



THE FEDERATION OF MELLERS PRIMARY SCHOOL

AND

NOTTINGHAM NURSERY

Looked After Children Policy

May 2025

Looked After Children Policy

DOCUMENT ORIGINS			
Organisation	Federation of Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery School	Version date	May 2025
Owner	Lorna Dermody and Joy Buttress	Approved by (If applicable)	FGB
Next review date	May 2026	Approval date	

DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY		
Revision date	Author of changes	Summary of changes

Looked After Children Policy

Designated teacher: Laura Patel at Mellers Primary School.

We recognise that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad-based curriculum and aim to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care. The school and the governing body endorse Nottingham City Council's policy and welcomes children who may be looked after by our local authority or those who may be in the care of another authority but living in Nottingham City.

This policy includes requirements set out in 'Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004' and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children including the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

Definition

- Children and young people who are subject to interim or full care orders under section 31 of the Children Act 1989
- Children and young people who are voluntarily accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- Children and young people who are accommodated for their protection by the courts or remanded into care by the courts
- Children and young people will be looked after by a local authority other than the authority in which this school sits. Therefore, this school and nursery may have looked after children who are living in the local authorities' area but looked after by another authority e.g. Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Leeds etc.
- Parental responsibility is shared with social care when children are subject to interim or full care orders. Parents retain parental responsibility if a child or young person is voluntarily looked after under section 20.

The Federation's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of looked after children is based on the following principles:

- prioritising education set within an inclusive context which makes reasonable adjustments to ensure a personalised curriculum
- listening to the child
- working closely with home, voluntary and statutory agencies
- promoting attendance, through a program of early intervention, priority action, reducing exclusions and promoting stability within a positive learning environment
- identifying need, including social and emotional as well as learning needs or gifted and talented skills and abilities
- targeting support, including accessing resources from other agencies as well as provision from school resources
- having high expectations

Rationale

Many children and young people, who are in care, have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, looked after children are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Barriers to their progress include a high level of disruption and change in school placements, lack of motivation or involvement in extracurricular activities. Most children will have experienced high levels of trauma and stress, which means that children will easily dysregulate. Many children will display attachment difficulties, and we recognise that this impacts greatly on children's readiness for learning.

The Federation of Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every child can be successful. This policy should be read alongside the safeguarding policy.

Admission Arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements, children may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate, additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle.

The school recognises that looked after children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked after children in the school's oversubscription criteria following the DCSF Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked after Children (England) Regulations 2006) Support and Resources.

The Governing body will ensure that the school and nursery allocate resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for looked after children, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher

Duties of the designated teacher are outlined in the Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies: The roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children, published September 2009.

The duties of the designated teacher will include:

- ensuring that children are welcomed into the school, necessary meetings are held, and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met. This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements, if needed
- maintaining an up-to-date record of the looked after children in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff as required
- promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for children. This will include monitoring and tracking progress of children and the planning of suitable interventions, holding a supervisory brief for all children being looked after and acting as advocate
- liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage children may face
- establishing and maintaining regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies
- ensuring Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings are held regularly and information passed to all those concerned, including the local authority
- ensure that the PEP targets accurately reflect the needs of the child and that the child's voice is represented in PEP paperwork
- attending training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding looked after children
- applying for additional funding using the Education Progress Grants (EPG) to support each child's individual needs
- produce a report at least annually to inform senior staff and governors of achievement and raise any concerns

What Governors need to know

Governors need to know:

- the number of looked after children on roll
- how well they are performing compared to other young people in their school
- that there are national and local targets for children around end of key stage tests

- the name of their school's designated teacher
- how the school specifically supports this group of young people
- that the attendance of this specific group is closely monitored

The local authority offers training to school governors interested in finding out more about their responsibilities regarding looked after children and young people.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

The designated teacher will keep an up-to-date record of looked after children and young people in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff.

A PEP will be initiated within 20 school days of the looked after child or young person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the child. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure all relevant parties are informed accordingly.

Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition.

It is vital that the looked after child or young person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them, will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Exclusions

The Federation of Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery recognises that looked after children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions.

Where a child is at risk of exclusion, the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion. The child or young person's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan.

All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and perhaps alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening.

Staff Development and Training

The designated teacher will attend network meetings regarding local developments and raising the attainment of looked after children and training opportunities and cascade this knowledge to the appropriate staff. The designated teacher will also arrange for specific training in areas such as attachment.

Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with looked after children, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. Midday staff will be trained to an appropriate level and will be supported to understand that children may need additional support at lunchtimes and may struggle with the lack of structure at this time of day.

In line with the safeguarding policy, all information about looked after children will be stored confidentially in the locked cupboard. The designated teacher will inform the relevant staff about individual children on a need-to-know basis.

Home-school liaison

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable looked after children to achieve their potential.

We understand that there are many points throughout the school year that can be emotive for children and strive to develop an open communication with parents to enable us to better understand the children in our care.

At Mellers Primary School and Nottingham Nursery, we understand that some adoptive parents will be first time parents and may require additional support for school and the agencies who work with them. We also recognise that siblings may need additional support when a new foster child or adoptive child joins the family home and that this could impact on them emotionally and therefore academically. In these circumstances, class teachers and teaching assistants will liaise closely with families to provide siblings with appropriate support. Parents evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the looked after child or young person including Social Care teams; Community Educational Psychologist; Health services; CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams and Clinical psychologists.

Safeguarding

E-safety

It is crucial that no information or photographs pertaining to vulnerable children are used on the nursery or school's website. It is also made clear in these policies that photographs from class assemblies, school trips or events must not be uploaded onto social media sites, as children may be located by their birth families and in some cases, this can put children at risk.

We also recognise that it is particularly important that our looked after children understand the risks of posting to social media sites and using the internet without supervision and this is tackled in an age-appropriate manner across school. Please refer to our E-safety policy for more information.

Register of Looked After Children

Each education establishment is required to maintain a register of children in care.

This should include up-to date information about their care status, details of their Personal Education Plans, if they are identified as gifted and talented, if their first language is not English or if they have any SEN needs as well as a record of those working with the child.

This will be available to local authority officers, Ofsted and Comprehensive Area Assessment Inspectors together with pertinent academic records comparing this discrete group with the rest of the school population.

It is part of the role and responsibility of the designated teacher to maintain this record and ensure that staff in school are familiar with any relevant information.

Personal Education Plans - PEPs

What is a PEP?

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an important document which has formed part of the official school record for looked after children/young people (LAC/YP) since 2005.

It should be a continuous record of their achievements, identification of their educational and developmental needs, clear attainment targets and long-term plans and aspirations. Its purpose is to clarify what is needed by the child to ensure progression.

It is important that social workers and the designated teacher work together to ensure that children, young people and their carers are involved in the planning of PEPs and that their views are heard and their interests represented.

Who does what and when?

The people involved in a PEP will vary according to the age, needs and circumstances of the child. Carers, young people, social workers and school staff, particularly the designated teacher. Many children will work with a named trusted adult in school, who may be a learning mentor, key worker or teaching assistant. This person may provide social and emotional support and be instrumental in supporting the young person to reach agreed targets.

The PEP is initiated by the child's social worker, but the school's designated teacher should play a key role in the design and review process, alongside the child and the carer. A key aspect of the designated teacher's role is involvement in the design and delivery of PEPs.

A PEP should be put in place for all children in public care (looked after) or statutory school age:

- When a child enters public care, the social worker will inform the school and the local authority. The social worker is responsible for initiating a PEP
- The PEP should be agreed as soon as possible and at least within 20 school days of entering care or of joining a new school

The PEP is normally reviewed concurrently with the Care Plan at the 28-day review, three (3) month and six (6) month review and then at a minimum of every six (6) months. Provision should be made to ensure that the Care Review and concurrent PEP review are not scheduled to take place during school holidays when school staff will not be available.

How do you make sure a PEP is good and effective?

The PEP should:

- recognise, record and celebrate strengths and successes
- Identify academic and developmental needs
- provide an effective starting point for identifying gifts and talents as well as needs and developing provision which matches those abilities
- set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-limited) personal and academic targets which are challenging and practical
- set out what is needed to ensure the progression of each child or young person in care
- articulate short-, medium- and long-term aspirations and plans
- agree specific timescales and responsibilities (who will do what and by when)
- explore and identify appropriate teaching and learning styles
- Identify strategies for the school to implement
- Identify how the pupil premium funding is allocated
- ensure the child has their full entitlement to support including EPG and 1:1 tuition be regularly reviewed and updated Education Progress Grants.

