



Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children Policy

Policy agreed by Staff on:	Autumn 2025
Ratified by Local Advisory Board on:	Autumn 2025
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Agreed Frequency of Review:	Annually
Allocated Group / Person to Review:	LAB can delegate to committee or individual member or HT
Signed by Chair:	
Signed by Headteacher:	



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Statement of Intent

Bradford AP recognises that Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) can experience specific and significant disadvantages within a school setting.

Bradford AP is committed to ensuring that all LAC and PLAC reach their full potential across all areas of development. We recognise that many LAC and PLAC may have experienced significant trauma in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect, loss and/or rejection. Exposure to these adverse and stressful experiences can have long-lasting effects on learning, as well as on a child's ability to think, regulate emotions and interact with others.

Educational achievement and future life chances for LAC and previously looked after children are a key priority. Pupils who are looked after often require additional support and attention to help improve outcomes. We believe that the educational experiences of all children should be positive and empowering and aim to provide a learning environment in which every LAC and PLAC can succeed.

Bradford AP Academy is committed to providing positive experiences and offering stability, safety, and individualised care and attention for all pupils. With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage pupils to reach their potential and make good progress in relation to their personal, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that pupils access high-quality teaching and a curriculum that meets their needs and complies with legislative requirements.
- Plan support for LAC and PLAC realistically and utilise school resources efficiently to meet identified needs.
- Promote a positive and inclusive culture across all aspects of school life.
- Support pupils in developing their cultural, moral and social understanding.
- Ensure that LAC and PLAC are healthy, achieve successfully, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

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.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2018), *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children*.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2018), *The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children*.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2023), *Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England*.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2025), *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- Department for Education (DfE) (2023), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- Behaviour Policy.
- Home–School Agreement.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

Definitions

Looked-After Children (LAC)

Looked-after children (LAC) are defined as:

- Children or young people who are subject to 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, or in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- Children subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order who are placed with a parent where the Local Authority (LA) retains parental responsibility.
- Children who are not subject to a care order but are accommodated by the LA under an agreement with their parents.

Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC)

Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England or Wales because they have been adopted, or are subject to an adoption order, special guardianship order or child arrangements order, as defined by the *Children Act 1989*.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from **state care**, meaning care provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose primary purpose is to benefit society.

Virtual School Head (VSH)

Every Local Authority is required to appoint an officer to ensure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is fulfilled. This officer is known as the Virtual School Head (VSH).

The role and responsibilities of the VSH are defined in Department for Education statutory guidance, *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children* (February 2018).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Advisory Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has a coherent policy for Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC).
- Reviewing the school's policies and procedures in line with current legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring that the designated teacher for LAC and PLAC has received appropriate training.
- Ensuring that relevant staff have access to the necessary information for each looked-after child, including:
 - Their legal status (for example, whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with parental consent, or under an interim or full care order), and contact arrangements with birth parents or others with parental responsibility.
 - Their care arrangements and the level of authority delegated to carers by the Local Authority (LA).
- Ensuring staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding required to keep LAC and PLAC safe.
- Ensuring that clear systems and processes are in place to identify and report safeguarding or mental health concerns relating to LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring that LAC and PLAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made where necessary.

