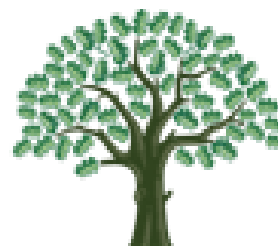


Children Looked

After Policy



Acorn Park

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Purpose:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) Acorn Park can be a source of stability for children who may have been subject to emotional distress and disruption. Acorn Park is a place where children form and maintain positive relationships with adults and their peers and provides a place where they feel safe and secure which in turn allows them to thrive.

At Acorn Park, we believe that LAC and PLAC have distinct identities, aspirations and particular needs as a result of their experiences. This can lead to them having specific and significant disadvantages within a school setting compared to their peers. ACORN PARK believes that the educational experience of all students should be positive and empowering; its aim, to create a climate which is conducive to success and supports the student to achieve their true potential in all areas.

Aims and Objectives:

- To create a nurturing environment which provides continuity and stability.
- To help build self-confidence and self-esteem.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers.
- To encourage robust, home/residential school links.
- To support and improve educational progress and promote achievement.
- To ensure that LAC and PLAC have equal access to their bespoke curriculum pathway at Acorn Park and associated nationally recognised accreditations or certificates in personal progress.
- To identify the roles and responsibilities of staff in providing for LAC and PLAC.
- To ensure that the Acorn Park anti-bullying strategies and equal opportunities policies encompass LAC and PLAC.
- To develop close liaison with, and effective co-operation between all relevant agencies involved in the care of LAC and PLAC e.g. Social Services, Department of Health and Educational Social Worker (ESW), Virtual Schools.

Rationale:

LAC and PLAC are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of LAC and PLAC have been exposed to or experienced significant trauma in the form of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) including abuse or neglect, loss and/or rejection from the adults in their lives. When children experience these stressful and difficult experiences, it can have a long-term impact on their learning as well as their ability to link and process information, retain knowledge and interact with others. It is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers and they are at greater risk of exclusion. This can result in poor exam attainment in comparison with the general population with fewer LAC and PLAC progressing to Higher Education and following progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being.

3 Policy (Legal Framework)

Under the Children Act 1989 (updated 2004), a child is considered looked after by a local authority if they are in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the local authority.

They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20).
- Children who are the subject of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38).
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46).
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term '**in care**' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a children's home, in a residential establishment, with relatives or with parents under supervision.

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential establishment.

All these groups are said to be 'Looked After Children' (LAC). They may be looked after by **Together for Children (Norfolk)** or may be in the care of another authority but living in the **Norfolk area**.

'Previously Looked After Children' are those who "are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act

1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales.

State care is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society. Each local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged; this officer is called the Virtual School Head.

Introduction

Acorn Park aims to promote the educational attainment and achievement of LAC and PLAC as well as their welfare and emotional well-being. The Designated Teacher for LAC is Mrs Sarah Saunders, Deputy Head and SENCO. The Governor with special responsibility for LAC is Nick Simpson, who is also the Safeguarding Governor. The Governing Body is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and previously looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of LAC from "The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and Responsibilities" February 2018. Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020 contains information on what schools and colleges should do and sets out the legal duties with which schools and colleges must comply. It should be read alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (updated December 2020) which applies to all the schools. The Children Act 1989 sets out the legal framework.

We aim to contribute towards:

- Staying safe.
- Being healthy.
- Enjoying and achieve.
- Making a positive contribution.
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

Acorn Park believes in the principles of good parenting as noted below and supports the corporate parents and carers of LAC by:

- Giving priority to education.

- Listening to children.
- Providing stability and continuity.
- Taking corporate responsibility.
- Promoting inclusion.
- Raising standards.
- Intervening early.
- Promoting early year's experiences.
- Celebrating success.

The Governing Body endorses Acorn Park for the admission of LAC including "Promoting the education of looked after children" (statutory guidance for local authorities) 2018 section 23 which prioritises the admission of LAC.

The Governing Body of Acorn Park, as the admissions authority, will admit students to the school in accordance with the following criteria as a matter of priority 'Looked-after' children – a child that is 'looked after' by a Local Authority in accordance with Section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989 (b) and a child who was looked after, but ceased to be so, because of adoption (or become subject to a child arrangements order, residence order or special guardianship order). Due to care placement changes, LAC may enter Acorn Park mid-term. Acorn Park believes that it is vital that it gives each LAC a positive welcome and full support to their induction which will help them settle and be part of our learning community as quickly as possible. Section 24 of guidance to local authority states that in year fair access protocols do NOT apply to LAC in secondary education.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that all students are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum. Our LAC policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure Acorn Park makes appropriate provision for all LAC and PLAC.

Allocation of Resources

The Governing Body will ensure that Acorn Park allocates resources to support appropriate provision for LAC and PLAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy. It will work in partnership with Norfolk Virtual School for LAC and other Virtual Schools for students who are from other local authorities, to ensure that LAC receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to ensure they make progress and achieve. Section 28 of LA guidance 2014

states the 'Virtual School Head should be involved at the earliest opportunity.'

Monitoring the Progress of Looked After Children

Each local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged; this officer is called the Virtual School Head. The duties of this position are defined in the DfE statutory guidance "Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children" (February 2018). Section 32 of guidance states the virtual school ensures that a PEP (either paper based or electronic) must be initiated within ten working days of becoming LAC and start of the first placement. An initial version must be available for the twenty working-day review of the care plan. Acorn Park assesses each LAC's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. Section 38 states the PEP should link to but 'not duplicate' other plans. Nor should the PEP conflict with or contradict information in any other plan.

Following the initial PEP, the role of the Designated Teacher is to liaise with other agencies involved to arrange further PEP Review meetings and to provide copies of the PEP to the social worker, specialist teacher from Norfolk Virtual School, or other Virtual Schools where the child is from another Local Authority, and other agencies. Targets in the PEP should be reviewed termly and the PEP updated every term (Section 41).

Record Keeping

The Designated Teacher knows all the LAC and previously LAC in Acorn Park and has access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers, Norfolk Virtual School specialist staff, or other Virtual School specialists for those LAC who are from other local authorities, teacher/support worker and social worker. The status of LAC and PLAC is identified within Acorn Park's information systems so that information is readily available as and when required.

Staff Development

We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills needed to support LAC and PLAC. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to raise awareness of issues associated with LAC and PLAC within Acorn Park and disseminate information. Partnership with parents/carers and care workers, we believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable LAC and PLAC to achieve their potential to aid their future economic well-being. Review meetings are an opportunity to further strengthen this collaboration and partnership working. Links with external agencies and organisations We recognise the important contribution

that external support services make in supporting LAC and PLAC. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual LAC and PLAC:

- Social care worker/ community care worker/ residential child care worker.
- Norfolk Virtual School for Looked After Children (Looked After Children in EducationTeam).
- Other Virtual Schools for Looked After Children from other Local Authorities.
- Educational Psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services.
- Medical Officers.
- School Nurses.
- CYPS/CAMHS.
- Education Welfare Officers.
- Youth Offending Service.
- External Learning Providers.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Teacher will:

- Be an advocate for LAC within the School.
- Be proactive in identifying ways in which Acorn Park can raise attainment of LAC.
- Work in partnership with Norfolk Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students who are from other Local Authorities, providing termly progress data on the progress of LAC.
- Give regard to the impact of relevant decisions for LAC on both the looked after child and the rest of Acorn Park community.
- Know all the LAC and PLAC in the School, including those in the care of other authorities, and ensure the availability of all relevant details from Acorn Park record- keeping systems as required.
- Attend relevant training about LAC and disseminate information and good practice to other staff.
- Influence Acorn Park policy and practice for LAC and PLAC.

- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and carers in relation to LAC, seeking advice from Norfolk Virtual School, and/or other Virtual Schools for those students from other Local Authorities, when appropriate.
 - ensure that LAC receive a positive welcome on entering the School, especially mid- year, and offer additional support wherever possible such as a pre-entry visit to help the new student settle.
- Ensure that all LAC have an appropriate PEP that is completed within ten days of joining the School, or of entering care, and ensure that the young person contributes to the plan.
- Arrange and contribute to PEP Review meetings.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and review PEPs at transfer and at termly intervals.
- Monitor the targets set out in the PEP.
- Convene an urgent multi-agency meeting if a LAC is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion; Section 27 of statutory guidance, 'Head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding any LAC.
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual student.
- Act as the key adviser for staff and Acorn Park Governing Body on issues relevant to LAC.
- Ensure that care and Acorn Park liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other School events.
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extracurricular activities for LAC.
- Ensure a speedy transfer of information, records and coursework, where appropriate, when a LAC transfers to another educational placement.
- Report to Acorn Park Governing Body on LAC and PLAC in Acorn Park and inform of relevant policy and practice development.
- Agree with the social worker the appropriate people to invite to parents' evenings and other events.
- prepare reports for the Governing Body to inform and share information at meetings to include:
 - a. The number of LAC and PLAC on roll and the confirmation that all LAC have a Personal Education Plan – PEP.

