

The Four Stones Multi Academy Trust

Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children Policy

Version Control

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Version	Date	Details
1.0	15 th July 2019	Policy written to reflect the formation of The Four Stones Multi Academy Trust
2.0	18 th May 2020	Changes made to reflect the new leadership structure across the MAT
3.0	24 th May 2021	No changes
4.0	1 st Sept 2021	General updates-eg replacing 'associate headteacher' with 'headteacher'

In the following policy, the term looked-after refers to all looked-after and previously looked-after children.

A previously looked-after child is one who is no longer looked-after in England and Wales because s/he is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order. This includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.

We believe that all looked-after children should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and be able to achieve at a similar level to all Worcestershire children.

We recognise that nationally there is considerable educational underachievement of children in residential and foster care, when compared with their peers. Closing the gap between the achievement of looked-after children, previously looked-after children and their peers remains a high priority. We are committed to implementing the principles and practices to ensure our looked-after and previously looked-after children achieve at least in line with their peers.

All staff, trustees and governors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for looked-after children by ensuring that:

Advocacy

- Staff are aware that being or becoming looked-after has a major impact on children's lives and that when considering children's learning and/or behaviour, due consideration will be given.
- The Designated Teachers in each school in The Four Stones Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and all staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Headteacher.
- School staff, trustees and governors are aware and adhere to of the DfE statutory guidance: 'Duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children (2014)'.
- There is a dedicated and trained governor in each school to monitor the work of the school in supporting its looked-after children as a part of a larger group of vulnerable children.

Documentation and Monitoring of Progress

- We contribute to the process whereby all looked-after children have a high quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting a school in the MAT or becoming looked-after. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child-eg student profile, IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need or Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. Please note that we do not produce PEPs for previously looked-after children.
- PEP targets will reflect the outcomes everyone, most importantly the child, aspires to. These will determine the need for pupil premium plus (PP+) for the child. Personalised, specific and meets individual child's needs. Adapted frequently as the student develops over each term.
- The PP+ funding is used to improve educational outcomes for our looked-after children. Interventions will be tailored to the characteristics and experiences of the individual, ensuring the child makes at least good or excellent progress.
- The child's views will be sought by the Designated Teachers, in a way that best promotes the child's engagement and will be noted on the PEP.
- If appropriate the child will attend the PEP and contribute.
- Following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by the relevant staff in order that the child has the opportunity to achieve his or her targets.
- The schools in the MAT will assess each child's attainment either on entry to the school or on becoming looked-after to ensure continuity of learning. These baselines will be recorded in the PEP. We will not, however, use these to refuse admission to the school.
- The schools will meet Virtual School deadlines for submission of attainment and progress data.
- The schools will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all looked-after and previously looked-after children at regular intervals and report this to the Virtual School on a termly basis. Where a child is underachieving, an interim PEP review will be arranged to discuss how this underachievement will be addressed.
- The schools will be proactive to discuss the progress of looked-after and previously looked-after children, where there are causes of concern, with the Virtual School.
- The school will be proactive in sharing effective practice, where looked-after and previously looked-after children are making noticeable and/or significant progress.

Joined up Working

- Where appropriate we will send representatives to any review held for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- We will send reports to any review held for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- We will forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition. The Virtual School will assist and will ensure any additional information is also forwarded.
- We take a proactive approach in co-operating with and supporting the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of our looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- We liaise with other agencies as appropriate so that our looked-after and previously looked-after children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- At school, we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents, carers and caseworkers to enable looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve their full potential.
- We ensure that Virtual School, parents, carers and social workers are kept fully informed of the progress and attainment of the looked-after and previously looked-after children. Information between staff and other relevant professionals is on a need to know basis only and in line with confidentiality and data sharing protocols.

Training

- We will attend training arranged or recommended by the Local Authority regarding the roles and responsibilities involved in the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

- The Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Governance

- We have a trained governor in each school designated to lead on children in care and other vulnerable groups.
- We ensure that the Designated Teachers report at least once a year to the Local Governing Body on the training they have received, the safety, attainment and progress of the looked-after and previously looked-after children and the impact of the PP+.

Admissions

- The Trust Board and the Local Governing Bodies adhere to the Admissions Code (2014) and Local Authority protocol for the Admission of looked-after Children (2016). Looked-after Children will not be expected to be placed via the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol.
- Due to care placement changes, we understand that looked-after and previously looked-after children may require a school placement mid-year. We will ensure that they receive the best possible start within our school and will endeavour to offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle in.
- Where an application is received for a place for an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, the school will give due attention to the agreed protocol ensuring that these vulnerable young people are swiftly admitted and integrated in to school.
- We will only refuse the admission of a looked-after or previously looked-after child if we feel that we are unable to meet the child's needs and that such admission would cause prejudice. We therefore expect professionals to have followed the Local Authority's Admissions Protocol prior to making an application to the school.