- Reviewing the annual report produced by the designated teacher to evaluate the progress of LAC within the school.
- Receiving feedback from the Headteacher on the effectiveness of this policy on an annual basis.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of children looked after by their authority, including those who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements orders, or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to improve educational outcomes for LAC, including those placed out of authority.
- Building effective relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other relevant partners, to ensure designated teachers understand the support available to LAC and PLAC.
- Working collaboratively with schools to ensure that all LAC on roll are fully supported to reach their full potential.
- Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
- Acting as a source of advice and information for parents of PLAC, to enable them to support their children effectively.
- Managing the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding for LAC.
- Ensuring that robust systems are in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date record of LAC in school settings and gather information about their educational placements, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the Headteacher and designated teacher when a pupil on roll is looked after by the LA.
 - Ensure that social workers, schools, designated teachers, careers advisers and Independent Reviewing Officers understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to a pupil's Personal Education Plan (PEP).
 - Ensure that high-quality, up-to-date PEPs focused on educational outcomes are in place for all LAC.
 - Avoid delays in securing suitable educational provision.
 - Ensure that the educational achievement of LAC is prioritised by all those responsible for promoting their welfare.
 - Report regularly on the attainment, progress and attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the designated teacher for Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC).
- Ensuring that the designated teacher has sufficient time, resources and facilities to fulfil their role effectively, including access to appropriate training related to LAC and PLAC.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, reporting annually to the Local Advisory Board on:
 - The number of LAC and PLAC on roll.
 - An analysis of assessment outcomes for LAC and PLAC as a cohort compared to other pupil groups.
 - Attendance trends for LAC and PLAC compared to other pupil groups.

- Fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates for LAC and PLAC compared to other pupil groups.
- Ensuring that all staff understand that supporting LAC and PLAC is a key school priority.
- Ensuring that Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for PLAC is managed effectively. The school will work with the Virtual School to ensure that LAC receive the full range of support to which they are entitled, enabling progress and achievement across all aspects of life.
- Promoting the importance of challenging negative stereotypes associated with LAC and PLAC.

The Designated Teacher for LAC and PLAC is responsible for:

- Building strong relationships with health, education and social care partners, and other agencies, ensuring that both the designated teacher and the Virtual School Head (VSH) are aware of available support for LAC and PLAC.
- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC within the school, including pupils who left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements orders, or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main point of contact for social services and the Department for Education (DfE).
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring that LAC are supported to be involved in setting and reviewing their own educational targets.
- Advising staff on effective teaching strategies and classroom practice to support LAC and PLAC.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for appropriate one-to-one tuition and targeted support when needed.
- Leading on the development and effective use of each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP), ensuring progress towards clear, measurable SMART targets is monitored.
- Liaising closely with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO) to ensure that all pupil needs are identified and met. Robust arrangements will be in place to ensure that any undiagnosed special educational needs are reflected within the PEP and addressed through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) framework as soon as possible.
- Remaining vigilant to safeguarding concerns affecting LAC and PLAC, recognising their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting any concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Working collaboratively with the child's VSH and social worker to develop, implement and review the PEP. Children will be supported to contribute to their PEP, either by attending meetings or sharing their views through alternative means.
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be effectively used to support the child's progress and address the identified needs within the PEP, in line with the objectives of this policy.
- Working with the Headteacher to submit an annual report to the Local Advisory Board detailing the progress, attendance and outcomes of LAC and PLAC. This includes ensuring that procedures are in place to monitor admissions, progress, attendance and any exclusions, and that appropriate strategies are implemented to address identified concerns.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for:

- Maintaining up-to-date records of each Looked-After Child's (LAC) allocated social worker and Virtual School Head (VSH), understanding the roles of carers, social workers and other relevant professionals, acting as the named point of contact, and maintaining regular communication with them.
- Promoting awareness among staff of the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns relating to LAC and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) promptly, due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, maintaining up-to-date contact details for their Local Authority personal adviser and liaising with them where concerns arise.
- Acting as an advocate for LAC and PLAC to maintain high aspirations, ensure equal access to educational opportunities, and support informed decision-making that impacts future life chances.
- Ensuring that each LAC and PLAC has access to an identified **key adult** within the school whom they can talk to.
- Ensuring that children are supported to discuss their progress, are involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Being actively involved in the review of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and care plans for LAC and PLAC.
- Liaising with class teachers, the designated teacher, external specialists and parents or carers when planning and implementing interventions to support the progress of PLAC.

Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of pupils who are LAC and PLAC and providing appropriate support, encouragement and understanding.
- Preserving confidentiality where appropriate and demonstrating sensitivity to the needs and experiences of LAC and PLAC.
- Remaining vigilant for any signs of bullying directed towards LAC and PLAC.
- Being alert to safeguarding concerns involving LAC and PLAC, recognising their increased vulnerability to harm, and reporting concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay.
- Actively promoting the self-esteem and wellbeing of LAC and PLAC.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All Looked-After Children (LAC) must have a care plan, and the Personal Education Plan (PEP) forms an integral part of this plan.

