



# Looked After Children Policy

## Harbinger Primary School

Last reviewed on: December 2023

Next review date: December 2024

## Introduction

At Harbinger, our values are 'Togetherness, Wellbeing and Learning'. These values underpin everything that we do at Harbinger. Our priority is to support and protect every child entrusted into our care.

## Rationale

**'Looked after children have a right to expect the outcomes we want for every child – that they should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.'**

(‘Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children’. Department for Children Schools and Families, 2010)

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improve the life chances of looked after children; tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. For children who have been subject to abusive, chaotic lives, schools can provide a source of continuity and “normality” and a safe place for them to be themselves and develop and maintain friendships.

## Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and is synonymous with the term “in public care”. It refers to a child who is either *accommodated* (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a *care order* (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

## Legal Framework

Section 52 of The Children Act 2004, places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of looked after children. Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education for all looked after children
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all looked after children
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all looked after children •  
Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of looked after children
- Develop systems of communications and protocols.
- Promote the attendance of looked after children.

## Objectives

To:

- Work alongside social workers and ensure that each looked after child has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a caring and accepting climate that values all children and supports their well-being.
- Ensure all looked after children have equal opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Ensure discretion and sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education and Skills/Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavor to support all looked after children educated in this school towards developing their fullest possible academic potential.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The school will:

- Act sensitively regarding the child's care status and share this information with individuals negotiated with the child, whilst acknowledging that this may not always be possible.
- Have a named Governor to work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and Designated Teacher as responsible for ensuring that all looked after children have equal access to all learning opportunities.
- Ensure that the Head Teacher and Designated Teacher support the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children.

**The Named Governor should be satisfied that:**

- the school has a coherent policy for looked after children
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfE guidelines
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- Looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.

**The Headteacher will:**

- appoint the designated teacher and ensure appropriate training
- oversee the development of the policy on looked after children
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after children
- annually report to the governing body on:
  - the number of looked after pupils in the school

- analysis of test scores as a discrete group
- compared to other pupil's attendance
- the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- compared to other pupils, the number of complaints.

### **The Designated Teacher will:**

Our designated teacher for looked after children is Jubeda Ahmed, Acting Deputy Headteacher, SENCo and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- maintain and respect confidentiality, ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- ensure that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the possible difficulties and educational disadvantages and understand the need for positive systems of support
- act as an advocate, in order to ensure equal access to educational opportunities
- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding information
- maintain children's records
- maintain a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools, facilitating a smooth transfer
- monitor the children's educational progress, attendance and well-being.

The designated teacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- building positive home-school relationships, with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
- ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews/PEP meetings for looked after children
- serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education
- inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The designated teacher will monitor each child's achievement and ensure in-school support by having:

- a named staff member, maybe the class teacher, from whom they feel happy to seek advice/help;
- a Personal Education Plan;
- support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies if additional academic or behavioural support required;
- a strategy for key stage or new school transitions.

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP),

### **Personal Education Plans**

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and weaknesses
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental, educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported

- issues arising for the child
- targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

## **Admission / Induction Arrangements**

Looked after children are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LA's published admission criteria.

Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer /parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker 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 fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed

## **Complaints**

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved, the Head teacher will investigate the complaint and any issue that remains unresolved at this stage will be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of the complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend.