



## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) POLICY**

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## Key Contacts

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## Acknowledgement:

- This policy is adopted with guidelines provided by Waltham Forest Virtual School for Children in Care.
- This policy is to be read alongside the post-Looked After Children (post-LAC) Policy.

*The Headteacher, Designated Teacher and Governing Body will ensure that all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.*

## Introduction:

- At Emmanuel Community School, we endeavour to create an environment where children in care have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with *Promoting The Education of Looked After Children, 2014*.
- We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for children in care, and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development.
- We promote staff training in their specific needs so that all adults are equipped to support children in care appropriately.
- Our school community aims to champion children in care and to promote their rapid progress.

## Our Aims for Children in Care:

- To provide a safe and secure environment where education is central to planning, and all adults understand the specific needs of children in care.
- To narrow the gap between the attainment of children in care and their peers, promoting **accelerated** and **rapid** progress.
- For all children in care to have a Personal Education Planning meeting every school term, and for the joint planning to actively impact on each child's learning on a daily basis.
- Children in care benefit from school-based interventions, as well as interventions linked to targets agreed at the Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting and funded via the Pupil Premium Plus.
- For all adults to provide discreet, sensitive, child-led support, with one Key Adult identified who will form a strong relationship and take a special interest in daily life at school
- Children in care will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for
- Children in care and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community, in recognition of the particular needs of this group

## Educational Planning for Children in Care - Personal Education Plans :

- The school will ensure that every child in care on roll has a Personal Education Planning meeting every school term within the statutory guidance (*Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children, February 2018*), and in collaboration with the social worker, carer and other relevant professionals.

- Any use of Pupil Premium Plus will be explicitly linked to the child’s PEP targets, and the PEP will be a living document which reflects the child’s needs, strengths, aspirations and interests.
- The Designated Teacher is responsible for ensuring that the child’s PEP plays an integral part in wider school planning.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

<p><b>The Headteacher and Governing Body</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for Children in Care.</li> <li>• They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children in Care has qualified teacher status, and has appropriate experience to fulfil this statutory role.</li> <li>• They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher in line with statutory guidance (<i>The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children, February 2018</i>) and ensure that all staff receive appropriate training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Designated Link Governor</b></p>	<p><b>The nominated school governor will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that the needs of current and former children in care in the school are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their duties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Designated Teacher for Children in Care (LAC)</b></p>	<p><b>The Designated teacher will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as the LAC advocate, target support and champion LAC in aspects of school life.</li> <li>• Be a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for Children in Care by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies;</li> <li>– developing expertise in the field of children in care;</li> <li>– providing training and offering advice to school staff;</li> <li>– promoting a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for children in care;</li> <li>– regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of children in care, school resource and staff training needs for working with this group; and</li> <li>– prioritising children in care for school-based additional support and interventions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• They will liaise regularly with Virtual Schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>All staff</b></p>	<p><b>All staff will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote improved educational life chances for Children in Care by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reading the statutory guidance and school policy for children in care; attending training as appropriate, referring to the Designated Teacher for advice;</li> <li>– playing their part in creating a ‘child in care-friendly’ culture and securing rapid progress for children in care by ensuring that they benefit from targeted support.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Attendance:**

- School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of children in care to prioritise their good attendance.
- Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality, the school will contact the carer, social worker and Virtual School as an early intervention.
- This will be outlined in the attendance policy.

### Admissions/ Transitions

School procedures to support children in care during admission and transition include:

- prioritising children in care at the point of admission in line with statutory guidance *The Admissions code (2014)*;
- the swift transfer of information between schools;
- early identification of Key Adult and peer buddy;
- additional support for children in care at times of transition;
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss.
- partnership working with the team around the child

### Additional Educational Needs

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for children in care with additional educational needs by:

- having high expectations;
- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support,
- ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic;
- ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight (*in line with the Lamb Report, Dec '09*);
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed in line with the Personal Education Plan, with an expectation of accelerated progress each academic year.

### Special Educational Needs

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for children in care who have special educational needs by:

- having high expectation of progress each academic year;
- ensuring that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is 'additional to and different from' the universal and additional needs provision (*in line with the SEN Code of Practice*);
- ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic;
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEN Code of Practice;
- ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher oversight.

### Safeguarding

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on children in care by:

- familiarising themselves with the 'School Policy for Children in Care' and following the school's child protection policy if there are any safeguarding concerns;
- they will undertake regular Safeguarding training in line with school policy.

### Exclusion

- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a child in care, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of disrupted attachments and loss.
- If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to minimise the length of the exclusion and ensure that alternative provision is in place from day one of the exclusion.
- School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of children in care.

**Multi-Agency Working:**

School staff will make every effort to engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of children in care.

