



Overarching Looked After Children Policy

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“Learning together, to be the best we can be”

1. Scope

- 1.1. This overarching Looked After Children (LAC) policy has been developed and published to outline the Nexus Multi Academy Trust commitment to a best practice approach in ensuring the best possible support for LAC and previously LAC.
- 1.2. To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Nexus LAC and previously Looked After Children.
- 1.3. Our pupils' welfare is our paramount concern. Trust Governance will ensure that an academy within Nexus will safeguard and promote the welfare of LAC and work together with other agencies to ensure that the academy has adequate arrangements to identify, assess and support them.

2. Ethos

- 2.1. We believe that all our academies should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of each individual child.
- 2.2. Every one of our academies is a community and all those directly connected - staff members, governors, parents, families and pupils - have an essential role in ensuring our LAC and previously Looked After Children thrive.
- 2.3. We recognise the importance of providing an environment within our academies that will help **all** children succeed.
- 2.4. We will work with carers to build an understanding of the Trust's responsibilities to ensure the welfare of LAC and previously LAC, including the need for regular communication to other agencies in some situations.

3. The legal framework

- 3.1. LAC and previously LAC are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of looked after children have suffered abuse or neglect and it is nationally recognised that considerable educational underachievement exists when compared to their peers.
- 3.2. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is '**looked after**' by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
 - children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
 - children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
 - children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).
- 3.3. The term '**In Care**' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the Court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with Foster Carers, in a Children's Home, in a Residential School, with relatives or with parents under supervision.
- 3.4. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are '**accommodated**' by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.
- 3.5. All these groups are said to be '**Looked After Children**'. They may be looked after by the Local Authority or may be in the care of another authority but living locally.
- 3.6. "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).

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. All schools must have a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

- 4.1.1. The Trust Board of Directors is committed to providing a quality education for all its students based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. 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" (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of looked after children.

- 4.1.2. The Headteacher will ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the Trust Board are fully implemented in their academy(s) and sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable staff members to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities
- 4.1.3. Those in a governance role are collectively responsible to the Trust Board for ensuring that arrangements for LAC and previously LAC are fully embedded within the academy's ethos and reflected in the academy's day-to-day practice.
- 4.1.4. All staff members, governors, volunteers and external providers know how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse, how to respond to pupils who disclose abuse and what to do if they are concerned about a child.

5. Admissions

- 5.1. The Trust Board endorses the appropriate Local Authority policy for the admission of LAC. Due to changes in care placements, looked after children may enter an academy at any time in the term. At Nexus, we believe that it is vital that all new students receive a positive welcome and full support for their inclusion in our learning community.

6. Inclusion

- 6.1. This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. This LAC Policy reinforces the need for teaching and learning that is fully inclusive. The Trust Board, via the Chief Executive Officer, will ensure the academy makes appropriate provision for all looked after students.

7. Allocation of Resources

- 7.1. The Trust Board, via the Chief Executive Officer, will ensure that the academy allocates resources to support appropriate provision for LAC and previously LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. Schools will work in partnership with Local Authority Virtual Schools for looked after children and other Virtual Schools for students who are from other Local Authorities, to ensure that looked after children receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve.

8. Record keeping

8.1. The Designated Teacher knows all the looked after children in the academy and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Local Authority Virtual Schools specialist staff, teacher/support worker and social worker. The status of looked after children is identified within the school's information systems so that information is readily available to all classroom teachers and relevant associate staff. LAC are identified as a vulnerable group when tracking, monitoring and reporting on attainment and progress.

9. Monitoring progress

9.1. Each academy assesses each looked after student's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The social worker for the looked after child initiates a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of the student joining the school, or of entering care, and ensures that the young person is actively involved. Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP review meetings and provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, specialist teacher from the Virtual School (or other Virtual School, where the child is from another Local Authority) and other agencies. The allocation and purpose of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) will be included within the PEP. All PEPs are completed electronically through the online system provided by Welfare Call.

10. Staff Induction, Training and Development

10.1. We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support a looked after child / previously looked after child. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to raise awareness of issues associated with LAC within the academy and disseminate information.

11. Partnership with Parents/Carers and Care Workers

11.1. We believe in developing strong partnerships with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC and previously LAC to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this collaboration and partnership working.

12. Confidentiality, Consent and Information Sharing

- 12.1. We recognise that all matters relating to LAC and previously LAC are confidential. The Headteacher, DSL or the Designated Teacher will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only.
- 12.2. All staff members must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being.
- 12.3. All staff members have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
- 12.4. All our staff members who come into contact with children will be given appropriate training to understand the purpose of information sharing in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- 12.5. We will ensure that staff members are confident about what they can and should do under the law, including how to obtain consent to share information and when information can be shared without consent.

13. Multi-agency working

- 13.1 We will develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, including agencies providing early help services to children, the Police and Children's Social Care.
- 13.2 We will ensure that relevant staff members participate in multi-agency meetings and forums, including child protection conferences and core groups, to consider individual children.
- 13.3 We will participate in serious case reviews, other reviews and file audits as and when required to do so by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 13.4 We will ensure that we have a clear process for gathering the evidence required for reviews and audits, embedding recommendations into practice and completing required actions within agreed timescales.

14. Whistle-blowing and complaints

- 14.1. We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff members fail to do so.
- 14.2. We will ensure that all staff members are aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues.
- 14.3. We have a clear reporting procedure for children, parents and other people to report concerns or complaints, including abusive or poor practice.
- 14.4. We will actively seek the views of children, parents and carers and staff members on our child protection arrangements through surveys, questionnaires and other means.

15. Quality assurance

- 15.1. We will ensure that systems are in place to monitor the implementation of and compliance with this policy and accompanying procedures. This will include periodic audits of LAC files and records by the Designated Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 15.2. School senior leadership teams, Trust officers and/or the local governors will ensure that action is taken to remedy without delay any deficiencies and weaknesses identified in child protection arrangement.