- b. Their attendance compared to other students.
 - c. Their attainment (using internal data and external data) compared to other students.
 - d. The number, if any, of suspensions and expulsions.
 - e. The destinations of students who leave the school.
- Attend Governing Body meetings as appropriate – such as the admission, disciplinary and exclusion of LAC.
 - Prepare reports of the LAC and PLAC and share with link governor termly all relevant data including their progress against PEP targets (LAC) attendance, academic attainment and current attainment.
 - Ensure that any Special Educational Needs are addressed in conjunction with the SENCO and in accordance with the Code of Practice for SEND
 - Encourage all LAC to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities to encourage self- confidence and self-worth.
 - Ensure that each LAC and PLAC has identified key adult that they can talk to at school.
 - Attend training as required and keep fully informed of latest developments and policies regarding LAC.

All school staff will:

- Positively promote the raising of a LAC or PLAC students' self-esteem.
- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of LAC and PLAC students.
- Keep the Designated Teacher informed about a LAC and PLAC students' progress.
- Understand how important it is to see LAC and PLAC as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treated differently from their peers, and ensure any LAC or PLAC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Follow Acorn Park procedures.
- Be familiar with Acorn Park policy and guidance on LAC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- Liaise with the Designated Teachers where a LAC is experiencing difficulties.

- Work in partnership with Norfolk Virtual School, and/or Virtual Schools from another local authorities.
- Work with other agencies to prevent a LAC or PLAC students behaviour leading to an official expulsion and only use expulsions in line with the School's expulsion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement.
- Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times.
- Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to the Designated Teacher, Norfolk Virtual School for LAC and PLAC, and other virtual schools for those students who are from other local authorities, and professionals/ parents/carers/students as appropriate.
- Make extra copies of reports available when required.
- Ensure that all LAC and PLAC students are offered and access the regular mentoring session with the designated LAC mentor. The mentor will support the LAC/PLAC using a range of strategies that meet the individual needs of each LAC/PLAC and in a way that is appropriate and accessible to them e.g. academic support in subjects where the LAC/PLAC is finding topics difficult to master or being an advocate for the student when they find it difficult to verbalise their concerns.
- Be aware of the impact of trauma (including abuse, neglect, loss and separation) on children's development and their ability to build relationships, and how this might affect their behaviour.
- Use effective classroom strategies to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC and be aware that some curriculum content may trigger difficult emotions, such as school work on "family".

Acorn Park Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritise LAC according to the DFE Admissions Code of Practice and Statutory Guidance to LA 2014.
- Ensure all Governing Body members are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for LAC.
- Ensure there is a Designated Teacher for LAC (Section 9 of statutory guidance).
- Liaise with the Principal, Designated Teacher and all other staff to ensure the needs of LAC are met.
- Identify a Governing Body member with special responsibility for LAC.

- Nominate a Governing Body member with responsibility for LAC who links with the Designated Teacher.
- Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher via the Governing Body link person.
- Ensure that the Acorn Park's policies and procedures give LAC equal access in respect of:
 - a. Admission to the School.
 - b. National Curriculum and examinations, both academic and vocational.
 - c. Out of School learning and extra-curricular activities.
 - d. Additional educational support.
 - e. Work experience and careers guidance.
- Annually review the effective implementation of Acorn Park policy for LAC.
- In the event of exclusion, ensure that the Designated Teacher is invited to the exclusion meeting of the LAC.
- Challenge the Designated Teacher in a robust and rigorous manner to ensure that LAC's attainment and achievement is in line with non-LAC.

All Local Authorities will:

- Provide a Virtual Headteacher who has responsibility for championing the education of LAC.
- Provide a specialist team to provide a wrap-around service for LAC as part of Norfolk Virtual School.
- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for LAC.
- Ensure that the education for this group of student is as good as that provided for every other student.
- Ensure that LAC receive a full-time education in an appropriate setting.
- Ensure that every LAC has an School/school to go to within ten days of coming into care or of coming to Norfolk from another authority.
- Make sure that each LAC has a PEP according to national guidance.
- Ensure that every School has a Designated Teacher for LAC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support and training.
- Provide alternative educational provision where appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible.

- Work with others to provide smooth transitions at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 and at any mid-phase transfer including options advice and guidance for Key Stage 3-4 transition.
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special educational needs of LAC and work collaboratively with schools/academies, other services and agencies to meet those needs.

It is important to promote inclusive policies within the context of the School's robust pastoral systems. LAC Policy Review and Evaluation We undertake a thorough review of both the Looked After Children Policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform Acorn Park Development Plan and the LAC policy for the following academic year. The annual review will be summarised and an impact statement will be produced reflecting the strengths and opportunities for development for the LAC provision at Acorn Park. Linked Policies

- Teaching and Learning Policy.
- Single Equality Policy.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy and SEND Information Report