Looked-after Children and Previously Looked-after Children Policy

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1. Purpose

Bohunt Education Trust and each member school is committed to providing all students with equal access to our curriculum and educational activities, and to offer stability, safety, with care and attention differentiated to meet the needs of all our students. However, national as well as regional data for each member School consistently shows that educational achievement and subsequent life chances for looked after children (LAC) and Previously LAC (PLAC) are consistently less good than for non looked after or previously looked after children . Pupils who are looked or previously looked after are more likely than not (but not in every case) to require additional strategic planning and additional support in order to ensure that they:

- reach their potential and make good progress in relation to their academic attainment and progress and personal, social and emotional development
- engage fully with high quality teaching and the curriculum which meets their needs so that they enjoy all aspects of school life
- plan appropriate support for LAC/PLAC realistically and maximises the efficient use of school's resources to enable the school meets their needs
- [help pupils develop their spiritual, cultural, moral, and social understanding]

This policy sets out Bohunt Education Trust's (Trust's) approach to Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy delivers the Trust's duties with respect to:

- the Department for Education's statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- section 2E of the Academies Act 2010.
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- DfE (2026) 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- Schools Admissions Code 2021

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

Looked-after children(LAC) are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority: or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Previously looked-after children (PLAC) are registered students that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:

- A child arrangements order (including an interim order), which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them (which may include living with parents but the Local Authority retains parental responsibility)
- A special guardianship order
- An adoption order

OR

- They appear to the member School to have:
  - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
  - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Personal education plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

LA Virtual School Head (LA VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school. The LA VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

DTLAC: the member School's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children who will always hold qualified teacher status throughout the period of time they act as DTLAC; a deputy DTLAC without qualified teacher status may be appointed with prior approval of Headteacher and Trust Co-Ordinator for DTLAC either permanently or for fixed periods of time.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Board

The Board has overall accountability for the creation, maintenance and implementation of this Policy which it has delegated to its Education Committee through its Terms of Reference.

CEO

The CEO is responsible to the Board's Education Committee for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of this Policy in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and will ensure that reporting requirements of this Policy are delivered.

Head of School

Each Head of School is responsible to the CEO for:

- appointing the DTLAC;
- allowing DTLAC the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties, including allowing time for DTLAC to attend CPD required to perform their role, with a minimum of 3 hours CPD per year;
- overseeing and monitoring the implementation of this Policy within their School, including ensuring that all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC and PLAC is a key strategic School and Trust priority and that all staff play a role in the implementation of this Policy;
- providing the required reporting to LGB and to the CEO to secure the required reporting under this Policy;

- ensuring that Senior Leadership Group or Team within each School review all reporting made by the DTLAC under this Policy, regardless of the size of student group that are represented by LAC/PLAC.

DTLAC

The designated teacher for LAC and PLAC is responsible to the Head of School for the overall coordination, facilitation and reporting of the School's implementation of this Policy to their Head of School and for working with and implementing best practice as determined by the Trust DTLAC Co-Ordinator. DTLACs are specifically responsible for the following:

- reporting the following to School leadership team on a termly basis:
    - the number of LAC and PLAC in the school
    - an analysis of assessment scores as a cohort and individual, compared to other pupil groups
    - the attendance of LAC and PLAC, compared to other pupil groups
    - the level of suspensions and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupil groups
- acting as the first point of contact for the local authority (including social services and Inclusion or other LA units), building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the Virtual School Head (LA VSH) understand the support available to LAC and PLAC and working with the child's LA VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP
- promoting the educational and personal development and achievement of LAC and PLAC at the school, so that all staff maintain the same high level of aspiration and achievement for all students regardless of their status
- leading on how the child's PEP is developed and communicated in school to ensure the child's progress towards targets is monitored, including ensuring LAC /PLAC are involved in setting their own targets
- advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC/PLAC, including liaising with other in school leaders such as SENDCo and pastoral staff to ensure all needs are met whether in school or through other specialists to ensure appropriate interventions when required are available to and easily accessible by the LAC/PLAC
- providing all information required for the Head of School to complete and submit the required annual reporting to Local Governing Body and to the CEO (through the Trust DTLAC Co-Ordinator) for reporting to Education Committee