The PEP is a dynamic and evolving record that sets out what needs to happen to support a pupil in making expected progress and fulfilling their potential. It reflects the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the individual educational needs of the child.

The school, in partnership with other professionals and the child's carers, will use the PEP to support the child's educational development, raise aspirations and improve life chances. All relevant partners, including the Local Authority (LA), the designated teacher and carers, will actively involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.

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

- Ongoing catch-up support for children who have fallen behind in their learning.
- Arrangements for suitable education where a child is not attending school due to suspension or exclusion.
- Transitional support where needed, such as when a child moves to a new school or educational setting.
- Attendance and behaviour support where appropriate.
- Support to enable the child to meet their aspirations, including:
 - Support to achieve expected progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
 - Careers advice, guidance and financial information relating to further education, training and employment, focused on the child's strengths, capabilities and desired outcomes.
 - Opportunities for out-of-school learning activities, study support and engagement in leisure interests.

The Virtual School Head (VSH) and the designated teacher will ensure that each LAC or Previously Looked-After Child (PLAC) PEP clearly records how the pupil is benefiting from the use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding to support attainment and progress.

Any interventions funded through PP+ will be evidence-based and implemented in the best interests of the pupil.

Working with Agencies and the Virtual School Head (VSH)

The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are shared promptly with the Looked-After Child's (LAC) social worker, as well as carers or residential social workers where applicable.

Where possible, the school will coordinate review meetings, for example by aligning the school's annual review of a LAC with their statutory care review.

The school will work collaboratively with other agencies to share relevant information, including changes in circumstances, exclusions or attendance concerns, and will take timely action where required to safeguard LAC and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC).

Behaviour management strategies will be agreed jointly between the Virtual School Head (VSH) and the school to ensure that any challenging behaviour is managed in the most appropriate and effective manner for the individual child.

The designated teacher for LAC and PLAC will maintain regular communication with the VSH and the child's social worker to support the timely completion and review of the Personal Education Plan (PEP).

Through the designated teacher, the school will work closely with the VSH, social worker and other relevant agencies to monitor arrangements outlined in the PEP. This will ensure that agreed actions and interventions are implemented without delay. The designated teacher will liaise with the VSH to agree how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding is used effectively to support educational attainment and progress.

PP+ funding for PLAC will be allocated directly to, and managed by, the school. The school will work with the VSH to manage the allocation of PP+ funding for LAC and PLAC in line with identified needs. Where appropriate, funding may be allocated to support individual pupils.

The designated teacher will ensure consistent and effective communication with the VSH regarding any LAC who are absent without authorisation.

The school will also share its expertise and effective practice with partner agencies to support improved educational outcomes for LAC and PLAC.

Training

The designated teacher and other school staff involved in the education of LAC and PLAC will receive the appropriate training, including information about the following:

- School admissions arrangements
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Homework
- GCSE options

- Managing and challenging behaviour
- Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
- Supporting pupils to be aspirational for their future education, training and employment
- Safeguarding

All training will ensure staff are equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep LAC and PLAC safe.

Safeguarding

The school recognises that many Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them entering care. The school ensures that all staff understand that such adverse experiences may increase pupils' vulnerability to further harm or exploitation.

All staff will receive training to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will apply heightened vigilance when observing and identifying such indicators among LAC and PLAC.

Where a LAC or PLAC has an allocated social worker, this information will inform safeguarding decisions, such as responses to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.

The Headteacher will ensure that appropriate pastoral support services are in place across the school to safeguard the welfare of LAC and PLAC in a way that reflects their increased vulnerability.

Staff will be encouraged to report any concerns relating to LAC or PLAC to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), in line with the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will remain alert to signs of bullying and will report concerns to the designated teacher where they believe a LAC or PLAC is being bullied. Bullying can have a particularly detrimental impact on pupils who have experienced early rejection, loss or abandonment.