Eligibility criteria

All LACs including those not educated in mainstream settings and those placed out of LA area, who have been identified as at risk of not reaching their targets, not necessarily national targets, are eligible to be considered for an EPG. This should always have an education focus.

EPGs

- determined at specific points throughout the year
- EPG requests run within financial year, so an EPG to fund additional tuition would need to be considered at the first PEP review meeting of the year to allow time to arrange the tuition
- reviewed at PEP meetings or otherwise if circumstances change
- should provide additional personalised support to the child
- should pay for activities or resources which support learning and development of children additional to those a parent would usually be expected to fund for a child not looked after
- should support improvement to child's educational attainment
- should link to educational objectives outlined in PEP (e.g. extra 1:1 tuition, out of school learning and development to raise self-esteem and confidence, personalised educational trips and visits not organised by school as part of curriculum, learning resources not covered by fostering allowances or children's homes fees, wider activities to help learning and development, additional support for vocational training)
- is not ring-fenced
- should be used to prevent children from falling behind or if they are already behind to help them catch up
- additional, not instead of, services already provided (e.g. SEN statement requirements, items covered by fostering allowances/children's homes fees, School trips, basic equipment, Alternative provision for children who are excluded from mainstream school)

Local Authority responsibility

- establishing local eligibility criteria
- should establish process for determining which children are eligible
- should provide EPG for all eligible children
- pay special attention to the needs of particularly vulnerable children (e.g. those who have recently become looked after; admissions have experienced repeated episodes of care are placed out of the authority; are in residential children's home have moved schools mid-year or have experienced multiple school moves; are not in mainstream education such as Pupil Referral Units; have experienced periods with no educational provision have additional needs/SEN 9)

Admissions

For many children and young people who are looked after, school can be the only stable thing in their lives. At a time when their world is changing and everything that they know is unstable the routine of coming to school and seeing familiar faces may offer a tremendous security.

It may not always be possible, but whenever a young person is taken into care they should stay at the same school. However, when they must move away to a foster placement, it is vital that their routine is not disrupted any more than necessary and that a new school place should be found as soon as possible.

National, local and school policy should all reflect the needs of looked after children.

Current legislation supporting the admission of Looked after Children stipulates:

- a school place should be found as quickly as possible
- regulations require admission authorities to give children in care the highest priority in their admission arrangements, although exceptions apply to faith schools
- class size regulations allow for the admission of a looked after child as an excepted child if admitted outside the normal admission round but only for the remainder of that academic year after which the qualifying measures must be taken
- section 50 of the EIA 2006 empowers local authorities to direct admission authorities to admit looked after children. It also provides for those authorities to appeal to the adjudicator against such directions

Exclusions

Looked after children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions and educational settings should be especially sensitive to exclusion issues where looked after children and young people are concerned.

When then there is evidence that the LAC/YP is having difficulties in school which may be reflected through changes in attitude and behaviour, the setting should be proactive in identifying the causes of the difficulties and putting appropriate interventions into place. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and perhaps alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening.

Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion the school should try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting should be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

The child or young person's Personal Education Plan should be drawn up to reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan.

Transport

Children in care may have changes of foster or community care placement which will affect their journey to school. It is often felt that it is more important for the looked after child to continue to attend the same school which provides consistency, stability and continuity, rather than transfer to a local school. This is especially true when the placement is known to be a short-term care arrangement or the looked after child or young person is soon to take exams or leave school.

Paragraph 3.10 of Nottingham Home to School Transport Policy – Children in Care Placements states: "For children in foster or community homes the designated school is one assigned to the home. Any exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. This may include short-term foster or care placements. Where a child who is in public care and "Looked After" by the Authority moves home and it is decided that it is in the child's interests to continue to attend the same school, the Authority may decide to provide travel assistance to ensure continuity of education for the child. In these instances, consideration will be given to the distance from home to school and the length of time the child is scheduled to attend the school."

Legislation regarding Looked After Children

The Children Act 1989 outlines responsibilities to meet the needs of children with needs of local authority intervention and support. Children may be in care or accommodated in different ways as outlined in What is a "Looked after Child"? Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

Looked after children with special educational needs

Section 317 of the Education Act 1996 stipulates responsibilities schools have for children with special educational needs (SEN). A disproportionate number (60%) of LACs have special educational needs and nationally 28% have statements of SEN. The local authority has responsibility for children with statements.

