



TRUST IN LEARNING (ACADEMIES)

CHILDREN IN CARE AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

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Approval By: Quality of Education Committee	Lead: Director of SEND, Safeguarding and Inclusion	Review date: Autumn 2026
As part of the review process, this policy/procedure has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.		

History of Policy Changes:

Date	Page	Change	Reason for Change
May 2025		New policy	New over-arching policy for the Trust

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1. Statement of Intent

This document sets out the policy for children in care and previously looked-after children within Trust in Learning Academies (the Trust).

Trust in Learning Academies places a high emphasis on inclusion and providing a high-quality education for vulnerable pupils within our city, including children in care and previously looked-after children. Trust in Learning Academies has high expectations for all pupils. The Trust places each child at the centre of their education, and as such the pupil's voice must be heard in the planning and implementation of any additional support required. Pupils are supported to achieve their potential and are well prepared for their next step in life.

The policy has been developed and implemented in consultation with headteachers and staff. It will be shared with parents/carers and pupils.

2. Values and Principles

This Trust policy is set out with the following principles at its core:

Trust in Learning Academies is a family of schools each with a distinctive identity, collaborating to strengthen and support each other. We deliver high quality education with evidence-informed approaches to teaching, learning and the curriculum. Inclusion is at the heart of all we do. We actively listen to the voices of our pupils, staff and communities. Every school makes deliberate choices to be sustainable and globally focused.

The Trust vision is to:

- Inspire pupils to trust in learning and achieve their full potential
- To empower pupils to have confidence in their successes to make a positive contribution to the world
- To remove barriers to learning and help transform the lives of our pupils

Any data collected, stored or managed as a result of this policy is in accordance with UK and any relevant retained or assimilated EU law, and in line with the Trust's ethos and values.

This policy has been framed in accordance with the guidance on best practice from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Objectives and Scope

3.1 The specific aims of this policy are to:

- outline how the statutory guidance for children in care and previously looked after children is implemented across the Trust;
- outline the high expectations and good practise that all Trust schools will implement to ensure that children in care and previously looked-after children receive an excellent education that gives them the best possible opportunity to thrive.

3.2 This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to, the following:

- Children's Act 1989;
- Education Act 1996;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2024);
- Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (DfE, 2018);
- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE, 2018);
- Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill (2025).

3.3 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following Trust policies:

- Pupil Wellbeing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Complaints and Feedback Policy.

4. Responsibilities and Accountabilities

4.1 Responsibilities of the Trust central team

- To ensure that the policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and children who are care experienced.
- To ensure the policy is well communicated to all headteachers.
- To ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed.
- To ensure that designated teachers receive appropriate support and training in order to effectively carry out their roles.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Headteacher

- To ensure the implementation of and compliance with current policy and procedures at school level. This includes ensuring that all staff in school receive appropriate training and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.
- To ensure that should the designated teacher leave the school or take sick leave, then another person is identified to hold the role immediately.
- To ensure that appropriate support and supervision for the designated teacher is in place to promote their wellbeing.
- To report on the attainment, progress, attendance and inclusion of children in care to all relevant parties.
- To ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used appropriately, evidenced and monitored within the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and agreed with all parties.
- To monitor systems, resources, impact and actions related to this policy.
- To handle any complaints at school level which arise through this policy.

4.3 Responsibilities of school leadership

- To ensure staff are inducted into the procedures surrounding this policy and any updates.
- To provide training to ensure policy compliance.
- To hold sessions for parents and pupils as required, to ensure the policy is understood.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher

- To act as an advocate for all children in care and previously looked-after children within the school, providing advice to staff, senior leaders and governors. This includes promoting inclusion for children in care and previously looked-after children in all areas of school life.
- To ensure that each child in care and previously looked-after child has an identified, trusted, member of staff that they can talk to and who will check in with them regularly. This need not be the designated teacher, but should be based on the pupil's own wishes.
- For all children in care and previously looked-after children, to ensure high expectations for attendance, and in collaboration with the Attendance Lead, to monitor it thoroughly and address any concerns.
- For all children in care and previously looked-after children, to track academic progress and target support appropriately. To co-ordinate and monitor any support for each child in care and previously looked-after child that is necessary to promote their educational progress.
- To work in partnership with the local authority virtual school, to ensure that comprehensive support is implemented for children in care, previously looked-after children and those in kinship care.
- For children in care, ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed with the child, the carer, the social worker and any other relevant people, at least two weeks before the Care Plan reviews.

