

1. Purpose of Policy

Educational achievement and subsequent life chances for Looked After Children (LAC) and previously LAC are of real concern. Students who are looked after often require additional support and attention in order to improve their situation. The Sixth Form Bolton endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention for all our students.

With this in mind, we aim to:

- Encourage students to reach their potential and to make good progress in relation to their professional, social and emotional development.
- Ensure that students enjoy high quality teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs and the requirements of legislation.
- Plan support for care experienced and previously care experienced children realistically and use the college's resources efficiently to ensure the college meets their needs.
- Promote a positive culture in all aspects of college life. Help students develop their cultural, moral and social understanding.

It is recognised that there is a need for schools and colleges to track particular cohorts of 'vulnerable learners' and to ensure there are no significant gaps in their educational outcomes, and that they receive the support they require to be successful. Although a small cohort in the College, young people in care and care leavers have been identified nationally and locally as a group needing particular attention.

This policy relates specifically to learners who are looked after children (LAC) also known as Child Looked After (CLA), care leavers (CL) and young carers (YC). As partners we endeavour to ensure that Young People in Care and Care Leavers achieve the best possible outcomes in post-16 education.

The college will ensure that:

A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this too

Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for

The College recognises that it is important to identify young people in care and care leavers as early as possible in the application process, in order to assess and meet their academic and support needs, and to aid their retention. Most of this work will be carried out through the Inclusive Learning Team.

Looked after Children in College should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and local authorities should ensure they have a Pathway Plan which supports their progression. The College will endeavour to identify young people in care and care leavers prior to their enrolment at College. This will be achieved through liaison with schools, Children and Young People's Services, Virtual Schools and other social care agencies, and we will use all available paperwork to assist in assessing their support needs.

The College will ask all students about their 'care' status as part of the application and enrolment process (this is now essential to identify those who require Bursary funding. Any declaration of 'care' status will be dealt with sensitively and the young person will be made aware of who this information is shared with.

2.Scope

- 2.1 This Policy is designed to support the educational achievement and welfare of young people who attend The Sixth Form Bolton and who are also currently in, or have left, the care of the Local Authority. This policy is applicable to all LAC students at college and those staff within The Sixth Form College who work with them.

3.Definitions

- 3.1 *College* – The Sixth Form, Bolton

3.2 Looked-after children are registered students that are:

- In the care of a local authority
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

- Looked-after children will be referred to hereafter as Children who are Looked After, or LAC.
- Living with foster parents
- Living in a residential children's home

3.3 Previously looked-after children are registered students that fall into any of these categories:

They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:

- A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
- A special guardianship order
- An adoption order

3.4 The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is part of a LAC's care plan that is developed with the college. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

3.5 The Virtual School Head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools and colleges to monitor and support these students as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, colleges, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children.

3.5 Parents – this can include natural parents, adoptive parents, or foster parents.

3.6 Guardians – a person or persons with parental responsibility, and may make decisions about the child's care and upbringing

4. Policy

4.1 Identity of our designated teacher

Our designated teacher is Darren Macfarlane

You can contact him at 01204 846215 or DMacfarlane@Bolton-SFC.ac.uk

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of CLA and previously looked-after children at our college. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

4.2 Our link Governor is Mark Rigby.

4.3 The Sixth Form Bolton works closely with a number of Virtual Schools. The contact details of which:

Bolton's VSH is Lindsay Nelson

Lindsay.nelson2@bolton.gov.uk

07385 361924

Bury's VSH is Catherine Hobday

C.Hobday@bury.gov.uk

07356 103040

Liverpool's VSH is Carolyn Lawler

[Carolyn.Lawler @liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.Lawler@liverpool.gov.uk)

0151 233 2289

Wigan's VSH is Jen Mills

admin.virtualschool@wigan.gov.uk

07876 791045

Role of the designated teacher

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The designated teacher, with support from the LAC Officer will:

Act as a central point of initial contact within the college for any matters involving LAC and previously looked-after children

Promote the educational achievement of every LAC and previously looked-after child on roll by:

- Working with VSHs
- Promoting a whole-college culture where the needs of these students matter and are prioritised
- Take lead responsibility for ensuring those in college understand:
 - The barriers which can affect how LAC and previously looked-after children learn and achieve.
 - How the whole college supports the educational achievement of these students.

