school and to ensure the tasks are differentiated appropriately.

Liaison with other Partners

- To liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register, ensuring all Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children in school are safeguarded;
- To liaise with the school officer responsible for making links with mental health services where there is such an officer.
- To attend Looked After Children reviews and to partner with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to co-ordinate the education discussion within Looked After Children review meetings, so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan;
- To attend or arrange for the most appropriate member of staff to attend and to fully contribute to Looked After Children care review meetings and PEP meetings;
- To complete and regularly update the Education and Designated Teacher's sections of the PEP on the ePEP system;
- To be the named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and other professionals as appropriate;
- To ensure that the Head Teacher considers a range of strategies before internal isolation or exclusion of a Looked After Child, which should be a last resort;
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information and school records between agencies and other schools;
- To ensure the school admits Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children in line with the Admissions Code of Practice; schools should admit all Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children separate to 'In Year Fair Access Protocols'.
- To work proactively and with compassion, as soon as a Looked After or Previously Looked After Child begins to struggle with school (such as under-achievement, attendance, engagement, perceived difficulties, relationships with staff or peers) before any possible negative consequences begin; this may include:
    A. to assign the child a key person (to be an advocate and source of pastoral/moral support);
    B. talk with the child and their key person;
    C. speaking directly to the Virtual School or the child's Social Worker;
    D. the effective use of Ladder of Intervention (North Yorkshire Schools only) to find out what works best to support a child;
    E. to refer the child to the SEND Inclusion Panel/Hub (North Yorkshire Schools only) (LAC can be referred without the need for 2 cycles of intervention evidence);
    F. to call an urgent multi-agency meeting to find out reasons and resolutions;
    G. to support the SENCo to write and submit an ECHAR or EHCP request (ECHAR North Yorkshire Schools only);
    H. if the child has an EHCP, to seek support from the SEN Caseworker for additional support or funding, or hold an interim EHCP review.

Training

- To continue to develop understanding and knowledge of Vulnerable Children and inclusion by attending training events organised by the Local Authority and other providers for example: the Virtual Schools Attachment, Trauma and Recovery Training; Emotion Coaching or Circle of Adults and Action Research; training involving developing a greater understanding of Foetal Alcohol Disorder (FASD) or Adverse Childhood Experiences;
- To attend training for Designated Teachers as appropriate;
- To support the school SENCo to undertake SENCo network meetings and training, with specific regard to supporting vulnerable children.

Admission Arrangements

On admission of a Looked After Child, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school by the Designated Teacher and the eGOV ePEP system will be accessed and utilised to form a sound induction and assist transition planning. An admissions meeting/PEP review is required between the DT's of both schools, School SENCo, Carer/parent, Social worker and Virtual School. A date will be agreed for a new Personal Education Plan within 10 school days of a child becoming Looked After Child or 20 school days of a Looked After Child being admitted.

We will ensure that there is effective personal induction for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children starting school, new to the school and new to care. Here are some examples of what our school may deliver:

- A student buddy from the same year and / or an older year,
- A pre-start date school tour involving the buddy (possibly the DT/ SENDCo);
- A key adult who is available all the time to answer queries/ contain and redirect to other members of staff if appropriate (not necessarily teaching – could be the Secretary);
- Daily check-ins for the child with their key adult, DT or SENDCo (weekly after the first fortnight);
- Meet and greet every morning and send-off at the end of the day with a key member of staff to check everything is ok for the day ahead /next day, so this member of staff can alert others as to difficulties the child is experiencing at that time;
- A phased time-table;
- Time to meet all of their new teachers with a chance to connect/talk with them about topics they like in the subject and outside of school;
- Social Worker is involved to find out their story and to learn from everyone in the child's life to find out what works well;
- Layout of the school;
- Interventions arranged that can help them reach or exceed Age Related Expectations, etc.;
- Further examples of what can work well, can be found in the documents referenced in the Appendices.

Involving the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. It is good practice to share with a young person appropriate records that are held by school and the local authority. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the social worker, their carer(s), parents or guardians are working together to help them achieve in school. It is courtesy to ask them what they would like staff to know / not know.

Communication with Other Agencies

The Designated Teacher should proactively engage with other professions to create a team around the child (e.g. SEN, CAMHS, Virtual School) to enable school to respond effectively to looked-after and previously looked-after children's needs. As a school we will develop a close working relationship with the child's carers and social worker. We will understand the child's story and keep updated about their life outside of school, which might have an impact on the child's emotional wellbeing on a daily basis such as court proceedings, family contact arrangements (NYCC Family Time) and sessions etc.

For Looked After Children, school will ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year reports) are forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the Foster Carer or Residential Carers. It will be agreed at the PEP meeting what information parents will receive, this needs to be in line with the legal framework. A Social Worker will advise us on correspondence with parents and approaches to normalise consent for routine school activities.

