

Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust



LAC Policy Federation

January 2022

Next Review date: January 2024

Federation of Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools
Policy for Looked After Children
January 2022

Introduction

LAC pupils presently account for 2 of the Pupils at Torfield School and 12% of the pupils on roll at Saxon Mount School. We would expect to have a reasonably high percentage of LAC children given the specific needs of our pupils.

The post of Designated Teacher for LAC children at Torfield is held by the Assistant Headteacher Alison Love, and Caroline Higgins, Assistant Head teacher holds the post at Saxon Mount School, Rochelle Abraham, Assistant Headteacher at Torfield and Caroline Higgins are the Designated Safeguarding Leads. Other members of the SLT, including Alison Love, and Ade Olorunda, Assistant Headteacher at Saxon Mount are trained as DSLs and can also assist in supporting the Designated teacher for LAC pupils. Any of the members of SLT will attend meetings in the event of the designated teacher for LAC being unavailable.

Some of our LAC pupils will remain on our child protection monitoring procedures due to contact and care arrangements. Child Protection files will remain available in school throughout the child's time with us. The file will then follow the pupil to their new placement when they leave to go to a new school or college. Wherever possible safeguarding information will be transferred through CPOMS or downloaded and digitally shared with the receiving institution. On completion of their time at Saxon Mount a file will remain archived for reference as information held in this may need to be accessed by social services or Police at a later date and this has happened on several occasions. This is in line with our data retention policy.

There is a named Director for LAC pupils from the Trust; it is Sarah Fitzjohn-Scott. The named Director will liaise with the DSL and senior staff to monitor provision and school implementation of the policy, in order to report to the AAB and Board of Directors. The school policy for Looked After Children details the role of the designated teacher as follows;

The role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After children:

- To maintain, in conjunction with the school office and other members of the SLT, an up to date register of looked after children and inform colleagues, giving due regard to issues of sensitivity and confidentiality.
- To attend relevant training so that they are aware of statutory responsibilities and procedures for looked after children.

- To co-ordinate/deliver training to staff (teaching and non-teaching) and Governors, so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantages affecting many looked after children and the need for positive systems of support to overcome them. There is also the need to promote the involvement of looked after children in extra curricular activities, offsite educational experiences, the school council and other additional activities.
- To act as a resource and advocate for all looked after children.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in social care who support the child.
- To be one of the main points of contact for other professionals working with looked after children and ensure the timely transfer of information between agencies (other member of the SLT being the other point of contact).
- Where appropriate, the designated person will offer the school's facilities to hold LAC meetings, PEP meetings and other multi-agency meetings. The designated teacher or SLT member will represent the school at those meetings.
- To monitor the educational progress of all looked after children in order to inform the School Development Plan, Self Evaluation Form or Department Development Plans.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, repeated or sustained absence, evidence of difficulties sustaining good behaviour or risk of exclusion.
- To supervise admission of new looked after children and ensure appropriated induction into school.
- Ensure that looked after children have opportunities to play a full and active part in the life of the school and have access to extended school provision when offered.

Where necessary, the designated person will liaise with the LA education support team and the Virtual School or Children's Services of the responsible local authority for each child, in order to facilitate achievement and support of Looked After Children.

1. Provision

- 1.1 Looked after children are everyone's responsibility in a school. Schools have a significant role in raising the achievement of looked after children. Both nationally and regionally, looked after children feature disproportionately in groups vulnerable to low achievement at school. These groups include young offenders, teenage pregnancies, risk of CSE, children who are excluded, children with EHCPs: Looked after children are one of a number of groups vulnerable to low achievement, at Torfield and Saxon Mount School, where all fulltime children have EHC Plans and most children a range of complex needs, this is an additional vulnerability. The exam success of LACs compared to their peers is poor with nationally between 8 – 12% achieving 5 level 4s or above. Their lives can be characterised by instability and discontinuity as a result of change of care placement, social worker and educational provision.
- 1.2 At Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools, we strive to help every child, to achieve the highest educational standards they can, whilst providing access to a wider curriculum, promoting social inclusion, enabling children to develop the potential to make a positive contribution to society.
- 1.3 We believe that making the most of educational opportunities can significantly improve one's life chances and better enables the cycle of economic and social deprivation that represents so many of the pre-care lives of looked after or vulnerable children, to be broken. At Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools we can play a vital part in promoting and raising the achievement of these children.
- 1.4 The term achievement is used to cover academic/intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural developments. At Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools, we aim to provide a safe secure and structured setting so that pupils can learn the diverse rules of social engagement and about emotional literacy, self-confidence and self-control. It is a place where teachers provide modelling of appropriate behaviour, a place that expects high aspirations in learning and social development.
- 1.5 We believe that through implementing this and other school policy documents, and by providing a safe, secure, stable and consistent place of learning, each child can identify not just one, but many members of staff with whom they can talk, discuss problems, share difficulties and begin to find solutions.

