



SPENCER
ACADEMIES TRUST

The Mease Spencer Academy

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER & PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER POLICY

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1. Trust Policy Statement

Spencer Academies Trust (SAT) is committed to supporting looked after children (LAC)/children in care (CiC) and those who have been previously looked after (PLAC). Department for Education guidance is clear that all schools have a statutory duty to ensure that children who fall into these categories are well supported to ensure that they achieve their potential at school. As a Trust supporting the most vulnerable children is at the heart of everything we do.

This Trust-wide policy applies to all staff, including the Board of Directors, Governors, Central Team Staff, volunteers, agency staff, students or anyone working for and on behalf of SAT.

As part of our focus on diversity and inclusion, SAT pledges that our policies will seek to promote equality, fairness, and respect for all staff and pupils.

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'Trust' refers to SAT. The term school and the term academy are interchangeable. The terms Looked After Child (CLA) and Child in Care (CiC) are interchangeable.

2. Introduction

We recognise that each child/young person is unique, with different lived experiences, different talents, and different hopes and dreams. Statistically, however, without additional support and intervention, looked after children and those who have previously been looked after by the local authority are at increased risk of experiencing:

- lower attainment at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in comparison with their peers;
- poorer attendance and higher suspension rates than their peers;
- a higher level of disruption/change to their educational placements than their peers;
- a lower level of involvement in extracurricular activities than their peers and;
- underachievement in further and higher education compared to their peers.

Our aim in each SAT academy is to create a school environment where high quality and inclusive teaching is underpinned by strong routines and relationships that enable all pupils to flourish, whilst also being proactive to recognise and support the needs of our most vulnerable, including those who are experiencing or have experienced the care system.

3. Scope and Aims of the Policy

This policy is designed to promote the educational achievement, welfare and successful progression of pupils in SAT schools who are looked after by the local authority or who have previously been looked after by the local authority.

It complements the *SAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* and outlines the commitment of all SAT schools to:

- fully and holistically support children who are looked after or previously looked after in order to help them reach their educational potential;
- identify a Designated Teacher to work with the local authority in order to promote the educational outcomes of students who are in care or were previously looked after;

- ensure that all staff clearly understand their role and responsibilities in relation to pupils who are looked after or were previously looked after by the local authority;
- demonstrate commitment to multi-agency working by fully participating in processes that support children in care (e.g. Personal Education Planning meetings and Looked After Child Review meetings);
- recognise the importance of staff training on the barriers a child with experience of the care system may face and how to support these children to overcome any such barriers in line with best practice approaches, and;
- provide families, carers and other relevant agencies with information on the duties and responsibilities of school to promote the educational outcomes of children who are looked after or were previously looked after.

4. Definitions

4.1 Looked After Children (LAC)

A child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a local authority if they are in the care of the local authority or get accommodation from the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This term can be used interchangeably with the term 'Child in Care'.

4.2 Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)

A child is previously looked after if they have ceased to be a child looked after as a result of:

- A Child Arrangements Order (CAO)
- A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- Adoption

4.3 Personal Education Plan (PEP)

This is an education focused plan that forms part of a looked after child's wider care plan. It contains short, medium and long term targets with details of how their Pupil Premium Plus funding is being used to support them in achieving these targets and fulfilling their educational potential.

4.4 Virtual School Head

This person is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children in care across their local authority. They work collaboratively with schools to monitor and support children who are looked after as if they were in a single virtual school. They are also responsible for providing information and advice to schools and parents/carers.

4.5 Pupil Premium Plus Funding (PP+)

Pupil Premium Plus Funding is managed by the Virtual School Head and is designated for the purpose of meeting the needs and supporting the educational achievement of children in care.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Board of Directors will:

- hold the relevant members of the SAT Executive Team to account regarding the educational outcomes and welfare for looked after children or previously looked after through termly Quality and Standards Meetings and Safeguarding and Inclusion Meetings;
- ensure that each academy has appointed a Designated Teacher (DT) to oversee the education and support for looked after or previously looked after children;
- ensure that the DT has the appropriate seniority, professional experience, training and skills to perform the role.

5.2 The SAT Executive Team will:

- provide strategic leadership within the Trust for the educational outcomes and support for looked after children or previously looked after children;
- ensure that all policies and procedures are reviewed and updated in line with national and local requirements and appropriate changes disseminated to all academies;
- ensure that there are systems in place to support the effective management of looked after and previously looked after children, especially the role of DTs, training for staff and supervision as appropriate;
- ensure that all staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to promote the educational outcomes and holistic development of children who are looked after or previously looked after;
- ensure that there is available to Principal's someone who can offer appropriate advice and support with concerns;
- ensure quality assurance processes are in place and oversee the information they produce;
- produce information for the Board of Directors in order to ensure that the Board can demonstrate that it is discharging its obligations appropriately.