Pupil Mental Health

Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are more likely to experience social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) challenges, which can impact both behaviour and educational outcomes. The designated teacher will have appropriate awareness, training and skills to recognise individual needs and support pupils in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The designated teacher will work closely with the Virtual School Head (VSH) to ensure the school is able to identify early indicators of mental health concerns, understand the impact such issues may have on LAC and PLAC, and access further assessment and specialist support where necessary.

The school recognises that the increased prevalence of mental health difficulties among LAC and PLAC may make it harder to distinguish between behavioural indicators of mental health needs and those that may signal a safeguarding concern. For this reason, the designated teacher will ensure that they, and all staff who work regularly with LAC or PLAC, remain vigilant to changes in mental health, behaviour, social interaction or mood.

The school's Senior Mental Health Lead will work alongside the designated teacher to promote the wellbeing and mental health of LAC and PLAC. This role will either be fulfilled by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or be supported by them, and may include the pastoral lead, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO), or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy will be followed when responding to both potential and identified mental health concerns affecting LAC and PLAC.

Exclusions / Suspensions

The school will take into account the past experiences of Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) when designing and implementing the school's Behaviour Policy.

In managing behaviour, the school will have due regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England* and will, wherever possible, seek to avoid the exclusion or suspension of any LAC.

Consultation with social workers, the Virtual School Head (VSH) and other relevant professionals will play a key role in identifying strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion or suspension.

Where the school has concerns about a pupil's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity. As far as possible, the school will work proactively with the social worker and/or carer of a LAC to identify and provide appropriate support for any underlying issues contributing to the behaviour and to support positive behaviour change.

Exclusion or suspension will be used only as a **last resort**, after the school and the VSH have considered what additional support may be put in place to prevent exclusion or suspension, and any alternative arrangements required to support the pupil's education during any period of exclusion or suspension.

Parents and carers will be informed that they may seek advice and support from the VSH on strategies to help prevent exclusion or suspension.

Permanent exclusion will be considered only where there have been serious and/or persistent breaches of the school's Behaviour Policy or where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of other pupils.

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 PLAC.

The designated teacher and the SENCO will ensure that LAC and PLAC 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 proportionate arrangements are in place for sharing reliable information to ensure that the educational needs of Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are understood and met.

These arrangements include:

- Clear guidance on who has access to information relating to LAC and PLAC, and how data will be stored securely.
- Processes for informing pupils and parents or carers about the information held about them, and enabling them to challenge or correct this where appropriate.
- Mechanisms through which carers contribute to, and receive, relevant information relating to the child.
- Secure systems for sharing information between the school and relevant Local Authority (LA) departments.
- Procedures for ensuring that relevant information is shared appropriately between authorities, departments and schools when pupils transfer or move placements.

The school recognises that many LAC do not wish for staff to be aware of their care status, as this can cause them to feel different or stigmatised. The school will respect and maintain confidentiality wherever possible, working in consultation with the child, their social worker and other relevant professionals.

Once confidentiality arrangements have been agreed, information relating to a pupil's care status will be shared strictly on a "need to know" basis, ensuring that the child's welfare, dignity and best interests remain central at all times.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the designated teacher and the headteacher.

All changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Responsibilities

All governors should be fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of LAC and PLAC.

The governing body will appoint a named governor for LAC and PLAC. The named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher and DT as the named staff responsible for implementing this policy.

The named Governor should:

Ensure the school has a coherent policy for LAC and PLAC, that is regularly reviewed in light of the relevant statutory guidance and that other school policies support their needs.

Ensure that the school has a DT and that the DT has the necessary time, resources and training to be able to carry out their responsibilities.

The Governing body/Stakeholders, should receive an annual report setting out:

The number of LAC and PLAC students on the school's roll

Their attendance/progress and attainment, as a discreet group, compared to other pupils.

The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.

The destinations of LAC pupils, who leave the school.

The information for this report, should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.