**Appendix: Some useful terminology when thinking about LAC and previously LAC children.**

<b>CiC/LAC/CLA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children In Care, Looked After Children, Children Looked After – describes children who are in the care of the LA (Local Authority).</li> <li>• Children can be looked after either as a result of a care order (S31) or in agreement with their parent(s) (S20).</li> </ul>
<b>Care Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An order granted by the courts following consideration of evidence that suggests it is in the best interests of the child to be accommodated/in care.</li> </ul>
<b>LPM – Legal Planning Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Local Authority (LA) planning meeting – looking at the evidence in preparation for entering the court arena.</li> </ul>
<b>LOI – Letter of Intent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issued to parent(s) – stating the intention of the LA as they prepare to enter the court arena – or actions to be taken to prevent legal proceedings.</li> </ul>
<b>FGC – Family Group Conference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructed by court, the LA arrange for a formal meeting involving extended family members to discuss whether there is scope/if it is viable for a family member to have the child in their care.</li> <li>• The meeting is facilitated by the LA.</li> </ul>
<b>Care proceedings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the court arena – evidence heard from all sides – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) parent(s)</li> <li>2) the Local Authority and</li> <li>3) Guardian Ad Litem (child’s voice)</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Placement Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific to adoption care plans – in order for a child to be placed for adoption, the LA needs to secure a Placement Order (used to be called a Freeing Order) to allow them to eventually place a child with an adoptive family.</li> </ul>
<b>S20</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 20</b> – a legally binding agreement between the LA and the parent(s). Parents are therefore in agreement for their child to be in care.</li> <li>• Parent(s) retain full PR. Parent(s) must abide by the S20 – any attempt to break the agreement may instigate a LPM and entry into the court arena.</li> <li>• Post-16, the young person can voluntarily ‘refer’ themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>ICO – Interim Care Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court gives authority to the LA for the duration of care proceedings - a care order that cannot last indefinitely - needs a conclusion/to be resolved definitively.</li> <li>• See PLO definition below.</li> </ul>
<b>FCO – Full Care Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcome of care proceedings (if the child is to remain in care) - FCO lasts until adulthood. Case no longer in care proceedings – case concluded.</li> <li>• Also known as <b>Section 31</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>LTF - Long term fostering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is LAC until adulthood (21) and lives in a LT placement.</li> </ul>
<b>STF - Short term fostering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By definition – not LTF. Case is in care proceedings – leading to either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) LTF or</li> <li>2) return to parents or</li> <li>3) SGO or</li> <li>4) CAO or</li> <li>5) adoption.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Child is placed with ST carers until permanency/stability is secured.</li> </ul>
<b>PLO – Public Law Outline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strict PLO timescales - 26 weeks – from entry into care to final conclusion of care proceedings.</li> <li>• PLO ensures there is no drift and children left in limbo not knowing what their long term care plan is.</li> </ul>
<b>SGO – Special Guardianship Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An order granted by the courts – not long term fostering but not adoption either – person with SGO is not a foster carer – they are the ‘legal parent’ and make decisions just as any parent would.</li> <li>• Once the SGO is granted, child ceases to be LAC.</li> </ul>
<b>CAO – Child Arrangement Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A melding of Residency Order and Contact Order - a CAO not only dictates where the child will live and who they will be living with (like a Residency Order), but may also detail aspects such as contact with</li> </ul>

	parent, siblings, support packages etc.
<b>SW – Social Worker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The person who has the principle overview and responsibilities to co-ordinate all services for the child. Note: if a WF LAC moves to another borough, the SW remains the same – that child will always be a WF LAC. Similarly, you may have a LAC from another borough (eg Tower Hamlets) who resides in WF and attends your WF school – they are not a WF LAC, they ‘belong’ to another borough.</li> </ul>
<b>SSW – Supervising Social Worker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not the child’s social worker – the SSW is the social worker for the foster carer. They support the placement and the carer (rather than the child per se).</li> </ul>
<b>In-house foster carer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WF’s own foster carers. Some are specifically approved as short term carers – some are long term approved.</li> <li>As is often the case in many LAs, we do not have enough FCs, so often have to use PVI carers.</li> <li>Or we may not have the ‘right’ FC for a particular child.</li> <li>Or it may be that the child needs to live a significant distance from WF for a number of reasons.</li> </ul>
<b>PVI – Private Voluntary and Independent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agencies (and their carers) who are not ‘in-house’.</li> <li>Many PVIs offer specialist services – examples: large sibling groups, children with sexualised behaviours, children with challenging SEMH and SEBD profiles, children with profound and complex health needs etc.</li> </ul>
<b>FC - Foster carer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An approved foster carer – one who has been trained, been presented to panel and approved.</li> <li>They may be approved for a certain age, or approved as either short term or long term.</li> <li>They are subject to annual reviews and on-going training, support and professional development.</li> </ul>
<b>Connected persons carer (formerly ‘kinship’ carer)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to be confused with a private arrangement between family members.</li> <li>Kinship or connected persons foster care is not a private arrangement.</li> <li>The carer is an approved ‘connected person’.</li> <li>They are an approved foster carer – the difference between a connected persons carer and a ‘standard’ foster carer is that a connected person carer is approved for that particular child (kin) only.</li> </ul>
<b>IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IRO chairs the LAC reviews. They have an oversight of all aspects of the care plan – they look at the placement, education, health, contact and any other aspects of the care plan.</li> <li>LAC reviews happen <b>within 28 days</b> of becoming LAC, then at 3 months then 6 monthly after that.</li> <li>Unless there is a change in home placement and the process described above begins again.</li> </ul>
<b>PR – Parental Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the child is S20 – parent(s) retains full PR but acts in partnership with the LA. Once an ICO is in place, the LA and the parent(s) share PR but the LA has the over-riding power.</li> <li>Same once the FCO is in place – LA and parent(s) share PR but (like the ICO), the LA is the Corporate Parent and makes decisions.</li> <li>With SGO, parent does retain some PR but the ‘principle’ person with PR is the SG.</li> <li>With adoption – PR is fully with the adoptive parent(s).</li> </ul>