



Larwood Academy Trust

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Larwood School

Headteacher: Mr Pierre van der Merwe | BA, NPQH |

Brandles School

Headteacher: Mr Paul Smith | BA (Hons), AVCM |

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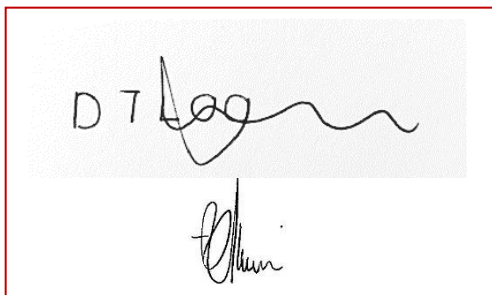
Brandles School

Headteacher: Mr Paul Smith | BA (Hons), AVCM |

Dan Login
Chair of Trustees

Pierre van der Merwe
Executive Headteacher

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER POLICY



Policy Number: 47
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Approved: March 2024
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BACKGROUND

There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995 a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework
- Underachievement in further and higher education

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children, who may also face additional barriers because of their race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. All schools should have a policy for Children Looked After that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. The policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of children looked after by a local authority but also the procedures that will ensure participation in high quality learning and progress.

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now refers solely to children who are subject to Care Orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'looked after children' (LAC) or children in care or 'children looked after' (CLA) by the local authority. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living with:

- Foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home, or
- In a residential school

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the statutory guidance on the duty on local

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, the Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher – Statutory Guidance for School Governors (2009) and the Hertfordshire Policy Statement on Children Looked After and should be read in conjunction with it. All schools have been issued with a copy of each document and may also refer to the Virtual School page on the Hertfordshire GRID for Learning.

It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day-to-day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

LARWOOD SCHOOL VISION AND PURPOSE

Our vision and approach to the leadership and management of our pupils is underpinned by a philosophy that is guided by our pupils, parents, and staff. It is challenged and supported by our governing body. We also ensure that we are compliant with the various groups that we work with (For example, Hertfordshire County Council and Ofsted). Therefore:

OUR PUPILS WILL:

- Be encouraged in a variety of ways to engage in all activities to promote their progress, improve their behaviour, and make the necessary changes to engage in their own education. They will achieve!
- Experience consistent boundaries and expectation with staff trained in Hertfordshire Steps. We expect them to make changes!
- Value themselves and others and be able to set themselves realistic goals, and targets. We believe that our pupils can improve, and we aim to help them believe this as well!
- Develop a sense of pride in themselves, their work and being part of 'Team Larwood.' They know that we enjoy working with them and hope they enjoy working with us!
- Go on to become life-long learners!
- Become more resilient as young people, moving forwards to secondary schools and further/higher education.
- Have their work and achievements praised and rewarded in a variety of ways to help develop their own self-esteem, alongside their social and emotional development
- Experience success! They will achieve, believe, expect and enjoy!

OUR STAFF:

- Are encouraging, empathetic, well trained and love working with our pupils
- Will go the 'extra mile' to help pupils make the changes they need to make
- Appreciate that they are preparing pupils for jobs that don't even exist right now!

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

- Promote the values of respect, responsibility, honesty, hard work, equality, and appreciation of differences
- Provide pupils with the opportunity to express themselves in a safe, productive, and reassuring manner
- Will promote educational development in the widest sense including intellect, creativity, and physical development
- Promote the role of the family-whatever shape or form that may take
- Provide a well-resourced, safe, and welcoming environment for everybody
- Use Hertfordshire Steps as a behaviour management process to enable our pupils to become able to self-regulate more often and with independence
- Enable and encourage a love learning for fun!
- Model the behaviour that we expect from pupils so that they can undertake the future roles that they would like and make a meaningful contribution to their communities and society
- Liaise with parents, and other professionals to promote the very best outcomes for all our pupils

OUR VALUES

Our school ethos encourages a range of values, to support our vision and purpose. This applies to all pupils both in day and boarding and includes:

Honesty Equality Resilience Empathy Determination Democratic Processes

Being responsible Respect for others Tolerance Respect for the law Tolerance

Such values are seen in our day-to-day interactions (Class based and in boarding), such as assemblies, class discussions, play times, lunchtimes and via our curriculum provision.

Policy Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Children Previously Looked After (PLA) on the roll within our Trust.

Name of the Designated Teacher for CLA and PLA

Bianca Osobu-Deputy Headteacher-Lead, and also lead DSP at Larwood School. Natalie Wilsher-Deputy Headteacher and also lead DSP at Brandles School

At Larwood Academy Trust we will ensure that children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (PLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions to achieve as well as possible, in accordance with the 'DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

children.

We recognise that our schools play a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA and in promoting their academic, social, and emotional development. We promote whole school staff training in their specific needs, so that all adults at this school are sensitive to the barriers to learning that CLA experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise. We understand the need to work in a 'relationship-based' way so that children looked after and previously looked after feeling valued and a part of our school community.

Our aim is to champion the needs of CLA to ensure they make rapid educational and social progress during their period in care on the role of this school.

Equality and Diversity statement

This policy is intended to be helpful for improvement in the education available for all learners but has a focus on children looked after who, statistically, experience disadvantage in education. The criteria are clear that the expectation is that all learners receive a high-quality, ambitious education; those providers are inclusive of all learners; and that all providers must be meeting their statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010 and all protected characteristics therein.