2. The Term 'Looked After'.

- 2.1 Looked After Children is the legislative term for children and young people in care introduced in the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are accommodated by the local authority, more recently CLA has been adopted by some organisations, but not universally and this has become less used with Local authorities favouring the term 'Looked after Children' instead. 'Accommodated children' also includes those in respite care if this accumulates to 120 days or more per year. It is important not to confuse a

young person's legal status with their living arrangements. A child on a care order, for example, could be living:

- With foster carers
- In a children's home
- With relatives or friends

3. Information Sharing

- 3.1 The designated member of staff, in partnership with the SLT is responsible for sharing sensitive information about children. This is not just about keeping records but about a child's identity in school. Many looked after children are reluctant for information to be known, as they may feel they may be stigmatised as different because they do not live with their families. For other children there will be official requirements that their status is not identified. Where information is shared by selected staff, it is important that where appropriate, the young person is aware of this, although how this is shared with them will depend on their age and understanding. The explanation to a child will usually emphasis that the school, social worker and carers, are working together to promote the young person's education. For a child who is newly looked after, it is likely to be important to establish his/her view of the changed circumstances and to monitor how this impacts on behaviour, attendance and performance. Children may benefit from some preparation when they may be asked about home by other pupils or staff.

4. The Role of the Designated Member of Staff for Looked After Children in the school.

- 4.1 The Role of the Designated Teacher is:

- To maintain an up to date register of looked after children and inform colleagues. Sensitivity and confidentiality are critical.
- To attend relevant training so that they are aware of statutory responsibilities and procedures for looked after children.
- To co-ordinate/deliver training to staff, teaching and non-teaching, and governors so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantage affecting many looked after and vulnerable children and young people and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them, and the need to promote the involvement of looked after children in extra curricular activities, the school council and other additional activities.
- To act as a resource and advocate for looked after children
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in social care who support the child,
- To be the main point of contact for other professionals working with looked after children and ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies.
- Where appropriate the designated teacher will offer the school's facilities to hold LAC meetings, PEP meetings and other multi agency meetings.
- To monitor the educational progress of all looked after children in order to inform the school development plan or department development plans.

- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, repeated or sustained absence, internal truancy or risk of exclusion.
- To supervise admission of new looked after children and ensure appropriate induction into school.
- Ensure that looked after and vulnerable children have opportunities to play a full and active part in the life of the school and have access to extended school provision where appropriate.

4.2 Where necessary, the designated person will liaise with the education support team (Virtual School for LAC pupils) in order to facilitate achievement and support of Looked after Children.

5. Looked After Children Placed by Other Authorities

5.1 Looked after children placed outside their originating authority and especially those who are a long way from home are especially vulnerable. The originating authority should 'ensure that the identified educational needs of any child placed in another authority area will be effectively met in the proposed placement before it is agreed'. We will ensure that baseline assessments occur on entry and a Personal Education Plan is prepared within 20 school days of the young person starting school. Early links will be sought with the child's social worker and carer and where additional support is identified by the school, this will be provided through the school's range of provision including the Pupil Mentor and annotated in the personal education plan. The education support team will be consulted as appropriate and we will attempt to facilitate effective communications between school and originating authority.

6. Private Fostering

6.1 A child is in private fostering if they live with friends or relatives, one step removed, (e.g. neighbour or second cousin). The arrangement must exist for longer than 28 days. Placements under this time do not count as private fostering. In accordance with an amendment to the Children Act 2004 we will alert carers that the latter need to inform children's services of these arrangements.

7. School Records

7.1 For children transferring schools at points through the academic year, records will be sent on to the new school and with minimal delay.

8. Training

8.1 The designated teacher or nominated representative will attend training on the issues around looked after children organised by the local authority. Relevant information will then be circulated either electronically or at staff meetings.

9. Attendance

- 9.1 It is vital that looked after and vulnerable children have good attendance as through this, good educational standards can be achieved and a positive experience of education can occur. The school closely monitors the attendance of all vulnerable children. If difficulties are identified, the designated teacher or their representative will investigate and attempt to support good attendance. Support may be sought from social workers, ESBAS or the education support team (Virtual School). Attendance is also monitored by the governing body.

10. Exclusions

- 10.1 The guidance to schools on exclusion (2004) and the Exclusion protocol for East Sussex draws particular attention to looked after children as a group particularly at risk of exclusion. At Torfield and Saxon Mount School we ensure that all alternatives are considered before exclusion occurs. If a looked after child is excluded, notification will be sent to the child's social worker and carer and anyone who is legally defined as a parent will have the right to make representations and to appeal. If a child is at risk of permanent exclusion, a professionals meeting or Annual Review will be held as soon as possible. In all cases, all available possibilities will be considered prior to issuing any exclusion.

