

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



Thomas Hickman School

Looked After Children Policy

Adopted by Thomas Hickman School

Adopted by Governors Full GB:

October 2022

Governing committee accountable for review:

Date of next review:

October 2023

Signed:

Date:

Alan Sherwell: Chair of Governors



As a **Trauma Informed School (TIS)** staff at Thomas Hickman understand that **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** will impact a child's ability to manage school life and inhibit their ability to learn and reach their ambitions.

Research shows that children with **3 Aces or more** are:

- Twice as likely to experience academic failure
- Five times as likely to have attendance problems
- Twice as likely to be overweight
- Thirty two times more likely to have behaviour problems

For every additional ACE there is an increased risk of learning difficulties, behaviour problems, obesity and mental health issues later in life.

Staff at THS know that emotionally available adults in school actually shape the neurocognitive development of executive functions in the child's frontal lobe and therefore interrupt the impact of ACES – in essence, adults who have a strong relationship with a child can redirect a child's future.

Therefore, staff work tirelessly to:

- Understand a child's 'story' – what's happened to them in their little lives so far, **not** 'what's wrong with them'?
- Develop secure attachments with the children in their care
- Ensure that children are kept **safe**, are **seen** and **soothed** and that they feel **secure**.
- Help children to understand how the 3 main areas of the brain work to support their emotional literacy, co-regulation and, ultimately, work towards self-regulation all of which are far more challenging for a child with ACES.

Hand on Heart is a whole school approach that encompasses **TIS** alongside **Norfolk Steps** methodology to ensure that our school community is a place where children are ready to be curious, take flight and learn well, leading to a sky of opportunity and a successful adult life.

Definition

'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 children 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 'Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004' and associated guidance on the education of Look After Children.

Governor responsible: Sakina Yaqoob

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Pippa Brand-Benee

Designated Teacher: Sarah Brew

Thomas Hickman 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 board endorses the Buckinghamshire Council 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 Buckinghamshire.

Thomas Hickman School's approach to encouraging and supporting the 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, and the child's social worker, 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 – at Thomas Hickman School we have a bespoke 'Flying Start' curriculum which provides rich, relevant and exciting learning opportunities for all children in order to address social disadvantage. Our curriculum is fully inclusive and designed to reach every child: it supports and challenges them to achieve their full potential and to soar to success.
- 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 good attendance and punctuality
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes
- Promoting good communication between those involved in the child's life and listening to the child
- Maintaining and respecting the child's confidentiality wherever possible

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

Rationale

Children and young people who are in care have suffered trauma; many through 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. 75% of Looked After Children leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping LAC succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

Thomas Hickman School recognises that Looked After Children can experience specific and significant disadvantage within a school setting, and is committed to ensuring that 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. Thomas Hickman School recognises 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.

Thomas Hickman School believes that the education experience of all children should be positive and powerful and aims to provide a learning environment in which every Looked After Child will 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 and make a positive contribution to society, achieving economic wellbeing.

Responsibility of the Head Teacher

- Identify a Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, whose role is set out below. Sarah Brew is the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.
- 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 receive relevant training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

Responsibility of the Governing Body

- Ensure that all the Governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Looked After Children.
- The Education (Admission of Looked After Children England) Regulation 2006. Relevant DfE guidance to Governing Bodies (Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors).
- Ensure that 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 Head teacher, the Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are recognised and met.
- Read the termly report presented by the designated and address any areas of underperformance, satisfying themselves that everything is being done, as per policy to support any LAC.

The role of the Designated Teacher

- Ensure a warm 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.
- Ensure arrangements are put in place to ensure their needs are 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 any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.
- Maintain 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 as required.
- Ensure that each Looked After Child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to. This need not be a 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, 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 LAC may face.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with home and both 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 to a new school, if the pupil changes 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 actively monitor and prevent bullying in school by raising awareness through the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored.
- Attend training as required to keep fully informed of the latest developments and policies regarding Looked After Children.
- Prepare an annual report for Governors outlining:
 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 responsibility of all the 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 be vigilant to prevent bullying in line with the school's policy.

Record keeping and information sharing

The Designated Safeguarding lead will keep an up-to-date record of Looked After Children in school and will ensure that relevant information is made known to appropriate staff – this is in line with our Hand on Heart programme; it is important for staff to know the child's story so they can form secure attachments and be an emotionally available adult for the child.

A Personal Education Plan will be initiated within 20 school days of the Looked After Child starting at the school or being taken into care and the plan will be reviewed regularly as necessary to meet the needs of the LAC. The

PEP will provide a regular opportunity to review progress, note any concerns and ensure that 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 is aware of what information is being recorded, who will have access to it and in what circumstances. How this is shared with them will depend on their age and level of understanding.

Exclusions

Thomas Hickman School recognises that Looked After Children are particularly vulnerable to exclusions.

Where a LAC is at risk of exclusion, the school will try every practical means to maintain the child in school. A professionals meeting will be arranged, bringing together those involved with the LAC to discuss strategies to minimise the risk of exclusion.

The child's Personal Education Plan will reflect strategies to support the child and where relevant those employed in their Pastoral Support. All relevant measures and resources will be considered to provide support and provide alternative educational packages to prevent an exclusion from happening.

. As part of our Hand on Heart approach, we understand that behaviour is a language and we will always look beyond the behaviour and try to understand what the child is sharing with us through their behaviour. Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for more information

Working Together

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 including Social Care teams, Educational Psychologist, Health Services, CAMHS and Youth Offending Teams.

The school recognizes the value of a close working relationship between home and school and will work towards developing a strong partnership with parents and/or carers/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.

Admission arrangements

We recognize 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 recognize that Looked After Children are an 'excepted group' and will prioritise Looked After Children in the school's over subscription criteria following the DfE Admissions Code (Admissions of Looked After Children (England) Regulations 2006).

Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities Statement

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race, disability or ability. Our planning incorporates reasonable adjustments to cater for the needs of all groups and individuals. Thomas Hickman School is a 'No Outsiders' school and is therefore committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential.