

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

V2

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1.0 Policy Statement

Beckfoot Trust is fully committed to supporting children who are looked after or who have previously been a Looked After Child. Department for Education guidance makes it clear that all schools have a statutory duty to ensure that students who fall into the categories above are well supported to ensure they achieve their potential at school. As a Trust whose mission it is to 'create remarkable schools where no child is left behind', supporting the most vulnerable is at the core of why the organisation exists.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

2.1 This policy compliments the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and identifies the need for all schools to:

- Identify a designated teacher of suitable seniority to support a child who is looked after or previously looked after
- Ensure that all staff are clear on their responsibilities and take these seriously
- Recognise the importance of staff training on the barriers a looked after child may face and how to support them with these barriers
- Highlight the need for multi-agency work around the most vulnerable
- Provide families with information on the duties and responsibilities of schools for a looked after child.

2.2 The policy is underpinned by and compliant with:

- Department for Education statutory guidance on the designated teachers for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Section 2E of the Schools Act 2020
- Section 20 of the 2008 Act

2.3 Definitions:

- **Looked-after children (LAC)** are students who are in the care of the local authority and/or provided with accommodation by a local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.
- **Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC)** are registered students who were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:
 - a child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
 - a special guardianship order
 - an adoption order.
- **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.
- **Virtual School Headteacher (VSH)** is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these students as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools and parents.

3.0 Overarching Principles

This policy is designed to promote the educational achievement and welfare and successful progression of Looked After Children/Young People (LAC/YP) and Care Leavers (CL) who attend Beckfoot Trust. We recognise that each young person is unique, with different backgrounds, talents and aspirations. However, we recognise that LAC/YP and CL face serious disadvantage growing up and this can affect their long-term life chances. This policy therefore aims to:

- Express our full commitment to supporting young people who are defined as Looked After as in section 2.3 (above)
- To ensure all staff are aware of and understand the difficulties and issues faced by LAC/YP.
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of all staff.
- State the commitment to improving outcomes for LAC/YP.
- Describe the process and procedures in place to early identify LAC/YP and CL's and the support package and offer available to them.
- To ensure consistent best practice is followed by all staff, thereby ensuring we respond appropriately and meet the needs of learners.

4.0 Responsibilities and Arrangements

4.1 Barriers for a looked-after child

Attainment data for looked-after and previously looked-after children show that they do not perform as well at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 when compared with non-looked-after children.

Students will have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. Many of them have special educational needs. The gaps in their learning and, in many cases, the emotional impact of their experiences are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress. The complexity of this fragmented educational experience with high incidences of SEND, needs careful assessment and planning and should involve a multi-agency approach.

The support that schools and designated teachers give to students to dismantle barriers should not be seen in isolation. Students will need a wide range of support mechanisms to assist in promoting their educational achievement. The students' foster carer (or residential worker, social worker or, previously looked-after children's parents or guardian), will have day-to-day responsibilities for the child. Within the local authority the VSH will provide more strategic support or advice and information for both the child and the school.

4.2 Role of the Board

The Trust Board ensures that there is a designated qualified teacher to oversee the education and support for LAC and PLAC in each school. The Trustees will ensure the designated teacher has appropriate seniority and professional experience and training to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advise others to ensure the needs of students are catered for.

4.3 Role of the Designated Teacher for a LAC or PLAC

The designated teacher is the central point of contact within the school for students who become LAC while on the school roll or if a LAC is about to come onto roll. They will ensure that the school plays its role to the full so that arrangements made are joined up and minimise any disruption to a student's learning. Designated teachers in schools will:

- Work with the VSH and external agencies where needed to ensure students' needs are met through contributing to, monitoring and reviewing the PEP within statutory timescales.
- Ensure that school staff understand the things that can affect how a LAC learns and achieves and how the whole school supports the educational achievements of these students
- Promote a culture in which a LAC is:
 - able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning
 - prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition and that they have access to academic focused study support
 - encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system
- Liaise with curriculum staff to ensure that the LAC is a priority for interventions and tailored lessons
- Ensure that there are positive and productive relationships with home which foster students' academic and personal development
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are quickly and effectively responded to
- Fully involve parents and guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, including and requests to the VSH for advice on meeting their individual needs

4.4 Roles and responsibilities of all staff

Staff in each school will work hard to ensure that a LAC achieves their potential and this is supported by:

- Having equally high expectations of all students but providing suitable scaffolds and support
- Being aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and understand that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour
- Understanding how important it is to see the student as an individual rather than as a homogenous group, not publicly treat them different from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their background

5.0 Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed annually. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.