



THE CONSORTIUM
ACADEMY TRUST

Shaping Positive Futures

Looked After Children Policy

The Consortium Academy Trust (TCAT)
An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee
Company Number 07665828

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**NB – This document can only be considered valid when viewed on The Consortium Academy Trust website. If the copy is printed or downloaded and saved elsewhere the Policy date should be cross referenced to ensure the current document is referenced*

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Statement of intent

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously-LAC (PLAC) are a significant focus. Learners who are looked after require careful consideration and positive discrimination to ensure that their life chances are equitable with their peers.

The Consortium Academy Trust (the Trust) endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our learners. With this in mind, we:

- encourage learners to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their personal, social and emotional development
- ensure that learners enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which is aspirational but meets their needs and the requirements of legislation
- plan support for LAC realistically and use the academy's resources efficiently to ensure their needs are met
- promote a positive culture in all aspects of school life
- help learners develop their cultural, moral and social understanding
- actively engage in processes designed to support LAC learners and their 'families'

1. Legal Framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to 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
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2018) 'The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children'
- DfE (2024) 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement'
- DfE (2022) 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust and academy based policies and documents:

- Admissions Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Promoting Equal Opportunities Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy

2. Definitions

2.1. **“Looked after children (LAC)”** are defined as:

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

2.2. **“Previously-LAC”** are defined as:

- Children who are no longer looked after by an LA in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- Children who were adopted outside England and Wales from ‘state care’ (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. The Local Governing Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the academy adheres to the Trust policy for LAC and Previously-LAC.
- Reviewing the working practices of policies and procedures in conjunction with legislation and statutory guidance.
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher for LAC and Previously-LAC is a member of the Leadership Team able to champion the learners
- Ensuring the Designated Teacher has received appropriate training.
- Ensuring that appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to each looked after child:

- Legal status (i.e. whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.
 - Care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the LA.
 - Ensuring that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep LAC and Previously-LAC safe.
 - Ensuring LAC and Previously-LAC have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and that reasonable adjustments are made, if necessary.
 - Reviewing the report produced by the Designated Teacher to evaluate the progress and other performance indicators of LAC in the academy.
- 3.2. The Virtual School Headteacher within the LAC home authority (VSH) is responsible for:
- Monitoring the attendance and educational progress of the children in their authority looked after; this includes children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders, or who were adopted from state care outside of England and Wales.
 - Ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's LAC, including those placed out-of-authority.
 - Building relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the Designated Teacher understand the support available to LAC and Previously-LAC.
 - Working with the academy to ensure all LAC in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential.
 - Acting as the educational advocate for LAC.
 - Acting as a source of advice and information to help parents of Previously-LAC as effectively as possible.
 - Managing the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for LAC in accordance with LA agreed procedures.
 - Ensuring there are effective systems in place to:
 - Maintain an up-to-date roll of the LAC who are in academy settings, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress.
 - Inform the Headteacher and Designated Teacher if they have a learner on roll who is looked after by the LA.

- Ensure social workers, academies, designated teachers, careers and independent reviewing officers understand their role and responsibilities regarding a learner's PEP.
- Ensure that up-to-date and effective PEPs that focus on educational outcomes are maintained for all LAC.
- Avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision.
- Ensure the educational achievement of LAC is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment, progress and attendance of LAC through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

3.3. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Appointing the Designated Teacher for LAC and Previously-LAC.
- Allowing the Designated Teacher the time and facilities to succeed in carrying out their duties.
- Overseeing this policy and monitoring its implementation, feeding back to the Local Governing Board on the following:
 - The number of LAC and Previously-LAC in the academy
 - An analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other learner groups
 - The attendance of LAC and Previously LAC, compared to other learner groups
 - The level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other learner groups
 - Engagement in the wider life of the school
 - Celebrating success of this key group
- Ensuring all members of staff are aware that supporting LAC is a key priority.
- Ensuring PP+ for LAC and Previously-LAC is managed effectively (processes will be dependent on the child's home authority and the Designated Teacher must be aware of the variation in allocation of PP+)
- Promoting a culture that actively challenges negative stereotypes of LAC.

