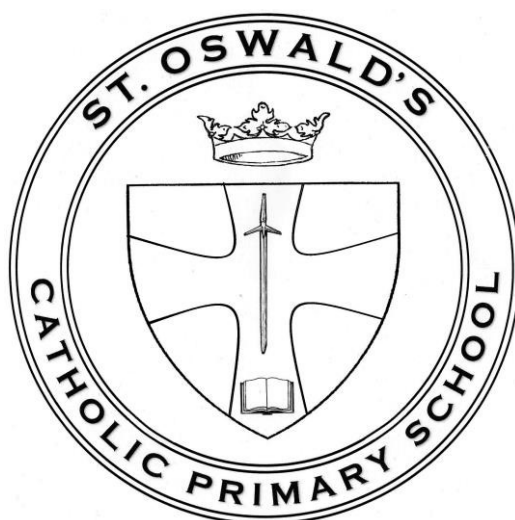


# **St. Oswald's Catholic Primary School**



## **Children Looked After Policy**

Approved by:	Approval date	Renewal date
Standards Committee	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	Autumn 24

This is the policy for children who are looked after is set within the context of the whole school aims and Mission Statement:



*Together with Jesus, we will  
Learn and Grow in Faith.*

#### **Introduction:**

At St. Oswald's Catholic Primary School, we believe that each child should learn in an atmosphere surrounded by love. We aim to promote a learning atmosphere where positive values in behaviour and attitudes are created. In every class all children will be given the opportunity to develop his/her true potential academically, morally and spiritually. The children in our care will be taught to value each other and the world around them.

The staff and Governing Body of St Oswald's Catholic Primary School places the highest priority on the responsibilities they have to actively contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Children Looked After or previously looked after, in accordance with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002. The Governing Body and staff of St Oswald's are committed to providing a safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of Looked After Children. All reasonable measures are taken to ensure that the risks of harm to their welfare are minimised.

#### **Aims:**

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for LAC and previously-LAC are of real concern. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation.

We would like to ensure that the children on roll at St Oswald's Catholic Primary School have their individual needs met and receive equal opportunity in education despite any disadvantage they have encountered or continue to encounter in their lives. To ensure that this aim is met the following roles and responsibilities have been agreed within the school.

#### **How this will be achieved:**

- ☐ By ensuring that staff play a positive and active role in the life of children who are looked after.
- ☐ By appointing a designated teacher and governor with immediate responsibility for the academic progress of Children Looked After, who will meet regularly to monitor progress.
- ☐ By working with all appropriate agencies in the development of the PEP.
- ☐ Ensure children's termly targets for the PEP are specific to the individual child and clearly outline the strategies that will be used in school to ensure children are making good progress.
- ☐ Monitor children's progress regularly and celebrate achievements.
- ☐ Ensure children have access to interventions that are suitable within school to develop academic progress and enhance a positive mental well-being.
- ☐ Through discussion, if deemed appropriate, with the child and/or any relevant adults.
- ☐ By ensuring regular and relevant training for the designated teacher, Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or governor.

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the principles of the School Mission Statement and will be reviewed annually.

**Definition:**

**“Looked-after children (LAC)”** are defined as:

- ☐ Children or young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- ☐ Children who are placed in foster care, children’s residential homes, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- ☐ Children subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the LA has parental responsibility.
- ☐ Children who are not subject to an order, but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

**“Previously-LAC”** are defined as:

- ☐ Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- ☐ Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from ‘state care’ (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

**Legal Framework:**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- ☐ Children Act 1989
- ☐ 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 (2018) ‘Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children’
- ☐ DfE (2018) ‘The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children’
- ☐ DfE (2017) ‘Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England’
- ☐ DfE (2021) ‘Keeping children safe in education 2021’
- ☐ DfE (2018) ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’

To ensure that the aims of this policy are met the following roles and responsibilities have been agreed within the school.