Contribute to the development and review of whole-college policies to ensure they consider the needs of LAC and previously looked-after children

Promote a culture in which LAC and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other college activities

Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with LAC and previously looked-after children

Work directly with LAC and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents and guardians to promote good home-college links, support progress and encourage high aspirations

Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of PEPs for LAC.

Ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding LAC and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.

Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education.

5.2 Supporting LAC

The designated teacher with support from the LAC Officer will:

Make sure the PEPs for LACs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs

Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs.

Monitor and track how LAC's attainment progresses under their PEPs.

If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress, and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.

Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place.

During the development and review of PEPs, help the college and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for students.

Ensure that:

- A child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered.
- PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced.
- Transfer a child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version

5.3 Supporting both LAC and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher, with support from the LAC Officer will:

Ensure the specific needs of LAC and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the college uses pupil premium funding

Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for LAC can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.

Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these young people.

Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked after children.

Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child, and be the main contact for queries about its use.

Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of LAC and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour and future career planning.

Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of LAC and previously looked-after children, and make sure teachers also have awareness and understanding of this.

Ensure the SEND code of practice, as it relates to LAC, is followed.

Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health and care (EHC) plans that a child may have.

Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in LAC and previously looked-after children, and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary

Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in LAC and previously looked-after children and understand where the college can draw on specialist services.

Put in place arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for LAC, and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs.

Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children.

Ensure that all LAC's have access to a mentor, who will be the LAC officer.

5.4 Relationships beyond the college

The designated teacher, with support from the LAC Officer will:

Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the college to respond effectively to the needs of LAC and previously looked-after children.

Discuss with social workers how the college should engage with birth parents, and ensure the college is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom.

Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education.

Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN Departments.

Consider how the college works with others outside of the college to maximise the stability of education for LAC, such as:

- Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when LAC are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action.
- Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption.
- Making sure that, if a child in care moves school or college, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process.

Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians

Make sure that for each LAC:

- There is an agreed process for how the college works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress.
- College policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents.
- Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips.

Where a child in care is at risk of exclusion:

- Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the college decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary.
- Work with the VSH and child's carers to consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour.

Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion.

There is also support with transition between colleges in the admissions code whereby looked after and previously looked after children have priority (criteria 1) when moving phases in education.

Monitoring and Support arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Darren Macfarlane. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

The Sixth Form Bolton prides itself on being a truly inclusive college. Our standards demand that we do everything we can to include and encourage ALL students with a focus on pupil premium and LAC students. We have all had training from the Virtual School, Educational Psychologists or other professionals on attachment and trauma theory. The Sixth Form Bolton will work closely with Virtual School staff, social workers and IROs to provide anything appropriate with pupil premium plus funding.

The key methods of supporting students who are LAC or previously looked after include:

- Regular PEP meetings (termly)
- Day-to-day monitoring and mentoring
- Identification of a key worker
- Provision of tuition for catch-up (to be arranged via the Virtual School if appropriate)
- Contribute to the annual LAC Review meetings overseen by the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer)
- Contribute to regular transitional or care planning meetings as requested
- Provision of IT equipment
- Bus passes
- Subsidy (sometimes total) for educational visits with more opportunities for socialisation and building attachments with peers.
- Opportunities to use the Cocoon to catch up on homework.
- Breakfast Club
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)
- In-house counselling
- Time out cards
- Cool-off space
- Reasonable adjustments
- Support from Local Authority's SGO team
- Working with the Virtual School

Name of Policy	Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children Policy
Date Reviewed	July 2024
Next Review	July 2025
JCC Consultation / Approval	Not required
Governing Corporation Approval	Not Required
Cross Reference to other Policies / Source Documents	Code of Conduct Child protection and safeguarding SEND Supporting pupils with medical needs Student Handbook