3.4. The Designated Teacher (DT) for LAC and Previously-LAC is responsible for:

- Building relationships with health, education and social care partners and other partners so that they and the VSH understand the support available to LAC and Previously-LAC.

- Promoting the educational achievement of LAC and Previously LAC; this includes those that left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- Acting as the main contact for social services and the DfE.
- Promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- Ensuring LAC are involved in setting their own targets.
- Advising staff on teaching strategies for LAC, with support from other key leaders.
- Ensuring that LAC are prioritised for one-to-one tuition and other appropriate supports, where available and identified as necessary
- Leading on how the child or young person's PEP is developed and used to ensure their progress towards targets is monitored and reviewed.
- Liaising with the SENDCO to ensure all learner needs are met, where there is identified need.
- Working with the child's VSH and social worker to develop and implement their PEP.
- Working with the VSH to discuss how funding can be used to support progress and meet the needs identified in their PEP.
- Working with the Headteacher to submit the LGB Report on LAC.

3.5. The DSL is responsible for (this may also be the Designated Teacher):

- Keeping up-to-date records of LAC's respective social worker and VSH.
- Highlighting the importance of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns regarding LAC and Previously-LAC as soon as possible due to their increased vulnerability to harm.
- Where a child ceases to be looked after and becomes a care leaver, keeping up-to-date contact details of their LA personal advisor and liaising with the advisor as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

3.6. The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring they are involved in reviewing PEP and care plans for LAC and Previously-LAC.
- Liaising with the class teacher, designated teacher, specialists and parents when considering interventions to support the progress of Previously-LAC.

3.7. Staff are responsible for:

- Being aware of LAC and Previously-LAC and providing them with support and encouragement.
- Preserving confidentiality, where appropriate, and showing sensitivity and understanding.
- Being aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some learners may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences.
- Being vigilant for any signs of bullying towards LAC and Previously-LAC.
- Promoting the self-esteem of LAC and Previously-LAC.

4. Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- 4.1. All LAC must have a care plan; PEPs are an integral part of this care plan.
- 4.2. The PEP is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a learner to enable them to make the expected progress in all aspects of their academic and personal development and fulfil their potential.
- 4.3. The PEP will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.
- 4.4. The academy, with other professionals and the child or young person's carers, will use the PEP to support their educational needs, raise their aspirations and improve their life chances.
- 4.5. All relevant bodies, such as the LA, the Designated Teacher and carers, will involve the child in the PEP process at all stages.
- 4.6. The PEP will address the learner's full range of education and development needs, including:
 - *Primary schools only:* Access to nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age.
 - On-going catch-up support for children and young people who have fallen behind with work.
 - Suitable education provided by the LA, where the child or young person is not in school because of suspension or exclusion.
 - Transitional support where needed, such as if a child or young person is moving to a new school.
 - School attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate.
 - Support to help the child or young person meet their aspirations, which includes:

- Support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications.
- Careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

5. Multi agency working and Information Sharing.

- 5.1. The Trust is aware that strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital to identifying and responding to the needs of LAC and Previously-LAC.
- 5.2. Our schools will work proactively and collaboratively with other professionals in other agencies and organisations in line with the framework of expectations outlined in the government's Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance document by:
 - Collaborating with services to achieve shared goals and share information.
 - Learning from evidence and sharing perspective to evaluate provision.
 - Prioritising and sharing resources depending on pupils' needs.
 - Celebrating inclusivity and diversity and challenging discrimination.
 - Mutually and constructively challenging others' assumptions in a respectful manner.

