



Marches Academy Trust

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# Looked After Children Policy

(Looked After Children – LAC, and  
Previously Looked After Children – PLAC)

[www.marchesacademytrust.co.uk](http://www.marchesacademytrust.co.uk)

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## 1. Statement of Intent

Marches Academy Trust (the Trust) believes that all Looked After Children (LAC), and those Previously Looked After Children (PLAC), should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Shropshire, and national, children. As a Trust we aim to be champions for Looked After Children, and those Previously Looked After Children, and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development.

Marches Academy Trust endeavours to provide positive experiences and offer stability, safety, and individual care and attention, for all our students.

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 Who are our Looked After Children?

Most Looked After Children will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative, or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the Care of the Local Authority if they have been provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- Children who are accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20);
- Children who are the subject of a Care Order or Interim Care Order (Section 31);
- Children who are the subject of Emergency Orders for the protection of the child (Section 44).

### 2.2 Definition: Who are our Previously Looked After Children?

- A Child Previously in Care is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an Adoption, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order which includes arrangements as to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been Adopted from state care outside England or Wales, and;
- A child is in 'state care' outside England and Wales if they are in the care of, or accommodated by, a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation, the sole or main purpose of which, is to benefit society.

## 3. Legal Framework

- From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Children's and Young Persons' Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children.
- The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Looked After Children is seen

as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes. Previous legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Looked After Children.

- The 2018 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities extended some responsibilities to Previously Looked After Children. These responsibilities are not as extensive as those for Looked After Children, but the expectation is that there is a Designated Teacher and the likelihood is that it would be the same person for both cohorts.

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

- Children Act 1989;
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000;
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'; and
- DfE (2017) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England'.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:

- MAT Admissions Policy;
- MAT Behaviour Policy (Primary or Secondary, as appropriate);
- MAT Attendance Policy;
- MAT Equality Policy;
- MAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; and
- MAT Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy.

## **4. The Trust's Commitment**

All Marches Academy Trust schools commit to:

- ensuring that Personal Education Plan is up-to-date and of a high standard;
- supporting Looked After Children to raise their aspirations and ambition;
- giving children and young people a sense of the control they have over their own lives;
- ensuring that the Designated Teacher contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who may be to be involved in supporting Looked After Children to achieve, so that each staff member keeps Looked After Children in mind;
- fostering positive attitudes and behaviours;

- providing routine, continuity and normality for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption;
- ensuring that children and young people have a trusted adult who they feel they can go to for support during the school day;
- ensuring Looked After Children have the best provision the school can offer to help them make good progress in all areas;
- working closely with the Virtual School, carers and social workers;
- ensuring a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent;
- providing a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children;
- bringing the educational attainments of our Looked After Children in line with those of their peers;
- making sure that Looked After Children have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- balancing high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress;
- having a Designated Teacher (DT) for Looked After Children who will act as the advocate to Looked After Children and coordinate support them, liaising with carers, parents (as appropriate) and social workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues;
- working alongside the social worker, Virtual Teacher(s) and other professionals to ensure that each Looked After Child has a current, good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and numerical progress targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person and helps them make excellent progress;
- ensuring that Student Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan;
- closely monitoring each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes;
- ensuring there is a well-planned and coordinated approach to meet the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented;
- planning for future transitions effectively including planning for transport.

## 5. Responsibilities

### 5.1 Trust Local Governing Boards

All Trust Local Governing Bodies (LGB) will designate a Governor with responsibility for Looked After Children. They will ensure a knowledge of:

- the number of Looked After Children on the school roll;
- the number of Looked After Children with up-to-date Personal Education Plans and the quality of these documents;
- overall attainment and progress of Looked After Children in the school / performance compared to peers;
- number of Looked After Children with SEN and with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- authorised and unauthorised absence levels of Looked After Children;
- the number of Looked After Children who have had a Fixed Term Exclusion in the previous 12 months;
- if the school is making effective and efficient use of the Student Premium for its Looked After Children;
- if the school is meeting its statutory duties with respect to the Designated Teacher, for example, qualifications, experience, etc.;
- if the designated teacher is provided with appropriate professional development and time to fulfil the role;
- how LA supports educational achievement of Looked After Children.

Also, all Trust Local Governing Bodies will ensure:

- the schools appoint a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009 (DCSF, The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies [2009]);
- the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that school staff and Governors are aware of the DfE Statutory Guidance;
- the appointed Governor with responsibility for Looked After Children has a knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004 and statutory guidance 2015 (Promoting the Education of Looked After Children);
- there is a proactive approach in cooperating with, and supporting, the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of Looked After Children attending the school;
- that the Designated Teacher and staff are aware of, and enabled to, carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Head Teacher;
- that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, Looked After Children.