Inclusion

- This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum and reinforces the need for quality first teaching.
- The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- The Designated Teacher and other staff have the responsibility for the progress and welfare of the looked-after children.
- We encourage the looked-after and previously looked-after children to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.
- In the few instances where we review whether a child is still appropriately placed in school we will arrange an interim review of the PEP to discuss the current provision, any adaptations, required or proposed alternative arrangements. The persons involved in the PEP will be consulted at all times.
- We will only permanently exclude looked-after or previously looked-after children if we have evidence that supports the decision to permanently exclude in line with statutory guidance. We will only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy and relevant national guidance and are mindful of the difficulties this may create in the care placement.

In any case where we have concerns in relation to the behaviour, attendance and attainment of a looked-after or previously looked-after child we will arrange an immediate review of the PEP.

Looked-after Children Policy Review and Evaluation

We consider this policy to be important and we undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the schools' action plans.

Roles and Responsibilities

Looked-after and previously looked-after children are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework

This may result in:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population.
- Underachievement in further and higher education.

These issues may also affect adopted children under Special Guardianship Orders.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. To date the outcomes achieved by looked-after children have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- Giving priority to education
- Listening to children
- Providing stability and continuity
- Taking corporate responsibility
- Promoting inclusion
- Raising standards
- Intervening early
- Promoting early years experiences
- Celebrating success

The Designated Teachers will:

- Be an advocate for looked-after and previously looked-after children within our schools.
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children believe they can succeed, and aspire to further training, education and higher education and/or employment.
- Know all the looked-after and previously looked-after children in our schools and have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker.
- Know all the looked-after and previously looked-after children in our schools, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from the schools' record-keeping systems as required. It is important that the child is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the social worker, and the carer(s) are working together to promote their education.
- Ensure all teachers know when there are looked-after or previously looked-after children in their class and what the childrens' specific needs are. Sensitivity and confidentiality are critical.
- Act as the key adviser for staff, trustees and governors on issues relevant to looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Attend relevant training about looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Understand the impact of trauma, loss and separation and how this can affect behaviour.
- Understand how attachment styles can affect their learning.
- Deliver training to staff (teaching and non-teaching), trustees and governors so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantage affecting many looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Intervene if there is evidence of underachievement, poor attendance, internal truancy or risk of exclusion.

- Ensure the PP+ is used effectively to ensure looked-after children make progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- Be familiar with the statutory guidance on the role of the Designated Teacher.
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for looked-after and previously looked-after children on both the looked-after and previously looked-after children and the rest of the school community
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to looked-after and previously looked-after children and seek advice from the Virtual School when appropriate.
- Ensure that looked-after and previously looked-after children receive a positive welcome on entering school, especially mid-year and, if necessary, offer additional support and a pre-entry visit to help the child settle into school life.
- Ensure that all looked-after children have an appropriate PEP that is completed within 20 days of joining the school or of entering care (see guidance on PEPs) and ensure that the child contributes to the plan.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at termly intervals.
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a looked-after children is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual student.
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra-curricular activities for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a looked-after or previously looked-after child transfers to another educational placement.
- Contribute information to looked-after and previously looked-after children reviews when required.
- Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings etc.
- Report to the Local Governing Body on looked-after and previously looked-after children in the school and inform them of relevant policy and practice development. The reports will include:
 - The number of looked-after and previously looked-after children on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan (PEP);
 - Their attendance compared to other students;
 - Their attainment & progress compared to other students;
 - Impact of the PP+ to improve educational outcomes;
 - The number, if any, of fixed term and permanent exclusions; and
 - The destinations of students who leave the school.
- Attend Trust Board and the Local Governing Body as appropriate-eg the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Arrange a mentor (adult and /or student) to whom the child can talk to and meet on a regular basis to discuss any concerns, worries or successes.
- Ensure that any Special Educational Needs or disability are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEND. Looked-after children are six to eight times more likely to have an Education, Health and Care Plan than the general school population.

Good practice suggests that school staff will:

- Follow school procedures.
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about the looked-after and previously looked-after children's progress.
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Positively promote the raising of the looked-after and previously looked-after children's self-esteem.

- Ensure any looked-after and previously looked-after children are supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on looked-after and previously looked-after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a looked-after or previously looked-after child is experiencing difficulties.
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times.
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings.

Good practice suggests that the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises looked-after and previously looked-after children according to the School Admissions Code.
- Ensure all trustees and governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children in each school.
- Liaise with the Headteachers and Designated Teacher to ensure the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are met.
- Nominate a governor with responsibility for looked-after and previously looked-after children who links with the Designated Teachers.
- Receive termly reports from the Designated Teacher.
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give looked-after and previously looked-after children equal access in respect of:
 - admission to school;
 - national curriculum and examinations;
 - out of school learning and extra-curricular activities; and
 - work experience and careers guidance
- Annually review the implementation of the MAT's policy for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Ensure that the Designated Teachers are invited to the exclusion meetings for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Worcestershire Children First will:

- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Ensure that the education provision for this group is as good as that provided for every other Worcestershire student.
- Ensure that looked-after and previously looked-after children receive a full time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible.
- Ensure that every looked-after and previously looked-after child has a school to go to within 20 days of coming into care or of coming to Worcestershire from another authority.
- Make sure that each looked-after child has a PEP according to national guidance.
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training.
- Provide alternative educational provision where appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible.
- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer.

- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying the special educational needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and work collaboratively with other services and agencies to meet those needs.