The **named Governor** Mrs Johanne Jones should be satisfied that:

- The school has a coherent policy for children who are looked after
- The school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and guidelines
- The designated teacher has received appropriate training
- Looked after children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- The Governing Body receives an annual report

The **Head Teacher** Miss Hay will:

- Be responsible for all systems to support looked after children
- Be the named point of contact for colleagues in social services and education
- The Head Teacher, SENCO and SLT meet when necessary with the DT regarding the education of CLA at the school
- Report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
  1. the number of looked after pupils in the school
  2. an analysis of teacher assessment and NFER scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
  3. the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils
  4. the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils -the number of complaints

The **Designated Teacher**, Miss Guy, and **Family Liaison Officer**, Mrs Mahon, will have lead responsibility in helping all staff to understand how to support CLA children. They will:

- Ensure that any 'looked after child' is made to feel welcome and valued
- To ensure there is a central point of contact in school for CLA related enquiries
- Liaise with home school link leads in school to share information and support each other's role.
- Ensure information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- Ensure that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children who are looked after and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining high expectations for their educational achievements.
- Ensure children's termly targets for the PEP are specific to the individual child and clearly outline the strategies that will be used in school to ensure children are making good progress.
- Monitor children's progress regularly and celebrate achievements.
- Ensure children have access to interventions that are suitable within school to develop academic progress and enhance a positive mental well-being.
- Make sure CLA children are prioritised for extra-curricular clubs and wider opportunities within school
- Act as an advocate for looked after children in order to enable equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances.
- Liaise with other professionals
- Be responsible for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
- Monitor the educational progress of all looked after children and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern.

- Build positive home-school relationships between parents/carers with regular opportunities for dialogue.

**The virtual school head (VSH) is responsible for:**

- ☐ Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
- ☐ 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 LAC and previously-LAC.
- ☐ 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 previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
- ☐ Managing the school's allocation of pupil premium plus (PP+) for LAC.
- ☐ 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 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.

**The DSL Miss Hay is responsible for:**

- ☐ Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- ☐ Promoting amongst staff the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and previously-LAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- ☐ Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

**The SENCO is responsible for:**

- ☐ Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and previously-LAC.
- ☐ Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of previously-LAC.

**Staff are responsible for:**

- ☐ Being aware of LAC and previously-LAC and providing them with support and encouragement.
- ☐ Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- ☐ Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and previously-LAC.
- ☐ Being vigilant for any signs of safeguarding concerns surrounding LAC and previously-LAC due to their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns to the DSL as soon as possible.
- ☐ Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and previously-LAC.

**Personalised Education Plans:**

All LAC must have a care plan; 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 potential. The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

The school with other professionals and the child's carers will 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, the designated teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

The PEP will address the pupil's full range of education and development needs, including:

- ☐ Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
- ☐ On-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work.
- ☐ Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
- ☐ Transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school.
- ☐ School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
- ☐ Support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
  - Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
  - Children will be praised and celebrated when they have achieved their termly personal targets
  - Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
  - Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

The VSH and the designated teacher will ensure that information is included within a LAC or previously-LAC's PEP surrounding how they are benefitting from any use of PP+ funding to improve their attainment.

Any interventions supported by PP+ will be evidence-based and in the best interests of the pupil.

**Safeguarding**

St Oswald's recognises that many LAC and previously-LAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation. All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and previously-LAC as soon as possible.

Where a LAC or previously-LAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks. The headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and previously-LAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or previously-LAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the designated teacher if they believe a LAC or previously-LAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

## **Mental health**

LAC and previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The designated teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

The school understands that the increased frequency of mental health problems amongst LAC and previously-LAC may present a barrier to adequately identifying when mental health problems are indicative of a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who maintain regular contact with LAC or previously-LAC are vigilant surrounding any changes in the mental health, behaviour, social inclination or mood of these pupils.

The school's senior mental health lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and previously-LAC, and will always either be a member of, or be supported by the senior leadership team and could be the pastoral lead, SENCO, or DSL.

## **Exclusions**

Past experiences of LAC and previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the school's Behavioural Policy.

The school will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.

Where the school has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will engage proactively with the social worker or carer of a LAC to provide appropriate support for underlying issues that may be causing poor behaviour and improving this behaviour.

Exclusion will only be used as a last resort, after the school and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the pupil's education in the event of exclusion.

The school will inform parents that they can seek the advice of the VSH on strategies to support their child to avoid exclusion.

Permanent exclusion will only occur where there has been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behavioural Policy or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others.

### **Pupils with SEND**

Support for LAC with SEND, who do not need an EHC plan, will be covered as part of the child's PEP and care plan reviews.

The SENCO, class teacher, designated teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for previously-LAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and previously-LAC with SEND are supported in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy, with extra consideration given to the fact that some of the usual procedures for supporting pupils with SEND may lack applicability for LAC, e.g. where LAC are in residential care and, thus, will have their EHC plans taken care of by the LA rather than the general stipulation of the place where they are ordinarily resident.

### **Information sharing**

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and previously-LAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out include:

- ☐ Who has access to information on LAC and previously LAC and how data will remain secure.
- ☐ 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 LA departments.
- ☐ How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.