- To meet regularly with appropriate professionals to discuss children in care and previously looked-after children e.g. DSL, SENCO, Attendance Lead, Headteacher.
- To ensure that the pupil's voice is represented and acted upon. This means that in all meetings where the pupil can attend, they are facilitated so that the pupil feels able to attend and contribute fully.
- To ensure appropriate levels of confidentiality for individual children are in place.
- To encourage children in care and previously looked-after children to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning.
- To set up timely meetings with relevant parties where there are concerns a pupil is at risk of exclusion.
- To ensure the appropriate transfer of information between individuals and agencies.
- To ensure that the induction for children in care and previously looked-after children is well planned and supported by the PEP.
- To be proactive in supporting transition and planning when moving to a new phase in education.

4.5 Responsibilities of all staff

- To have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of children in care and previously looked-after children, as for all students.
- To support children in care and previously looked-after children to achieve stability and success within school.
- To promote the self-esteem of all children in care and previously looked-after children.
- To uphold the whole school approach to the policy through modelling expected standards and utilising appropriate procedures.
- To respond promptly to the designated teacher's requests for information.
- To keep up to date with policy changes over time.
- To promote a collaborative and inclusive ethos where all pupils can thrive.
- To feed back to school leaders where concerns may arise in the implementation of the policy.

4.6 Responsibilities of parents/carers

- To support the implementation of the policy with their child, as appropriate.
- Where a parent/carer has feedback on the implementation of the policy, to raise this directly with the school while continuing to work in partnership with the school.

4.7 Responsibilities of pupils

- To uphold school rules and expectations and thereby comply with the implementation of the policy.
- To feed back on the implementation of the policy through appropriate means, such as school council, to school staff.

5. Definitions

Child in care (CiC):

- A child or young person who is the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order under the Children Act 1989.
- A child or young person who is placed in foster care, a children's residential home, with relatives or friends, in semi-independent or supported independent accommodation.
- A child or young person who is subject to a Care or Interim Care Order whilst placed with a parent, where the local authority has parental responsibility.
- A child or young person who is not subject to an order, but is accommodated by the local authority under an agreement with their parents or respite care.

*Much statutory guidance refers to children in care as looked-after children (LAC) however children in care have voiced that they find the term LAC to be a negative label and they prefer to be known as children in care (CiC). As a result, **Trust in Learning Academies' preferred terminology is children in care.***

Previously looked-after child (PLAC):

- A child or young person who is no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because they have either been adopted or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order.
- A child or young person who was adopted outside England and Wales from 'state care' (care that is provided by a public authority, religious organisation, or other organisation whose main purpose is to benefit society).

Kinship Care:

Where a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term. This includes:

- informal arrangements
- private fostering arrangements
- child arrangements orders
- special guardianship orders
- kinship foster care
- adoption (friends or family).

6. Trust commitment to children in care and previously looked-after children

High aspirations

Children who are in care or previously looked-after children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences or trauma, without significant and comprehensive intervention and support, are highly likely to underachieve academically and socially. The Trust's aspiration for children who are in care or previously looked-after children, is for them to achieve their full potential through academic, personal, social and emotional development.

The school will ensure that all staff members have high aspirations for each child in care or previously looked-after child. The Trust will ensure that children in care or previously looked-after children excel by working with them to overcome any barriers to progress socially, emotionally and academically, so enabling them to successfully engage in learning and be well prepared to transition into their next stage of life.

The pupil at the centre

Trust in Learning Academies recognises the importance of each child in care or previously looked-after child having a strong voice in decision making about their education and future. The school will listen to what each child in care or previously looked-after child tells us about what they want from their education and try to address any concerns or issues raised through working with relevant stakeholders.