5.3 The Local Governing Body will:

- monitor the educational experience and outcomes of looked after or previously looked after children in their academy and provide challenge to the Principal as required.

5.4 The Principal (Julia Hart) will:

- work closely with ELT, their Local Governing Body, as appropriate, their senior leadership team and the Designated Teacher to ensure that strategic development and whole school improvement mechanisms lead to the best educational outcomes for looked after or previously looked after children;
- take overall responsibility for the educational experience of looked after or previously looked after children.

5.5 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (Julia Hart) will:

- work closely with the Designated Teacher to provide support and provision as required for looked after or previously looked after children;
- ensure that the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS) is kept up to date for looked after or previously looked after children, including details of their social worker and their Virtual School Headteacher;
- engage with relevant training and development opportunities provided by the Virtual School;

- work with the Designated Teacher to ensure that information about looked after or previously looked after children is shared appropriately and sensitively, taking into account the child's wishes wherever possible.

5.6 The Designated Teacher (Julia Hart) will:

- work with the Virtual School Headteacher and other external agencies, as required, to ensure that the needs of children who are looked after are met, including how Pupil Premium Plus funding will be used to support this. This will be done through contributing to, monitoring and reviewing the Personal Education Plan within statutory timescales.
- work with the Virtual School to promote the educational outcomes of previously looked after children recognising that, although they may not be subject to the Personal Education Plan process, they may still require support and guidance;
- coordinate input from key staff members such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Behaviour Lead and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator to develop plans of support for children with overlapping vulnerabilities;
- ensure that school staff understand the impact that life experiences of looked after or previously looked after children can have on the way in which they learn and develop, including strategies that can overcome any difficulties;
- promote a culture in which children who are looked after or previously looked after are able to discuss their progress, be involved in their own target-setting, have their voice heard, and be supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- promote a culture in which looked after or previously looked after children are encouraged to participate in enrichment, extra-curricular and student leadership opportunities;
- liaise with teaching staff to ensure that looked after or previously looked after children are prioritised for interventions and targeted support as required;
- ensure that there are positive and productive relationships with the parents/carers of looked after children and previously looked after children so that school and home can work in partnership to foster the academic and personal development of the child;
- ensure that any transitions of looked after or previously looked after children (e.g. moving to Secondary School or Further Education) are supported by robust plans to minimise any anxiety that could arise;
- work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns relating to looked after or previously looked after children are responded to quickly and effectively.

5.7 All Staff will:

- ensure that all looked after or previously looked after children have the opportunity to reach their educational potential by having equally high aspirations and expectations of them as their peers, but also providing any scaffolding or support required to help achieve them;
- be aware of the potential emotional, psychological and social impact of loss and separation from birth families;
- understand that some looked after or previously looked after children may find it difficult to develop trusted relationships with adults due to their life experiences and development, and that they may need a more proactive approach to develop these relationships;
- prioritise students who are looked after or previously looked after when planning support and intervention in the classroom, but also with other opportunities that arise in school such as student leadership, field trips and extra-curricular activities;

- understand the importance of seeing looked after or previously looked after children as individuals rather than a homogenous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity to their background.

6 Working in Partnership

The support that our academies give pupils to help dismantle barriers should not be viewed in isolation. We are wholly committed to working with parents, carers, the local authority, the Virtual School and any other relevant agencies to ensure a holistic and collaborative approach is taken to promote the achievement and development of looked after or previously looked after children.

We value the views of parents/carers and we believe that developing strong partnerships is vital to enable all children to reach their full potential.

We recognise the essential contributions that external support services such as Children's Social Care and the Virtual School make in supporting both the academic and personal development of looked after or previously looked after children.

7 Links with Other Policies and Guidance

This Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Policies and is underpinned by the below statutory guidance:

- Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Academy Anti-Bullying Policy
- Academy Behaviour Policy
- Academy Attendance Policy
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)
- [The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children - February 2018](#)
- [Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children – February 2018](#)
- [The Designated Teacher \(Looked After Pupils etc\)\(England\) Regulations 2009](#)
- [The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 \(Section 20\)](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)
- [Children Act 1989](#)

8 Policy Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. We will monitor the application of this policy to ensure it is working effectively to achieve its core purpose of promoting the educational achievement, welfare and progression of all looked after or previously looked after children in SAT schools.