The Sherwood School

Looked After Children Policy

Our Mission Statement:

We are dedicated to providing the best possible education for every pupil in a safe, inclusive and stimulating environment. UNICEF's convention on the Rights of the Child is embedded within our ethos and curriculum and is valued and supported by our staff, children and families.

STATUS	FREQUENCY OF REVIEW	APPROVAL
Statutory	**1 year**	**Delegated**

Date approved: September 2026

Next review due: September 2027

Introduction

'Looked After' is a term that refers to children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility. This can happen either with parental agreement or when a Court makes a Care Order. The child may be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, with family members or sometimes with their parents. These children are therefore subject to corporate parenting.

This policy includes requirements set out in *Promoting the Education of Looked After Children (DfE:2014)* and associated guidance on the education of Looked After Children.

Governors with responsibility for LAC: **TBC**
Lead Designated teacher: **Tayla Woodman**

The Sherwood School recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad-based curriculum and aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in public care. The school and the governing body endorses the Merton LAC policy and welcomes LAC who may be looked after by our local authority or those who may be in the care of another authority but living in Merton.

The Sherwood School's approach to encouraging and supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

• Ensuring an appropriately trained Designated Teacher is appointed, who will be responsible for all Looked After children.

• All Looked After Children will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) drawn up between the school, the child, the child's social worker and the Virtual School, which will identify the child's individual needs and the support they require.

• Having high expectations for the child and ensuring equal access to a balanced and broadly based education.

• Recording, monitoring, and improving the academic achievement of the child in addition to their health and wellbeing.

• Achieving stability and continuity.

• Prioritising reduction in exclusions and promoting attendance.

• Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.

• Promoting good communication between all those involved in the child's life and listening to the child.

• Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible.

• Ensuring staff awareness of, and sensitivity to, the difficulties and educational disadvantages of Looked After Children.

Rationale

Many children and young people who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect. Despite having as broad a range of abilities as their peers, Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, Looked After Children (LAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

The Sherwood School recognises that Looked After Children can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring they reach their potential in all areas. We are aware that Looked After Children may have specific difficulties in transport and attendance, doing homework, getting parental consent for activities, obtaining funding for extra activities, obtaining correct uniform and equipment, as well as stigma about their circumstances. We recognise that Looked After Children may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty.

The Sherwood School believes that the educational experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child can be successful. We believe that this school has a major part to play in ensuring that LAC are able to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic wellbeing.

Responsibility of the Headteacher

• Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below.
• It is essential that another appropriate person is identified quickly should the Designated Teacher leave the school or take sick leave.
• Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the admission, progress, attendance and any exclusion of Looked After Children and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations.
• Report on the progress, attendance and conduct of Looked After Children to all parties involved.
• Ensure that staff in school receives relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibility of the Governing body

Ensure that all Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children: *The role and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children, Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies (DfE:2009)*

• Ensure the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Looked After Children.
• Allocate resources to meet the needs of Looked After Children.
• Ensure the school's other policies and procedures support their needs.
• Ensure that the school has a Designated Teacher, and that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out his or her responsibilities as below.
• Support the Headteacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are recognised and met.

Receive a report termly setting out:

1. The number of looked-after pupils on the school's roll (if any).
2. Their attendance, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
3. Their Teacher Assessment, as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
4. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any).
5. The destinations of pupils who leave the school.
6. The information for this report should be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned.

The role of the Designated Teacher

• Ensure a welcome and smooth induction for the child and their carer, using the Personal Education Plan to plan for that transition in consultation with the child's social worker and arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs identified and met.
• This may include providing basic equipment and resources if necessary and providing appropriate support in meeting uniform requirements if needed.
• Ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the social worker, the foster carer and the Virtual School, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
• Maintaining an up-to-date record of the Looked After Children in school, including those in the care of other authorities and ensuring all necessary information is passed to other staff and the Virtual School as required.
• Ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes.
• Track academic progress and target support appropriately
• Co-ordinate any support for the Looked After Children that is necessary within school liaising with teaching and non-teaching staff in school, including the person responsible for Child Protection as well as pastoral and subject staff to ensure they are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage LACs may face.
• Keep records of the LAC Pupil Premium Grant expenditure.
• Establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies.
• Ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a need-to-know basis.
• Promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage Looked After Children to join in extracurricular activities and out of school learning.
• Act as an advisor to staff and Governors, raising their awareness of the needs of Looked After Children.
• Set up meetings with relevant parties where the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion.
• Ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies and if the pupil changes school – to a new school.
• Be pro-active in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.
• Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied, so will actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
• Ensure that attendance is monitored.
• Attending training as required to keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding Looked After Children.

The responsibility of the all staff

• Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of Looked After Children, as for all pupils.
• Maintain Looked After Children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively.
• Respond promptly to the Designated Teacher's requests for information.
• Work to enable Looked After Children to achieve stability and success within school.
• Promote the self-esteem of all Looked After Children.
• Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of Looked After Children.
• Be aware that 60% of Looked After Children say they are bullied so work to prevent bullying in line with the school's policy.

Record keeping and information sharing

The Designated Teacher will keep an up-to-date record of Looked After Children and Young People in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff. A Personal Education Plan will be initiated in liaison with the Virtual School within 20 school days of the Looked After Child or Young Person starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the LAC/YP. The PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure all relevant parties are informed accordingly. Copies of reports and appropriate documentation will be sent to authorised carers and agencies involved with the child as well as any receiving school at point of transition. It is vital that the Looked After Child or Young Person is aware of information being recorded, in what circumstances and who will have access to it. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Suspensions

The Sherwood School recognises that Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions. Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion the school will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school. A multi-professional meeting will be arranged, bringing together all those involved with the young person to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion. The child or young person's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in the Pastoral Support Plan. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening. Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information.

Staff development and training

Arrangements will be made to ensure that the Designated Teacher is kept up to date with developments relating to the education and attainment of Looked After Children. Other staff will receive relevant training and support to enable them to work sympathetically and productively with Looked After Children, including those who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving or who have additional needs. These may include EAL, being Gifted and Talented or having learning or physical needs. Teachers with responsibility for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision and for children who are Gifted and Talented will be informed of those Looked After Children who have particular gifts, talents or learning needs and will work with them appropriately.

Support and resources

The Governing body will ensure that the school allocates resources, including professional time and expertise, to support appropriate provision for Looked After Children, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Home-school liaison

The school recognises the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable Looked After Children to achieve their potential. Open evenings as well as PEP and Care Plan review meetings provide opportunities to continue to develop this partnership working.

Admission arrangements

We recognise that due to care arrangements LAC may enter school mid-term and that it is important that they are given a positive welcome and where appropriate additional support and pre-entry visits to help them settle. The school recognises that Looked After Children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked After Children in the school's oversubscription criteria following *The Education (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006*.

Links with other agencies

The school recognises the value of working together with other agencies and organisations and will work closely with colleagues from services involved with the Looked After Child or Young Person including Social Care teams; Community Educational Psychologist; Health services, CAMHS; Youth Offending Teams.

Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. The Sherwood School is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.

Accessibility of policy documents

Parents and carers are welcome to ask for further information about any policy matter. The Sherwood School will try to arrange for the translation or summary of a document when this is requested by a parent or carer whose first language is not English.