Typical activities that result in the delivery of the above are set out in Appendix 1 for illustration and information

All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- being aware, through the Trust designated recording systems of LAC and PLAC both in their classes and in general, providing them with support and encouragement
- where teaching staff, knowing who is currently LAC or who is PLAC in their class and ensuring that support and encouragement as well as challenge and expectation is provided to secure the long term best interests of such students
- preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding

- being vigilant for any signs of wellbeing and welfare concerns, including with respect to peer relationships for LAC and PLAC
- proactively promoting the welfare and wellbeing of LAC and PLAC.

Trust DTLAC Co-Ordinator

The Trust Co-Ordinator for DTLAC provides support and oversight to the school-based DTs. This includes facilitating opportunities to collaborate and share best practice, as well as offer peer supervision and support. The aim of the Co-Ordinator is to support teams in providing an excellent level of care to our young people, by promoting training opportunities and maintaining the statutory duties outlined in the DfE regulations

5. Admission and induction arrangements

Oversubscription

LAC are a priority for admission in cases of oversubscription criteria under the Trust's Admissions Policy, and will be admitted in accordance with such priority.

Admission meeting

On admission, the student will meet with the DTLAC and senior leader with responsibility for LAC. Staff will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and seek to understand from the student the steps and strategies they would most like in place to help them feel comfortable and a full member of the School with the same opportunities, rights, expectations and responsibilities as any other student. Where feasible, the carer/parent and other professionals including social worker will be invited to attend this meeting. A draft Personal Education Plan will be developed following this meeting.

Records

Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received the PEP will be finalised, taking into account further information arising from the records. If not already held under 6.2, or where the information received requires substantive significant changes to the draft PEP, a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate to discuss the final PEP

Reports/Communication home

In the first PEP meeting, the DTLAC will need to be informed as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the exchange of information outside of statutory meetings and reviews will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school routine system of updates).

6. Personal Education Plans

All LAC are required to have a care plan devised by the Local Authority; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan. 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 progress. The PEP is completed using appropriate LA template. It will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

The DTLAC will work with other professionals and the child's carers to 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, DTLAC, and carers, will involve the student in the PEP process at all stages. The PEP

- will address the student's full range of education and development needs, including on-going academic support or access to co-curricular activities and any appropriate non academic support or intervention, including where children's attainment may not be in line with the expectation for children of the same age and cohort as the LAC/PLAC.
- may also include suitable alternative provision including education provided by the LA, where the child is not currently in school because of suspension or exclusion.
- Will incorporate transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving from an existing school to a new school and identity who will provide it (existing school; new school; LA; other professionals or provision
- May, where appropriate include School attendance and behaviour support details and expectations
- Will include careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focuses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- may also include provisions relating to access to non school leisure or extra curricular activities.

7. Working with agencies and the LA VSH

Usually working through the DTLAC or other nominated staff as appropriate, all member Schools will:

- ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the LAC's social workers, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- coordinate review meetings.
- work with other agencies to exchange information such as changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance issues.
- agree particular strategies relating to attendance or behaviour with the LA VSH, to ensure positive attendance and behaviour outcomes are supported and managed in the most effective way for that individual student.
- communicate with the LA VSH and child's social worker to facilitate the completion of the PEP and to monitor any arrangements in place so that actions and activities recorded in the child's PEP are implemented without delay.
- communicate with the LA VSH and agree on how pupil premium plus (PP+) can be used effectively to accommodate the LAC/PLAC's educational attainment and progress through any appropriate academic or non academic support or intervention; however PP+ is paid to managed by the School
- report LAC/PLAC absent without authorisation.
- participate in local and Trust networks to share best practice.

8. Training

The DTLAC and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC have received appropriate training, this includes information about the following areas: school admissions arrangements; SEND; attendance; safeguarding; suspensions and exclusions; managing and challenging behaviour; homework; GCSE/A level /post exams options; promoting positive educational and recreational activities, supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future
education, training and employment.

9. Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

All Member Schools take each student's personal circumstances, including consideration of unmet needs, into account when applying the School's Behaviour Policy, including when determining whether to issue a suspension or permanent exclusion in accordance with the Dfe Statutory Guidance 2022 - 'Exclusions from

maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England'. For all students, taking into account their personal circumstances, permanent exclusion is a last resort.

Where the school has concerns about a student's behaviour, the LA VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity as well as the student's social worker. Where suspension or permanent exclusion is being considered, the school will work with the LA VSH, the student's social worker and others, to consider what additional support can be provided to prevent the suspension or permanent exclusion and any additional arrangements that can be made to support the pupil's education in the event of suspension or permanent exclusion. Parents and carers will always be informed of such discussions at the same time so that the parent and carer can seek the advice of the LA VSH or social worker to support the student to avoid exclusion.

10. Welfare and Wellbeing

LAC and PLAC are more at risk of experiencing the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues, which can impact their behaviour and education than non LAC/PLAC students. The DTLAC will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health and will share such training and skills with other School staff where appropriate in order to support such students.

DTLAC will take advantage of training offered by the Local Authority and will work with LA 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 know how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

11. Students with SEND

Support for LAC/PLAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews. The SENDCo, tutor, DTLAC, and specialists as appropriate will involve parents/carers/social workers as appropriate when considering interventions to support the LAC's/ PLAC's progress. The LA VSH may be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for LAC/PLAC.

Where a School SENDCo acts as the DTLAC, this does not mean that all LAC/PLAC students are automatically students with SEND. All school staff acknowledge and respect this in all their planning and work with LAC/PLAC students.

12. School trips and special activities

Given the delays that LAC can experience in obtaining consent for school trips and activities, Member Schools will aim to ensure that LAC enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities and will consider use of appropriate funding as applicable in each individual case.

13. Information sharing

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and PLAC are understood and met.

The arrangements set out:

- who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured
- 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 local authority departments
- how relevant information about individual pupils is shared between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move

14. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Education Committee; reports on monitoring and evaluation of the impact of this Policy will be received by each Local Governing Body and the Education Committee annually.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Equalities Objectives
- Behaviour
- Attendance
- Anti Bullying
- Child protection and safeguarding
- SEN
- Supporting pupils with medical needs

Appendix 1 Role of designated teacher

Our designated teacher is **Chris Brooks**.

You can contact them by cbrooks@bohunthorsham.com.

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school including where such children are subsequently adopted. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

The DTLAC will as appropriate to role:

Leadership

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
    - Working with LA VSHs
    - Promoting a whole-school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:
    - The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
    - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils
    - Work to ensure the implementation of school policies consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and contribute as appropriate to development and review of whole Trust policies
    - Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities
    - Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
    - Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations

Strategic development of PEPs

- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education
- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs by:
    - taking overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs, monitoring and tracking attainment and progress under the PE
    - If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
    - Ensure identified actions of PEPs are put in place

    - During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for pupils
- A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
- PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
- Updated PEPs are passed to the child's social worker and LA VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

<u>Planning strategic SEN, pastoral and welfare needs</u>

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium plus funding
- Access training and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them
- Liaise with LA VSHs to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes
    - Work with leaders to ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
    - Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure other staff also have awareness and understanding of this including under SEN Code of Practice
    - Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

<u>Planning use of funding</u>

- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus funding and other support for these children, including encouraging parents to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Ensure specific funding for LAC and PLAC is tracked and monitored
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium plus funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use

Appendix 2 Role of Local Authority Virtual School Head

The role of Local Authority Virtual School Head will vary from local authority to local authority but in general Local Authority Virtual School Heads are responsible for:

- monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after.
- 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 LACand PLAC children.
- working with the school to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
- acting as the educational advocate for LAC. acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of PLAC as effectively as possible.
- ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
    - maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in school settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress
    - 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 to understand their role and responsibilities regarding a pupil's PEP
    - ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC
    - avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision
    - 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