



St Ives School



Designated Teacher Policy

(looked-after and previously looked-after children)

Dissemination: Website and Staff Shared Drive

Date of Approval: November 2023

Date policy becomes effective: Immediately

Review date: November 2024

Person responsible for Implementation and Monitoring: Head of School

Links to other relevant policies: Admission, Safeguarding, Behaviour, Exclusion, Pupil Premium Strategy, SEND, Attendance,

Introduction:

We believe that all Children in Care (CiC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) should have equitable access to excellent educational provision which ensures their achievements are in line with, or better than, their peers. Our school community aims to be a champion and advocate for Children in Care and PLAC, and will take a proactive approach to support success and achievement, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting children and young people's social and emotional development and enhancing outcomes. We believe that we should take a whole school approach to supporting CiC and PLAC by:

- Providing a safe and secure environment, which values education and demonstrates our commitment to the abilities and potential of every child
- Using Pupil Premium Plus funding prudently to make a positive impact on the educational, personal and social development of children
- Ensuring CiC and PLAC have access to age appropriate education; a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their needs and supports onwards progression to Post 16 opportunities.
- Recognising and celebrating the achievements of CiC and PLAC
- Ensuring all staff set high standards and are ambitious for the outcomes of CiC and PLAC, encouraging achievement and success

- Providing designated, trusted adults who have the time and resources available to listen and support CiC and PLAC
- All teachers understand and are aware of the needs of CiC and PLAC and actively promote their best interests
- Ensuring adults are sensitive to the child's wishes about what is known, and by whom, about their care status
- Ensuring effective systems are in place to keep staff up to date and information about CiC and PLAC
- Ensuring that a nurturing and trauma informed approach and understanding of ACES helps to support CiC and PLAC
- Ensuring that CiC and PLAC are given appropriate resources and support to engage in home learning (homework and remote learning)
- Ensuring there is a partnership approach between the LA, parents, carers, the school and other agencies and professionals
- Ensuring that all staff understand and actively support the variety of emotional issues and trauma that may understand a child's ability to engage in learning, including feels of loss, rejection, isolation, confusion and low self esteem
- Ensuring that all staff understand and can support a child to manage unresolved feelings about their own families and siblings, and insecurity about their current homes and carers
- Ensuring special educational needs are quickly identified and appropriate provision is made.

1. Aims:

Our school aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff with appropriate training, support, skills and knowledge, is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this as well.
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's [statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children](#).

It also takes into account [section 20](#) and [section 20A](#) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and [section 2E](#) of the Academies Act 2010.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

Looked-after children are students who are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Previously looked-after children are students who fall into either of these categories:

1. They 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
2. They are identified as having been looked after by the school because of evidence that they have:
 - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
 - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

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 is appropriately supported to reach their full potential.

Virtual school head (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, parents and carers in respect of previously looked-after children.

4. Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Mrs Rebecca Hickson – rhickson@stives.tpacademytrust.org

Our second contact for CiC and PLAC is: Ms Cesca Ryder –
fryder@stives.tpacademytrust.org

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are the initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in this Policy.

5. Role of the designated teacher

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
 - Working with VSHs
 - Promoting a whole-school culture where the needs of these pupils matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand:

- The things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked-after children learn and achieve
 - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these students
- Contribute to the development and review of whole-school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Involve parents, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education

5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place

- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for students
- Ensure that:
 - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered
 - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced
 - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan

Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

5.3 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium plus funding
- Access training and keep up to date with good practice, to ensure that they and other school staff have strong awareness and training around the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and how to support them
- Liaise with VSHs to contribute to decisions about how pupil premium plus funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their educational outcomes
- Help raise the awareness of parents, carers and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium plus funding and other support for these children, including encouraging parents and carers to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding

- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium plus funding is used to support previously looked-after children
- Encourage parents', carers' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium plus funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas such as attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and make sure other staff also have awareness and understanding of this
- Ensure the [SEND code of practice](#), as it relates to looked-after children, is followed
- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and how these can impact on the children and their ability to engage in learning, and understand where the school can draw on specialist services
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs
- Work with senior leaders and other relevant staff to put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children

5.4 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children

- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
 - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
 - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
 - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
 - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents, carers or guardians
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:
 - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
 - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents

- Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
 - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
 - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
 - Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

6. Personal Education Plans

Every Child in Care must have a PEP. A PEP meeting must take place, by law, within 10 school days of a child coming into care, or if there has been a significant change in their life e.g. change of school, carer or social worker.

It is the responsibility of the Designated Teacher to ensure the PEP is completed, and that it is appropriate to best meet the child's needs.

The DT will make every effort to complete the PEP within 10 working days of the PEP meeting.

The DT will ensure that appropriate, accurate and up to date information is available during the PEP meeting, including:

- attainment (from their subject teachers)
- attitude to learning (from their teachers)
- attendance
- exclusion
- student voice
- inviting other professionals and agencies involved in supporting and educating the child.

7. Special Educational Needs

The DT is responsible for coordinating work with the SENDCO to ensure that any special educational needs are quickly identified and appropriate provision is made. Early identification and action is crucial.

Where a CiC has an EHCP, the annual review will be scheduled to coincide with one of the six monthly Statutory Care Reviews or termly PEP.

8. Admissions

CiC and PLAC have priority in school admissions policy and procedure. Any application for admission of a CiC or PLAC will be prioritised by the school who will ensure that advice is immediately sought from the child's current or former school about their needs and whether the school is able to meet these. CiC and PLAC will be admitted as soon as possible, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for the child alongside the school's responsibility for their safety and safeguarding. The importance of a positive transition is crucial and the school recognises the critical importance of 'getting it right' from the outset and ensuring provision and support are in place to meet the needs of the child. The school will not admit any child without first ensuring that the appropriate educational provision and support is in place.

The DT will coordinate transition arrangements for CiC and PLAC and ensure that all relevant information is obtained at the outset.

9. Attendance

The Attendance Officer/ Administrator will prioritise CiC/PLAC within the attendance procedure, including first day absence reporting. Concerns about attendance will be referred by the DT to the school's EWO. High attendance will be recognised and celebrated in educational meetings. For children with a protection plan, the DT will ensure that social care and carers are contacted if the child is absent from school as a priority.

Requests for term time absence for CiC/PLAC will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. In line with school policy for all children, requests for term time holidays will not be authorised.

10. Exclusion

The DT will liaise with the Virtual School, EWO and Social care to proactively reduce the risk of exclusion for CiC and PLAC.

In the event of a fixed term exclusion, the DT will oversee the educational provision for the child during the exclusion.

As with all students, the school will explore alternatives to minimise exclusion including the use of Trust Exclusion where appropriate.

11. Responsibilities of the Governing Board

Governors (and the Governor with responsibility for CiC and PLAC) will be informed about

- the number of CiC and PLAC on roll (reported termly)
- The attainment of CiC and PLAC compared to peers and national data (reported termly)
- Authorised and unauthorised absence for CiC and PLAC (reported termly)
- Exclusions for CiC and PLAC (reported termly)
- The use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus funding
- To review the Designated Teacher policy annually, ensuring it is fit for purpose and complies with relevant legislation and associated policies.