

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

V4

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1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Beckfoot Trust is fully committed to supporting children who are looked after or who have previously been a Looked After Child. Department for Education guidance makes it clear that all schools have a statutory duty to ensure that students who fall into the categories above are well supported to ensure they achieve their potential at school. As a Trust whose mission it is to 'create remarkable schools where no child is left behind', supporting the most vulnerable is at the core of why the organisation exists.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

- 2.1 This policy compliments the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and identifies the need for all schools to:
- Identify a designated teacher of suitable seniority to support a child who is looked after or previously looked after
 - Ensure that all staff are clear on their responsibilities and take these seriously
 - Recognise the importance of staff training on the barriers a looked after child may face and how to support them with these barriers
 - Highlight the need for multi-agency work around the most vulnerable
 - Provide families with information on the duties and responsibilities of schools for a looked after child.
- 2.2 The policy is underpinned by and compliant with:
- Department for Education statutory guidance on the designated teachers for looked-after and previously looked-after children
 - Section 2E of the Schools Act 2020
 - Section 20 of the 2008 Act
 - Working Together to Improve School Attendance
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education
- 2.3 Definitions:
- **Children Looked After (CLA)** A child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a local authority if they are in the care of the local authority or get accommodation from the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This term can be used interchangeably with the term 'Child in Care'.
 - **Previously Children Looked After (PCLA)** A child is previously looked after if they have ceased to be a child looked after as a result of:
 - A Child Arrangements Order (CAO)
 - A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
 - Adoption
 - **Children in Kinship Care** The government defines kinship care as any situation in which a child is being raised by a friend or family member who is not their parent. There are different types of kinship care arrangements, including those arranged privately by a family and those arranged or supported by the local authority.
 - **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** This is an education-focused plan that forms part of a child who is looked after's wider care plan. It contains short, medium and long-term targets, along with details

of how their Pupil Premium Plus funding is being used to support them in achieving these targets and fulfilling their educational potential.

- **Virtual School Headteacher (VSH)** This person is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children in care across their local authority. This also includes children who were previously looked after, those in kinship care and those with a social worker. They work collaboratively with schools to monitor and support children who are looked after as if they were in a single virtual school. They are also responsible for providing information and advice to schools and families.
- **Care Leaver (CL)** Care leavers are young people aged 16-25 years old who have been in care at some point (for longer than 13 weeks) since they were 14-years old and were in care on or after their sixteenth birthday. These young people are statutorily entitled to some ongoing help and support from the local authority after they leave care.
- **Pupil Premium Plus Funding (PP+)** Pupil Premium Plus funding is managed by the Virtual School Head and is designated for the purpose of meeting the needs and supporting the educational achievement of children in care.

3.0 Overarching Principles

- 3.1 This policy is designed to support children who are looked after (CLA)/children in care (CIC), those who have previously been looked after (PCLA) and those in kinship care. Department for Education guidance is clear that all schools have a statutory duty to ensure that children who fall into these categories are well supported, enabling them to achieve their full potential at school.

We recognise that each young person is unique, with different backgrounds, talents and aspirations. Statistically, however, without additional support and intervention, children in care, those who have previously been looked after by the local authority and those who are in kinship care are at increased risk of experiencing:

- Lower attainment at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in comparison with their peers
- Poorer attendance and higher suspension rates than their peers
- A higher level of disruption/change to their educational placements than their peers
- A lower level of involvement in extracurricular activities than their peers
- Underachievement in further and higher education compared to their peers.

Our aim at Beckfoot Trust, is to create school environments where excellent teaching is underpinned by strong routines and relationships that enable all pupils to flourish, while also being proactive in recognising and supporting the needs of our most vulnerable pupils, including those who are experiencing or have experienced the care system.

4.0 Responsibilities and Arrangements

4.1 Role of the Board

- The Trust Board ensures that each Beckfoot Trust school has appointed a designated qualified teacher to oversee the education and the support for children who are looked after, previously looked after and are in kinship care.
- The Trustees will ensure the designated teacher has appropriate seniority and professional experience and training to provide leadership, and skills to perform the role.