11. Part-time Time Tables

- 11.1 Part time timetables are rarely used at Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools. However, in the unlikely event that a part time program is considered for a looked after or vulnerable child, in order to assess need and resource allocation, consideration will be given as to how the rest of the time will be filled so that the young person has a full timetable with supervision and can be productively occupied when not in school. We are aware that where children are on part time timetables, periods spent out of school will from September 2006 be classified as authorised absences in accordance with DfES guidance.

12. Special Educational Needs

- 12.1 All children attending Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools have special educational needs. These needs are monitored by the Headteacher as is provision identified in the child's Statement or EHC Plan. Regular assessment and monitoring occurs, which provides information to teaching staff planning individual learning programs.
- 12.2 All children have Individual Education Plans related to their particular needs. All children have access to a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum, and are given programs which support and extend their academic learning, emotional development and behavioural skills.
- 12.3 Additional support is offered to children who need to be targeted in terms of their progress, either in core skills or in aspects of learning related to their specific individual needs, with TA staff or other staff.

13. The Personal Education Plan (PEPs) or Additional Needs Plans (ASP)

- 13.1 Personal Education Plans for looked after children are statutory planning meetings which should occur within 20 school days of a child becoming looked after, reviewed at three months and thereafter 3 times during the academic year. A current PEP should be in evidence at every statutory review of the child's care plan and updated if significant changes occur. For LAC pupils with an EHCP the annual review process and documentation is considered one of the 3 per year PEPs.
- 13.2 At Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools we aim to communicate effectively with social work colleagues to support them in preparing a PEP including providing data relating to the pupils' progress and targets set. Often Social workers will rely on information provided by the child's Individual Education Plan, which is written by school staff in conjunction with parents / carers and the child. Other assessment information can be provided by school staff to assist this progress including information from Multi Agency Pupil Progress meetings and the 3 times per year data collection showing progress in learning.

14. Transition

- 14.1 Transition points are often daunting for most children but can be amplified for looked after and vulnerable children. Within our schools we aim to provide a safe secure and supported transition. For children transferring to other schools, we use the Annual Review process to help identify appropriate school placements and post 16 provision. When a transition occurs, relevant staff are responsible for liaison with parents / carers/ social workers and receiving school or college staff. We also provide opportunities to visit possible new placements, and facilitate Taster experiences. Post transition support is always offered to children and can last for up to four terms in their new school/college placement. For children transferring from Torfield or other schools to Saxon Mount School, relevant staff facilitate a safe and supportive transition and there are well established procedures for transition into Year 7, these are the responsibility of the Y7 team leader. In addition, at Saxon Mount School we have an Additional Support team whose role is to provide ongoing support for all LAC pupils throughout the secondary phase of their education.

15. The Curriculum

- 15.1 Some aspects of the curriculum may be difficult for looked after and vulnerable children such as 'My Family' or designing a card for mother's/father's day. In such instances, teachers will ensure that alternative activities are available, should the child need them, so that any difficulties can be avoided. For further advice on the curriculum, teachers will liaise with the designated teacher, or to the school advisory service.

16. Flexible Curriculum

- 16.1 Looked after Children, like many young people, will often need additional support in order to make progress. They will be given every opportunity to learn and achieve in ways best suited to their individual needs, including, where possible appropriate programs. School staff will aim to ensure a full range of assessments and examinations are available to all looked after or vulnerable children and that additional support is provided where necessary.

17. Expectations

- 17.1 Low expectations by adults have been identified as one of the key reasons that looked after children and vulnerable children fail to achieve. Staff at school will contribute to providing an ambitious agenda for pupils through a combination of consistency, high expectations, personalised programs, regular assessments and additional support where necessary.

18. Extended School

- 18.1 Being a member of the school community is very important for the social and emotional development of looked after children and they are therefore to be encouraged to take a full and active part in any extended school activities and additional enrichment activities including visits and trips out of school. These will be made available reflecting the support needs of the individual child.

19. Further and Higher Education (Saxon Mount School)

- 19.1 In conjunction with our intensive provision, and KS4 team, we operate a clear exit plan procedure for looked after and vulnerable children. All students are required to have had a careers interview, an application for FE and / or applied for fulltime employment before completing their compulsory education. Additional support is provided for children experiencing difficulties with this process.

20. Key Stage 4 (Saxon Mount School)

- 20.1 Looked after and vulnerable children are required to have the opportunity of work experience and some participation in FE in line with LA guidance. Effective liaison with parents / carers is mandatory and placements are planned with pupils' specific needs in mind.

21. Support for Looked After Children

- 21.1 All Looked after children are supported by the designated teacher at Torfield or Additional Support Team at Saxon Mount School, and a form tutor who is responsible for communication between school and home. The school monitors and evaluates academic and social and emotional development, which is fed back to LAC review meetings. Usually this is done by the designated teacher for LAC, or member of SLT.

This policy is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the Assistant Headteacher, who reports to the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher and Governors about the effectiveness of the policy on request.

Executive Headteacher Date

January 2022