Commitment to building self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed, is crucial for children in care and previously looked-after children, especially those who have experienced trauma or instability. It fosters a sense of agency, resilience, and motivation, which will positively impact their academic, social, and emotional well-being. The school will proactively support children in care and previously looked-after children to develop these skills, supporting them to develop their self-efficacy.

Belonging

Trust in Learning Academies recognises that it is particularly important for children in care and previously looked-after children to know a sense of belonging within their school community. The school will proactively work to help each child in care and previously looked-after child to know that they belong in their school community. For example, through participation in extra-curricular activities, school events and opportunities to take responsibility including through leadership.

Trust in Learning Academies strives to ensure that the culture and ethos of the school are such that, whatever the heritage and origins of members of the school, pupils are provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and celebrate diversity.

Support

Trust in Learning Academies recognises that children in care and previously looked-after children are likely to have experience of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The school will ensure that each child in care or previously-looked after child receives the support they need to engage in school successfully and make progress academically, socially and emotionally. This will involve working with them to identify and support any barriers to learning that they might face. In addition to ensuring high quality teaching which incorporates adaptive pedagogy, this will include the following:

- ensuring that every child in care or previously-looked after child has a trusted adult identified within school;
- understanding that behaviour is communication and using a trauma informed approach;
- making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships;
- developing strong relationships with families, carers, local authorities including the virtual school team and specialist agencies;
- encouraging and supporting each child in care or previously-looked after child to take responsibility for their learning;
- engaging children in care or previously-looked after children in extra-curricular activities;
- supporting promptly if concerns emerge such as with mental health or attendance;
- giving integrated but low-profile support in school for each child so that they are not made to feel different from other children;
- as appropriate, implementing appropriate interventions that support the pupil to overcome barriers, or catch up with gaps in learning.

Working in partnership

In order to enable children in care and previously-looked after children to engage successfully in education and have the support they need, Trust in Learning Academies recognises the importance of partnership working. This involves collaboration between school, the pupil, parents/carers, the local authority and other external professionals who may be involved. The school will ensure that, as required, there is close communication and a multi-agency approach to supporting each child in care or previously-looked after child.

Transitions

For children in care or previously looked-after children, transitions can cause distress and anxiety. The school recognises this and, as required, provides enhanced transitions for children in care and previously looked-after children when moving in and out of the school, as well as transitions within school, including between year groups.

7. Personal Education Plans

Children in Care are entitled to additional support, funded through Pupil Premium Plus and overseen by the local authority's virtual school through each pupil's Personal Education Plan (PEP).

The designated teacher will ensure that each CIC has a high-quality PEP which is written in partnership with relevant stakeholders and reviewed three times per year, according to statutory guidelines.

The child's views are central to the PEP. If the child cannot attend the meeting, a key member of staff from the education setting should go through the child's section of the form with them, before the meeting. As the lead professional for the care plan, the child's social worker must be at every PEP meeting. If the social worker cannot attend, they need to send a replacement. If they can't send a replacement, they should reschedule the meeting.

The designated teacher must complete and sign off the PEP form within 5 working days of the PEP meeting.

8. Additional Support for Previously Looked After Children

Previously looked-after children in Reception to Year 11 are entitled to Pupil Premium Plus which provides funding in order for the school to implement additional support. In order for the school to receive Pupil Premium Plus, the parent/ carer must declare the pupil's status and provide appropriate supporting evidence to the school.

Previously looked-after children do not have a PEP but additional support they receive should be documented, monitored and reviewed regularly. Reviews should include the pupils and parents/carers. Reviews should be recorded.

9. Kinship Care

Trust in Learning Academies is committed to supporting pupils in kinship care to enable them to successfully engage in school life and learning. The Trust understands that pupils in kinship care may have experienced trauma and/or ACEs and will ensure that they are given the support that they require. The school will have high aspirations for children in kinship care and will support them to overcome any barriers they might face to learning; they will ensure that the pupil's voice is heard and that they are proactively encouraged to develop a sense of belonging. The school will work in partnership with the kinship family and any other agencies working with them. The school will signpost the family to support offered through the local authority's virtual school.