



Children Looked After Policy

Leading Staff Responsible	Mrs Das-Mahon
Governor Responsible	Mrs Hilary Hart
Date	Summer 1 2025
Date of Next Review	Summer 1 2026

Introduction

Children looked after in St Mary's school have the right to expect the outcomes we want for every child. As part of its commitment to supporting children looked after St Mary's school will demonstrate the strongest commitment to helping every looked after child achieve the highest possible educational standards. The measures of our success in promoting the educational achievement of children looked after are:

- Children looked after at every age achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers.
- Planning and day-to-day processes throughout the school demonstrate robust procedures and a culture of proactive commitment to secure the highest educational outcomes for children looked after.
- Children looked after themselves and staff are encouraged to have high expectations of children looked after.
- There are opportunities for training, development and support for staff to ensure they understand the needs of children looked after.

Who are children looked after?

The term children looked after has a specific legal meaning based on the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she has been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act.

The child or young person will either have been taken into care by the Local Authority, or have been 'Accommodated' by the Local Authority (a voluntary care arrangement). The child or young person may be a subject of emergency orders for their protection. The child or young person may be compulsorily accommodated – includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Children Act 1989).

Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are accommodated.

Supporting children looked after

St Mary's school will:

- Create a whole school ethos in which staff understand their role in supporting children looked after to achieve the best possible education outcomes
- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values learning and believes in the abilities and potential of all children

- Work in partnership with professionals outside of the school, including the child's social worker, carer and Virtual School Headteacher
- Ensure that allowances are made for the special circumstances and needs of children who are subject to social care procedures, adapting regular school procedures where necessary.
- Maintain an overview of the educational needs and progress of children looked after.
- Review school policies from the point of view of children looked after.
- Allocate resources to match priorities for children looked after.

Designated teacher for children looked after

The school will appoint a member of staff with responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children looked after. The role of the designated teacher is described in Statutory Guidance *"The Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc.) (England) Regulations 2009."*

The designated person must be a qualified teacher or a head teacher or acting head teacher who has the necessary training and authority to:

- Lead the work of colleagues to raise the attainment of children looked after
- Guide and negotiate with qualified colleagues about delivering differentiated teaching and learning provision to meet the needs of individual children.

The designated teacher will, through their training and development, have the opportunity to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of children looked after including:

- The emotional, psychological and social implications of separation from birth families and the reasons for that separation
- Awareness that children looked after are not a homogenous group, but are individuals with many of the same needs as any other child
- The broad framework of the care system and the way it impacts on the child's education
- Their own role in contributing to the statutory review and Personal Education Plan (PEP)

NB: Training may be provided by Achieving for Children or through the iLearn online learning modules specifically for Designated Teachers.

The Local Governing Committee will ensure that the designated teacher is a member of the teaching staff with appropriate seniority, professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of children looked after.

Where the designated teacher is not a member of the senior leadership team, a member of the team should be designated as a champion of children looked after issues to work closely with the designated teacher.

The Local Authority Virtual School Head is a source of advice and support for designated teachers. Designated teachers should collaborate and liaise with the Virtual School Head to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge and understanding to carry out the role.

The designated teacher for children looked after is Mrs Monika Das-Mahon, Assistant Headteacher and SENCO/Inclusion Leader.

Key Responsibilities of the designated teacher

- Provide strategic leadership
- Assess and identify the teaching and learning needs of pupils and co-ordinate within the school the development and implementation of the PEP. Lead the process of individual target setting and tracking of the progress.
- Ensure children have an opportunity to contribute to their PEP. Ensure that the school has received the child's most recent PEP from the child's previous school or social worker. Ensure that the PEP is up-to-date and made available for the child's statutory care plan review.
- Secure relevant services for the pupil where necessary.
- Promote the pupil's inclusion in the school community and access to the school's curriculum, facilities and extra curricular activities.
- Work with school staff to support their understanding of the key issues affecting children looked after. Staff will be trained to understand the variety of issues that may undermine a child's ability to engage in the learning process, including: the impact of trauma, attachment and low self esteem.
- Assist children looked after when they transfer to their next school or college and ensure the speedy transfer of school records to a new school and ensuring that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most up-to-date version of the PEP.
- Ensure that arrangements are in place to facilitate effective co-operation with other professionals and carers
- Maintain an agreed process for developing and reviewing the educational progress with other professionals
- Communicate school policies such as home-school agreements; time-keeping and attendance; homework diaries; parents' evenings to carers and social workers and to birth parents, where appropriate
- Ensure that the child's teachers and non-teaching staff such as office staff know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary.