Information Sharing

- 5.3. The school recognises the importance of proactive information sharing between professionals and local agencies in order to effectively meet pupils' needs.
- 5.4. Staff will be made aware that whilst the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place a duty on schools to process personal information fairly and lawfully, they also allow for information to be stored and shared for safeguarding purposes, as data protection regulations do not act as a barrier to sharing information where failure to do so would result in the pupil being placed at risk of harm. If staff members are in doubt about sharing information and data protection legislation, they will be encouraged to speak to the DSL.
- 5.5. Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data will be put in place to ensure that the education needs of LAC and Previously-LAC are understood and met. The arrangements set out will include:

- Who has access to information on LAC and Previously-LAC and how data will remain secure.
 - How pupils and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them.
 - How carers contribute to and receive information.
 - Mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant LA departments.
 - How relevant information about individual pupils is passed between authorities, departments and the school when pupils move.
- 5.6. School staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils. This will include sharing information about any adults with whom a pupil has contact, which may impact the pupil's safety or welfare, where necessary.
- 5.7. The school will aim to be as transparent as possible by telling families what information they are sharing and with whom, provided that it is safe to do so.
- 5.8. The school will ensure that copies of all relevant reports are forwarded to the social workers of LAC, in addition to carers or residential social workers.
- 5.9. The DT will ensure consistent and strong communication with the VSH regarding LAC who are absent without authorisation.
- 5.10. The school will share their expertise on what works in supporting the education of LAC and Previously-LAC.

6. Training

- 6.1. The Designated Teacher and other staff involved in the education of LAC and Previously-LAC will receive the appropriate training, including:
- Admissions arrangements
 - SEND
 - Attendance
 - Exclusions
 - GCSE options
 - Information sharing
 - Managing and challenging behaviour
 - Promoting positive educational and recreational activities
 - Supporting learners 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 Previously-LAC safe.

7. Safeguarding

- 7.1. The school is aware that LAC and Previously-LAC most commonly become looked after because of abuse and/or neglect and because of this, they can be at potentially greater risk in relation to safeguarding.
- 7.2. The school recognises that many LAC and Previously-LAC have experienced trauma, abuse or complex family circumstances that have led to them being placed in care, and will ensure that all staff are aware that experiences of adversity such as these can leave pupils vulnerable to further harm or exploitation.
- 7.3. All staff will be trained to recognise signs and indicators of safeguarding concerns and will ensure that extra vigilance is practiced in observing and identifying these indicators amongst LAC and Previously-LAC as soon as possible.
- 7.4. Where a LAC or Previously-LAC has a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding, e.g. responding to absence from education where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.
- 7.5. The Headteacher will implement appropriate pastoral support services in place throughout the school to ensure that the welfare of LAC and Previously-LAC can be adequately protected to the extent that reflects their increased vulnerability.
- 7.6. Staff will be encouraged to report to the DSL any concerns they have over LAC or Previously-LAC in line with the processes outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- 7.7. When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a LAC or Previously-LAC is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the school will collaborate in the multi-agency strategy discussion where appropriate to determine the pupil's welfare and plan rapid further action as necessary. The school's representative at any strategy discussion meetings will be sufficiently senior, skilled and experienced, and authorised to make decisions on the school's behalf. Information and analysis about the pupil and their family will be provided as required.
- 7.8. Staff will be regularly encouraged to look for signs of bullying and report to the DT if they believe a LAC or Previously-LAC is being bullied, as this can have a particularly negative impact on pupils who have early experiences of rejection or abandonment.

8. Learner Mental Health

- 8.1. LAC and Previously-LAC are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. The Designated Teacher will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child or young person's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.
- 8.2. The Designated Teacher will work with the VSH to ensure the academy is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on LAC and Previously-LAC, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.
- 8.3. A strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be completed when requested to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about a LAC and Previously-LAC's current emotional wellbeing. Teachers will complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

9. Exclusions

- 9.1. Past experiences of LAC and Previously-LAC will be considered when designing and implementing the Behaviour Policy.
- 9.2. The academy will have regard to the DfE's statutory guidance 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and learner referral units in England' and, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.
- 9.3. Where the academy has concerns about a child's behaviour, the VSH will be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- 9.4. Exclusion will only be used as a last resort, after the academy and VSH have considered what additional support can be provided to prevent exclusion, and any additional arrangements to support the learner's education in the event of exclusion.

10. Learners with SEND

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. The SENDCO, class teacher, Designated Teacher and specialists will involve parents when considering interventions to support their child's progress.
- 10.3. If appropriate, the VSH will be invited to comment on proposed SEND provision for Previously-LAC.