For Previously Looked After Children (and for those placed with family members), school will ensure that parents or guardians with parental responsibility are able to approach the Designated Teacher to discuss the support needs of their child.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each Looked After pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) recorded on eGov. Our school will work in partnership with the Virtual school, parents, carers and social worker for the child to ensure the

PEP is of high quality. This will identify, success, specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The PEP is age group specific. Areas for consideration will include:

- A narrative on the current situation/progress.
- The child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective;
- What's working well for this child?
- What are your concerns for this child around their education?
- What are the team members around the child going to change to help this child make accelerated progress, to feel safer, to feel they belong, to build secure attachments with staff and peers, so they can achieve well?
- Attendance (high expectations but looking for patterns of non-attendance);
- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise);
- Emotional regulation (how school staff are meeting the SEMH needs of the child, how they are applying their Emotion Coaching training);
- What will happen or is already happening to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the child's education?
- Homework (for example, can this be completed in school, at a club);
- Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities (many looked after children haven't had the same opportunities to attend clubs as other children);
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (if any);
- EHCP, EHCAR (if any);
- Development needs (short and long-term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences); and
- Long-term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations);
- Evidence of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) expenditure.
- Evidence of the impact of intentions and support funded by PP+ are having directly on this child.

Legal Framework for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

Looked After Children:

The term 'looked-after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989, There are a few exceptions, which have been introduced purely for statistical purposes and wherever these occur appropriate guidance is given in order to achieve consistency and comparability of data between local authorities.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked-after by a local authority if they fall into four main groups:

- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (Sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)
- 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 who are looked after on a voluntary basis are "accommodated" by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children's Home or in a residential school.

It is possible that a placement order is made without a care order or interim care order being made, or the child not being subject to section 20 of the 1989 Act. For example, the local authority working with a family and believing that the child should be removed and be placed for adoption. The local authority does not have to apply for a care order first (though this would be the usual situation) and then a placement order; it could apply simply for a placement order.

For all children who receive more than 75 days of 'short breaks' in every 12 months, Looked After Children status applies and an independent Reviewing Officer is appointed. As the care arranged is not continuous, academic attainment does not have to be reported in the same way to the DfE.

The LA has a duty under Section 1 of the Children and Social Work 2017 to apply corporate parenting principles to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. See associated guidance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf

Provision of accommodation

Local authorities can provide children with accommodation under a wide range of circumstances, for example:

- as the result of an agreement between the local authority and the child's parents or guardians that being accommodated would be in the child's best interest
- the child having been remanded to the care of a local authority by a criminal court
- because the child is helping the police with their enquiries
- the child has been placed for adoption, and the local authority is acting as the adoption agency
- the child is subject to a police protection order.

In all these examples, the child will be subject to a different legal status, and the circumstances will be very different. However, in every case, the child is being looked after under the terms of the act because he/she is being accommodated.

Continuous period of more than 24 hours

Section 22 of the Children Act stipulates very clearly that for a child to be looked-after by a local authority, he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. Periods of being looked-after of less than 24 hours in total are recorded.

Exception

The only two exceptions to the rule that for a child to be looked-after is that he/she needs to be accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours relates to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (see section 1.9.7) and children with a legal status of V3 (short-term breaks when each break is being recorded as an individual episode). For statistical purposes, information is required for this group of children for receiving respites for periods of less than 24 hours duration, providing the periods include an overnight stay. For further information on the recording of data for children being looked-after under a series of short-term breaks see section 1.9.

Care order

A child is looked-after when subject to a care order. There are no exceptions to this rule. In these circumstances however, there is no obligation for the local authority to accommodate the child. For example, a child under a care order can be placed with their parents or other relative.

A care order continues in force until either:

- they are discharged by a court
- the child reaches his/her 18th birthday
- child leaves care through an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangement order.

A local authority cannot unilaterally end a care order, and therefore a child, once subject to a care order, will remain looked-after until one of the above events occurs. However, when a placement order is made the care order no longer has effect but is reactivated if the placement order is revoked.

Previously Looked After Children

Are those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

All these groups are said to be "Looked After Children or Previously Looked After Children". They may be looked after or previously looked after by our local authority or may be looked after or previously looked after by another authority but living in ours.

For more information on Legal duties see here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974676/Children_looked-after_by_local_authorities_in_England_2020_to_2021.pdf

Useful documents:

Useful documents to refer to:

- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children: Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities
- Promoting the Education of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England: Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Pupil premium: effective use and accountability
- Effective use of Pupil Premium Plus+
- Pupil Premium Teaching and Learning Toolkit
- SEND Mainstream Guidance
- Children's Act 2004