Section 321(3) of the Education Act 1996 specifies the responsibilities a local authority has for looked after children who may need an assessment for a statement. It is the responsibility of the local authority in which the child is ordinarily resident which has responsibility for assessment, issuing and maintaining the statement. It is possible that for the best interests of the child whose placement is in a different authority with the agreement of both authorities, for this responsibility to be taken on by the placing authority. The placing authority should be engaged in the assessment process where they are the corporate parent of the child and should advocate for and support the child in the same way as any good parent would.

Regulation 23 of the Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) Regulations 2001 provides for the transfer of the statement for a looked after child who has an out-of-authority placement. Good practice is that local authorities should always discuss moves of LAC with receiving authorities before a final decision is made.

Regulation 5 of the Arrangements for Placements of Children (General) Regulations 1991 places a duty of notification on placing authorities whenever they place a child out-of-authority including those in 52-week residential placements.

Monitoring

The Children Act 2004 provides for joint inspection of all children's services in an area. As part of the Joint Area Review (J.A.R.) consideration is given to how the education provided meets the needs of looked after children.

School Admissions

Admissions of looked after children (England) Regulations 2006 require admissions authorities to give top priority for admissions to looked after children in their oversubscription criteria

Welfare

Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 stipulates that local authorities in England must "act under" its guidance when performing their duties under section 22 (3)(a) (duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of a looked after child) section 22 (3A) (duty to promote the educational attainment of looked after children) and section 23(1)(b) (duty to maintain a looked after child in other respects apart from the provision of) of the Children Act 1989.

Glossary of terms

Accommodated - Children who are accommodated under voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20) Parents continue to have primary responsibility, but the local authority acts as a corporate parent. The person who has parental authority is fully involved in all decision-making and can take the child away from local authority accommodation at any time.

Advocate – someone who provides independent help and support of LAC/YP

Care order - A care order is made by a court when it considered to be in the best interests of a child who has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The local authority shares parental responsibility with the parents. The care order can last until the child is aged 18 or until an alternative order, such as adoption, is made or until the order is discharged.

Care plan – arranged by the social worker, this includes the LAC/YP's details, background, needs, strategies to meet the needs and is compulsory for every LAC/YP. It must be reviewed regularly at the Care Plan Review meeting.

Care Plan Review – There is a statutory requirement (Children Act 1989) that all LAC/YP have regular, independent reviews held within 28 days of the start of a placement, then within three months and every following six months. This should include consultation with all those involved in the care and education of the child and should be attended by the child/young person, their family and carer, the social worker. Wherever possible this should coincide with the PEP review meeting

Child – anyone under 18 years of age

Child in need (CIN) – a child who is “unlikely to achieve or maintain...a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of services by a local authority...” (Children Act 1989)

Futures – organisation which provides information and guidance for all young people aged 13 – 19

Contact Order – court order setting out contact arrangements for LAC/YP with other person named in order (usually family member/s)

Designated Teacher – qualified teacher with sufficient authority to enable appropriate provision and support in school to meet identified needs of LAC/YP and act as advocate on their behalf

EPG - Education progress grant which can be applied for through the Virtual School

Foster carer – person who looks after children in care on behalf of the local authority

Leaving Care Service – service which provides advice and support on accommodation, benefits, employment, training etc for 16–17-year-olds leaving care

Looked after Children/Young People LAC/YP – those who are either subject to a care order or who are accommodated

Parenting order – court order requiring parents to attend guidance sessions

Pathway Plan – LAC/YP leaving care at 16-17 have Pathway Plan to help them plan their future and to find accommodation, claim benefits, find suitable employment or training

Personal Education Plan (PEP) – a statutory document initiated within 20 school days of a child going into care or changing educational setting. It should be reviewed regularly (every six months at least), ideally at the same time as the care plan review. The PEP records progress to date as well as details of child, carer etc and identifies achievements as well as areas where support is needed in school. Strategies and resources, including access to services, to support the LAC/YP reach short and long-term goals are identified and necessary arrangements made.

Residential care/Children's Home – a residential home run by the local authority or an approved agency where a looked after child/young person is placed

Respite care – short-term accommodation placements to support family

Useful links:

www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/childrenincare

www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess

www.teachers.tv

www.governet.co.uk

www.teachernet.gov.uk