An inclusive learning environment in which everybody is respected is conducive to a happy and healthy learning environment.

The Virtual School Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Toolkit training will support a greater understanding of diversity and equality and is relevant to many children particularly those returning to school in September 2020.

Coronavirus response:

We have developed a range of protocols that assist of all our pupils during the different phases of the pandemic and the variety of scenarios we may find ourselves in. This includes normal operating procedures, remote learning, and lockdown situations. Consistent communication and differentiation of approach have and will continue to be vital.

We have also planned to ensure that the Trust takes a holistic approach to well-being. This will help to create an ethos where all of those working within the school feel confident in reporting and evidencing issues relating to equality and diversity. Promoting an inclusive environment is key to the well-being of all pupils as is a commitment to deepening pupils' understanding of "democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance" (Ofsted 2019).

Our Aims for CLA:

- to provide a safe and secure environment where educational progress and stability is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and PLA
- to narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLA and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- that they benefit from school-based interventions, even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- for all CLA to have at least termly Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings each academic year and for the joint planning and quality first teaching to have measurable impact on each child's learning on a daily basis (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children)
- for all adults to provide sensitive, child-led support, adopting a relationship-based approach and with at least one key adult with whom the child or young person has a trusted relationship and who will act as an advocate for them and take a special interest in their progress in all school activities
- that school systems facilitate discrete support, that includes a strong relationship between school staff, carers and children looked after on roll
- CLA will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children)
- our Behaviour Policy maintains clear boundaries and expectations about behaviour, but we understand that not all behaviour is a matter of choice. We will not enforce sanctions that shame and ostracise children looked after from their peers, school, community, or family. In this school we seek to create an inclusive and positive school ethos for every pupil
- CLA and PLA and their families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed, involved and engaged into this school community (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children).

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Educational Planning for Children Looked After Personal

Education Plans (ePEP):

The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer, and other relevant professionals. In any one school year there will be at least 3 PEP meetings for each CLA. We will self-evaluate our practice and how this has supported our pupils in a variety of ways and report to our Trustee's about our findings. We will also share such documents with the Hertfordshire Virtual School, where appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Headteachers and Trustees are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA. They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role and have at least 2 days per year training to remain fully informed. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and PLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receive appropriate training.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After is Bianca Osobu (Larwood School) Deputy Headteacher and Natalie Wisher (Brandles School) Deputy Headteacher. They are qualified teachers, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or PLA has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and PLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book looks
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- developing expertise in the field of CLA, including attachment theory and trauma-informed practice
- delivering the Virtual School training: 'An introduction to Attachment Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice' to the whole school
- providing and attending training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive, relationship-based and has high expectations for CLA and PLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and PLA and school resource and staff training needs for working with this group
- prioritising CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children ensuring that CLA and PLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

- their care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform their annual CLA health review.

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- reading this 'school policy' for CLA
- attending relevant training,
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher
- referring to the Designated Teacher for advice
- playing their part in creating an attachment and trauma-informed 'CLA-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for CLA by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available

Attendance:

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of CLA and PLA to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school will contact the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in our attendance policy.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support CLA during admission and transition include:

- prioritising CLA and PLA at the point of admission
- the swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school
- appropriate support and planning for CLA and PLA at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Additional Educational Needs

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and PLA with additional educational needs by:

- having high expectations
- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria (in line with the DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children)
- ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified and teaching to the plan is systematic; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight (in line with the Lamb Report, Dec '09)
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the targets set as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit, ePEP etc.

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities:

All staff will work creatively to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA who have special educational needs & disabilities by:

- having high expectation of progress each academic year (in line with the expectation set out in the ePEP)
- ensuring that they are accessing school-based targeted support which is ‘additional to and different from’ the universal and additional needs provision (in line with the SEND Code of Practice)
- ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEND Code of Practice
- ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- that with the school SENCO (if applicable) the EHCP review is held in a timely way with all relevant professionals invited and their views obtained.

Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA by familiarising themselves with the ‘School Policy Guidance for Children in Care’ and following the school’s child protection policy and the ‘DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education’ (All staff) 2021, if there are any safeguarding concerns. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Alternative Provision:

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision alternative to daily attendance at school will be:

- a plan that will retain the CLA on the role of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for essential reporting and accountable for the PP+
- an agreed part of the overall ePEP for the student
- full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- meet the educational needs of the CLA or PLA
- will provide the opportunity to make rapid progress in the course of study provided by the setting
- will be monitored regularly and that ePEPs will include the school and the alternative provider

Exclusion:

- We have reviewed the school behaviour policy (Sept 2021) in line with the statutory guidance published in February 2018 (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and

LARWOOD ACADEMY TRUST – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

- We will make every effort to avoid excluding a CLA, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School.
- If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion.
- School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of CLA and PLA. CLA and PLA with special educational needs should have exclusion as a behaviour management action as a last possible resort (Regulation 4(1)(c) of the Equalities Act 2010 which means that a head teacher could only lawfully exclude a child for a reason relating to their disability, even a disability that results in the child having a tendency to physical abuse, if reasonable adjustments have been made).

Multi-Agency Working:

- School staff will make every effort to develop positive professional relationships with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of CLA and PLA.

The Headteacher, Designated Teacher and Governing Body will ensure that all staff are briefed on the Statutory Guidance and practice outlined in this policy.

www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool