



## PORTFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Date	Review Date	Co-ordinator	Committee Responsible
September 2025	September 2026	Headteacher	FGB

2025 Updates:	Pg.
Completely re-written following the updated Children's and Wellbeing Bill and KCSIE 2025	all

### Rationale

National data consistently shows that Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) face significantly greater challenges in education than their peers. These children are more likely to experience disrupted learning, trauma, and barriers to emotional well-being, leading to lower academic achievement, higher exclusion rates, and reduced participation in post-16 education and training.

In line with the statutory guidance *Promoting the Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children* (DfE, 2018) and the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*, all schools have a legal duty to support the educational progress and broader well-being of these pupils. Portfields Primary School recognises that raising the aspirations and attainment of LAC and PLAC is a national priority, and we are committed to ensuring that they receive the highest level of support and opportunity.

Furthermore, our practice aligns with the government's Every Child Matters outcomes framework and the updated Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2025), which reinforces a whole-child approach to inclusion, safeguarding, and multi-agency working.

At Portfields Primary School, we are dedicated to:

- Raising attainment through targeted, responsive, and trauma-informed teaching;
- Promoting stability and inclusion, recognising the importance of consistency in relationships and learning;
- Working in partnership with local authorities, Virtual School Heads, social workers, carers, and health professionals to meet each child's full range of needs;
- Listening to the voice of the child, ensuring they are active participants in decisions affecting their education and well-being.

We recognise that while Looked-After Children may require additional support, they should never be defined solely by their care experience. We will strive to ensure that every child who is or has been looked after is supported to realise their full potential, both academically and personally, in a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment.

## Definition

The term "Looked-After Child" (LAC) is defined in the Children Act 1989 and refers to a child who is under the care of a local authority. A child is looked after if they are:

- Accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 – with the agreement of their parent(s) or person with parental responsibility, the local authority provides care and accommodation.
- Subject to a care order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 – the court grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Children who are looked after may be living in a variety of settings, including:

- With foster carers
- In a residential children's home
- In a semi-independent or supported accommodation setting
- With extended family members or kinship carers
- With parents, under the supervision of the local authority

In addition, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, schools must also recognise and provide appropriate support for Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC). These are children who were formerly looked after by a local authority but have since left care through:

- Adoption
- A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- A Child Arrangements Order (previously known as a residence order)

PLAC are no longer under the care of the local authority, but may still face many of the same challenges due to past experiences of trauma, neglect, or instability. Schools are required to support both LAC and PLAC in partnership with Virtual School Heads and other professionals.

## Legal Framework

Schools have a statutory duty to support the progress and well-being of Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC). This duty is grounded in several key pieces of legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004 – Establishes the legal definition of Looked-After Children and places duties on local authorities and partner agencies to safeguard and promote their welfare.

- Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Requires local authorities to promote the educational achievement of both LAC and PLAC, including the appointment of a Virtual School Head (VSH) responsible for oversight and coordination.
- Promoting the Education of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children (DfE Statutory Guidance, 2018) – Outlines the responsibilities of schools, designated teachers, and local authorities in improving outcomes.
- Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (anticipated 2025) – Proposes expanded duties around kinship care, data-sharing, mental health access, and multi-agency collaboration (in draft as of 2025).

### Statutory Duties for Schools

In line with the above legal framework, all schools must:

- Ensure that Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children have access to a broad, balanced, and inclusive education, including full participation in the National Curriculum and enrichment activities.
- Appoint a Designated Teacher with responsibility for supporting the educational progress and well-being of LAC and PLAC, as outlined in the 2018 DfE guidance.
- Work in partnership with the Virtual School Head (VSH) and local authority to ensure Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are in place, regularly reviewed, and effectively implemented.
- Monitor and improve the academic attainment, attendance, and progress of LAC/PLAC as a distinct group, with appropriate intervention strategies.
- Reduce the risk of suspensions and permanent exclusions through inclusive practice, trauma-informed approaches, and early intervention.
- Promote regular attendance and school stability, ensuring swift action is taken where concerns arise.
- Maintain confidentiality and sensitivity in how care status is managed within school settings.
- Provide training and awareness for staff to ensure a consistent and informed approach to supporting the needs of LAC/PLAC.

## Objectives

At Portfields Primary School, we are committed to improving outcomes for all Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children by ensuring they feel safe, valued, and supported in their learning and personal development. To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure that every Looked-After Child has an up-to-date, high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place, developed in collaboration with the child, their carer, social worker, Virtual School Head (VSH), and relevant school staff.
- Provide an inclusive school environment that actively promotes understanding, acceptance, and emotional safety for all children in care, and challenge negative stereotypes or assumptions associated with care experience.
- Guarantee equal access to the full National Curriculum, including educational visits, extra-curricular activities, leadership opportunities, and enrichment programmes, removing any barriers to participation.

- Maintain discretion and confidentiality when addressing a child’s care status, ensuring sensitive handling of information and that pupils are not singled out or stigmatised.
- Ensure the Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children receives regular, up-to-date training on statutory duties, trauma-informed practice, attachment theory, and multi-agency working—and that this training is cascaded appropriately to all staff.
- Follow a clear and robust protocol for information sharing within school and with external agencies, in line with GDPR, safeguarding policy, and statutory guidance, to ensure that all professionals involved can act in the child’s best interests.
- Work proactively with external agencies—including the local authority, Virtual School Head, educational psychologists, health professionals, and carers—to promote academic achievement, emotional resilience, and long-term aspirations for each child.
- Provide personalised support and early intervention for children who may be at risk of underachievement, poor attendance, or exclusion, using pupil premium plus funding effectively to narrow gaps and remove barriers to learning.
- Celebrate progress and achievement, both academic and personal, to build confidence and help children who are or have been looked after recognise their potential.
- Monitor the impact of our provision for LAC and PLAC and use data to inform planning, identify needs, and raise outcomes.

## Roles and Responsibilities

At Portfields Primary School, we recognise that supporting the education and well-being of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children is a whole-school responsibility, underpinned by leadership, accountability, and professional collaboration.

### The Governing Body

The Governing Body is legally responsible for ensuring the school complies with statutory duties under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Children Act 1989/2004, and DfE statutory guidance. The Governing Body must ensure:

- The school has a coherent, up-to-date policy for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children.
- The school appoints a qualified Designated Teacher with sufficient seniority, training, and resources to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
- All Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children have equitable access to the full curriculum and enrichment activities, with appropriate academic, pastoral, and emotional support.
- The Designated Teacher receives regular, high-quality training and cascades this knowledge across the school.
- It receives an annual report from the Headteacher and/or Designated Teacher, including:
  - The number of LAC/PLAC on roll
  - Attendance, attainment, and progress compared with peers
  - Fixed-term and permanent exclusions
  - Pupil Premium Plus spending and impact
  - Multi-agency working effectiveness

## The Headteacher

The Headteacher holds overall strategic responsibility and will:

- Appoint a suitably qualified and experienced Designated Teacher in accordance with statutory guidance.
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has protected time, access to training, and appropriate support to carry out their duties effectively.
- Monitor and evaluate school data relating to the admission, attendance, behaviour, exclusions, attainment, and progress of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children.
- Ensure systems are in place to track and report on the performance of LAC/PLAC as a distinct vulnerable group.
- Lead the school in maintaining a trauma-informed, inclusive culture that supports children with care experience.
- Oversee and quality assure the use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to support educational outcomes for LAC/PLAC.
- Report annually to the Governing Body, in partnership with the Designated Teacher, on outcomes for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children.