4.2 Role of the Headteacher

- Work closely with the LSC, their senior leadership team, and the Designated Teacher to ensure that strategic development and whole-school improvement mechanisms lead to the best educational outcomes for children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care.
- Take overall responsibility for the educational experience of children who are looked after, previously looked after or are in kinship care.

4.3 Role of the Designated Teacher

- Collaborate with the Virtual School Headteacher and other external agencies as needed to ensure that the needs of children in care are met, including how Pupil Premium Plus funding will be utilised. This will be achieved by contributing to, monitoring, and reviewing the Personal Education Plan within statutory timescales.
- Work with the Virtual School to promote the educational outcomes of previously looked after children, recognising that, although they may not be subject to the Personal Education Plan process, they may still require support and guidance.
- Work with the kinship carers and any relevant external agencies to promote the educational outcomes of children in kinship care, recognising that, although they may not be subject to the Personal Education Plan process, they may still require support and guidance.
- Coordinate input from key staff members, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Behaviour Lead and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator, to develop plans of support for children with overlapping vulnerabilities.
- Ensure that school staff understand the impact of the life experiences of children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care can have on the way they learn and develop, including strategies that can overcome any difficulties.
- Monitor the educational experiences and outcomes of children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care, and provide challenge to the Headteacher as required.
- Promote a culture in which children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care can discuss their progress, be involved in setting their own targets, have their voices heard, and be supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Promote a culture in which children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care are encouraged to participate in enrichment, extra-curricular, and student leadership opportunities.
- Liaise with teaching staff to ensure that children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care are prioritised for interventions and targeted support as required.
- Ensure that there are positive and productive relationships with the parents/carers of looked after children, previously looked after children, and those in kinship care, so that school and home can work in partnership to foster the academic and personal development of the child.
- Ensure that any transitions of children who are looked after, previously looked after, or those in kinship care (e.g. moving to Secondary School or Further Education) are supported by robust plans to minimise any anxiety that could arise.
- Work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns relating to looked after children, previously looked after children, and those in kinship care are responded to quickly and effectively
- Where safeguarding concerns are linked to pupil absence, schools must engage with Children's Services

4.4 Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

- Work closely with the Designated Teacher to provide support and provision as required for children who are looked after, previously looked after or are in kinship care.
- Ensure that the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS) is kept up to date for children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care, including details of their social worker and Virtual School Headteacher.
- Engage with relevant training and development opportunities provided by the Virtual School.
- Work with the Designated Teacher to ensure that information about children who are looked after, were previously looked after or are in kinship care is shared appropriately and sensitively, taking into account the child's wishes if possible.

4.5 Roles and responsibilities of all staff

- Ensure that all children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care reach their educational potential by having equally high aspirations and expectations of them as their peers, while also providing any necessary scaffolding or support to help them achieve these goals.
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social impact of loss and separation from birth families.
- Recognise that some children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care may struggle to develop trusted relationships with adults due to their life experiences and developmental stage, and that they may need a more proactive approach to foster these relationships.
- Prioritise students who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care when planning support and intervention in the classroom, as well as with other opportunities that arise in school, such as student leadership, field trips, and extra-curricular activities.
- Understand the importance of seeing children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care as individuals rather than a homogenous group, not publicly treating them different from their peers, and showing sensitivity to their background.

4.6 Working in Partnership

The support that our schools give pupils to help dismantle barriers should not be viewed in isolation. We are wholly committed to working with parents, carers, the local authority, the Virtual School, and any other relevant agencies to ensure a holistic and collaborative approach is taken to promote the achievement and development of children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care. We value the views of parents/carers, and we firmly believe that developing strong partnerships is vital to enable all children to reach their full potential. We recognise the essential contributions that external support services, such as Children's Social Care and the Virtual School, make in supporting both the academic and personal development of children who are looked after, previously looked after, or in kinship care.

5.0 Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed annually. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.