Admissions and Transitions

St Mary's School will:

- Ensure that the school's admission policy meets statutory requirements for children looked after. i.e. that children looked after are at the head of the over-subscription criteria
- Follow the School Admissions Code (December 2014), which states that children in care will be guaranteed a place in their first choice of school, even if it is already full. Local authorities will have the power to direct the admission of a child in care outside the normal admissions round.

- Offer a warm and positive welcome to the school by providing appropriate induction for children so there is smooth and successful transition in to the school
- Forward appropriate documentation, in a timely manner, to any receiving school at the point of transition where a receiving school is known

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

As a school we will put procedures in place:

- To ensure all children looked after have an up-to-date and effective PEP. This is done in partnership with the child's social worker, carer and Virtual School Head
- To ensure that where a child/young person in care transfers to a new school their PEP is transferred with them. A child's PEP is part of their educational record which must, by law, be sent to any new school to which they move.

Exclusions

As a school we aim to:

- Promulgate a thorough understanding of the extra problems caused by excluding children looked after.
- Identify any looked after child who is at risk of exclusion and contact the Virtual School Head, social worker and carer to put in place proactive strategies to avoid an exclusion
- Ensure that in the case of a fixed period suspension, the Virtual School Head, social worker and carer have been spoken to and within one day a letter has been sent to them specifying the period and reasons for the exclusion, with details of the arrangements to enable the child to continue their education for the period of the exclusion.

and

- Ensure that all persons with parental responsibility and the child's carers are told of their right to make representations to the governing board and, where a permanent exclusion is upheld by the governing board, are informed of their right to appeal to an independent appeal panel.

Special Educational Needs & Disability

St Mary's School will:

- Ensure that the school's SEND policy acknowledges the needs of children looked after.
- Quickly identify any special education needs of a looked after child and make appropriate provision
- Provide support for children looked after, who have missed schooling, under the SEN framework where appropriate.

Pastoral Support, Behaviour and Bullying

As a school we aim to ensure:

- The school's anti-bullying and behaviour policies are flexible in their understanding of care issues and support early intervention
- The school's confidentiality policy covers the needs of children looked after.

Roles and responsibilities of the Local Governing Committee

As a school we aim to ensure:

- The Local Governing Committee is fully aware of its statutory duty under Children and Young Person's Act, Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc) (England) Regulations 2009
- The Local Governing Committee is aware of its responsibilities as outlined by *"Supporting Looked After Learners – A practical guide for school governors"* DfES 2006
- The Local Governing Committee supports the Head Teacher, designated teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of children looked after are met.
- The named governor with responsibility for monitoring provision for children looked after is Mrs Hilary Hart.

Pupil Premium for children looked after

The school recognises:

- That all children looked after are eligible for the Pupil Premium Plus funding. The school recognises that this funding is managed by the Virtual School Head of the Local Authority responsible for the child's care arrangements
- That the Pupil Premium is an important source of funding for children looked after and should be used effectively by the school to raise the individual attainment of pupils
- That the Personal Education Plan meeting will be used to discuss how the Pupil Premium will be used most effectively for each individual child
- The importance of involving the Local Authority, particularly the Virtual School Head in discussions about how to use the Pupil Premium Grant
- The Designated Teacher will monitor the use of Pupil Premium Grant and report this information to the Head, the Governing Board and Virtual School Head.