## The Designated Teacher (Kelly Rae)

The Designated Teacher plays a central role in supporting LAC/PLAC and is the key point of contact for the Virtual School, social care, and other professionals. Responsibilities include:

### Strategic and Operational Duties

- Act as the champion for LAC and PLAC, ensuring high expectations and aspirations across school.
- Coordinate the development, implementation, and review of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in collaboration with the child, social worker, carer, and VSH.
- Lead on the use and impact evaluation of Pupil Premium Plus funding, ensuring it is linked to targets in the PEP.
- Promote a culture of inclusive support, ensuring early identification of needs, and timely intervention for academic or pastoral issues.

### Monitoring and Progress

- Track academic progress, attendance, and behaviour of all LAC and PLAC, acting swiftly where concerns arise.
- Ensure special educational needs (SEN) are assessed appropriately, with provision and EHCPs (if required) in place.
- Plan and oversee effective transition support for key stage moves or when pupils join or leave the school.
- Maintain oversight of key pupil information, including legal status, care arrangements, and professionals involved.

### Training and Support

- Ensure that all staff receive regular training and guidance on attachment, trauma, and the needs of LAC/PLAC.

- Advise on differentiated teaching strategies and interventions that support emotional regulation and learning.

#### Liaison and Communication

- Serve as the main contact for the Virtual School Head (VSH) and ensure alignment with the local authority's expectations.
- Work closely with carers, social workers, health professionals, and other agencies to coordinate a holistic support plan.
- Attend or provide reports for statutory reviews, such as CLA Reviews and EHCP annual reviews.

#### All Teaching and Support Staff

Every member of staff plays a part in promoting positive outcomes for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children. All staff are expected to:

- Have high aspirations for the academic and personal success of LAC and PLAC.
- Recognise the impact of trauma and disrupted attachment on learning, behaviour, and relationships.
- Ensure confidentiality is respected and care status is handled with discretion and sensitivity.
- Implement strategies recommended in PEPs or SEN plans and work collaboratively with the Designated Teacher.
- Promote inclusion, celebrate achievements, and contribute to a school environment where all care-experienced pupils feel valued and secure.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or intervention from the Designated Teacher or senior leadership.

## Admission and Induction Arrangements

In accordance with the School Admissions Code (2021) and DfE statutory guidance, Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC) are given highest priority for school admissions, including in-year applications. At Portfields Primary School, we fully adhere to the Local Authority's published admission criteria and ensure a supportive, timely, and inclusive admission process for all care-experienced pupils.

#### Admission Process

- Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children will be admitted without delay, in accordance with the statutory requirement to minimise school moves and promote stability.
- The Designated Teacher will be notified of the pending admission as early as possible and will liaise with the Virtual School, social worker, carers, and the previous school to ensure a smooth transition.
- Relevant background, safeguarding, SEND, and academic information will be requested promptly to ensure continuity of provision.

#### Induction Process

- On admission, the child will be welcomed by the Designated Teacher and a named pastoral/key adult, who will provide a safe space for initial settling-in and begin to build positive, trusting relationships.
- An individual induction meeting will be arranged involving the Designated Teacher, carer/parent, social worker (if applicable), and other relevant professionals. This meeting will:
  - Discuss the child's learning strengths, emotional needs, and any immediate concerns
  - Identify key adults and safe spaces in school
  - Clarify the child's legal status, care arrangements, and any additional support required
  - Plan for any required pastoral or SEND support, pending a formal Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- The school will ensure the child has access to uniform, school routines, clubs, and peer relationships as quickly as possible to promote a sense of belonging.
- A welcome pack or transition booklet may be used to help the child and carers understand the school environment, expectations, and who they can turn to for help.

#### Follow-Up

- A PEP meeting will be scheduled within 10 school days of admission for Looked-After Children, as required by statutory guidance.
- Progress, attendance, and emotional well-being will be closely monitored during the initial weeks, with regular check-ins by the Designated Teacher or key adult.
- Any gaps in learning, SEND needs, or emotional regulation challenges will be swiftly addressed with support from internal and external services where appropriate.