## 5.2 Trust School Leadership Teams

All Trust School Leadership Teams will:

- ensure the School Governor meets regularly with the Designated Teacher, to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children in the school are taken into account at a school leadership level and to support the Designated Teacher;
- support the Designated Teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training to support Looked After Children;
- oversee this policy and monitor its implementation, feeding back to the governing board termly on the following:
  - the number of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children in the school
  - an analysis of assessment scores as a cohort, compared to other student groups
  - the attendance of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, compared to other student groups
  - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other student groups
- ensure all members of staff are aware that supporting Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children is a key priority;
- actively challenge negative stereotypes of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children;
- support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making;
- liaise closely with the Virtual School, carers, parents (if appropriate) and the child's social worker on a variety of issues, including homework, kit and equipment required;
- share positive messages about behaviour and achievement;
- have a clear understanding about the role and responsibility of staff in relation to the child and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved;
- advocate for, and share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals, but especially with the child;
- aim to ensure that Looked After Children enjoy as many extra-curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible;
- be aware of, and sensitive to, the appropriate role of the parents;
- ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned on time, to comply with statutory obligations;
- encourage each of our Looked After Children to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self-esteem and learning.

### **5.3 The Virtual School Head (VSH)**

The Virtual School Head will:

- monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after;
- ensure that arrangements are in place to improve the education and outcomes of the authority's Looked After Children, including those placed out of authority;
- build relationships with health, education and social care partners, as well as other partners, so they and the Designated Teachers understand the support available to Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children;
- work with the school to ensure all Looked After Children in attendance are fully supported in reaching their full potential;
- act as the educational advocate for Looked After Children;
- act as a source of advice and information to help parents of Previously Looked After Children;
- ensure there are effective systems in place to:
  - maintain an up-to-date roll of the Looked After Children who are in schools, and gather information about their educational placement, attendance and progress;
  - inform the head teacher and designated teacher if they have a student on roll who is looked after by the LA;
  - ensure social workers, schools, designated teachers, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities regarding a student's Personal Education Plan;
  - ensure that up-to-date and effective Personal Education Plans focus on educational outcomes, and are maintained for all LAC;
  - avoid delays in providing suitable educational provision;
  - ensure the education achievement of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare;
  - report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of Looked After Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

### **5.4 The Designated Teacher**

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- promote the educational achievement of every Looked After Child on the school's roll;
- set up systems to regularly record the achievement of Looked After Children, monitor their attainment and progress and, where progress is not being made, take appropriate actions to support the student;
- ensure the voice of the child is heard;
- build a good working relationship with the Virtual Teacher(s) from the Virtual School bringing to their attention any concerns;



- regularly report progress and attainment for every Looked After Child to the Virtual School;
- promote a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every Looked After Child matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised;
- facilitate the training of school staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Looked After Children learn and develop;
- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Looked After Children at a disadvantage;
- promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- promote a culture in which Looked After Children are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in Care;
- make sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/interventions promoted by the Department for Education;
- promote good home-school links through contact with carers and effective communication;
- work with curriculum leaders to monitor the educational progress of Looked After Children and intervene, drawing upon external agency support if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy or other similar concern;
- maintain records regarding all Looked After Children, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- establish a specific system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Looked After Children;
- maintain and respect confidentiality of all Looked After Children and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis;
- play an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to statutory reviews of Looked After Children as required;
- serve as a named contact for colleagues in the Virtual School and Social Care and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between key stages and year groups and schools where appropriate;
- ensure that each child who is in Care has a carefully selected Key Worker, who has preferably, received Mentor training through the Virtual School. Part of the Personal Education Plan process involves checking if the child knows who they can talk to if they have a problem. If the child asks to see the Designated Teacher, then this becomes the priority, as part of the responsibility that this role involves.

## **5.5 Other staff involved in supporting Looked After Children**

All other staff involved in supporting Looked After Children will:

- ensure that all Looked After Children are treated inclusively;
- have high expectations of Looked After Children 's involvement in learning and educational progress; ensure that more able children are identified and appropriate provision is in place to enable them to reach or exceed their potential;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- be aware of the reasons which may affect the behaviour of Looked After Children and understand that this is often a form of communication which may need a more personalised response or intervention;
- understand how important it is to see Looked After Children as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Looked After Child's status;
- understand what a Personal Education Plan is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers, Virtual Teacher(s) and, depending on age and understanding, the child themselves, of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential;
- provide information including data and SMART targets to support the completion of Personal Education Plans, in support of the child's progress.

## **6. Supporting Looked After Children with SEN**

The role of all those involved in supporting Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs (see our SEND Policy for more information) is to:

- quickly identify any Special Educational Needs and ensure appropriate provision will be made;
- have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Looked After Children are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this;
- ensure that if the child has a Statement of Special Educational Need or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly Care Planning Reviews; dates can be obtained from the social worker.

## **7. Admissions and Transitions**

All Trust schools will:

- prioritise the admission of Looked After Children, and those who have been adopted or who have a Special Guardianship Order, within our own Admissions procedures in order

to admit students without delay, recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Looked After Children;

- ensure that all Looked After Children meet the Designated Teacher regularly who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral;
- ensure a warm welcome to the school by providing appropriate induction for all Looked After Children so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers and parents where appropriate;
- meet with the Virtual School to make sure that on admission or transfer, all relevant information records are obtained at the outset;
- forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition (where the receiving school is made known) including organising transition meetings where needed;
- make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience;
- where appropriate, ensure that Looked After Children receive timely and high-quality advice and guidance to support the transition into Post-16 provision;
- liaise with carers, previous schools and other professionals to help to effectively manage transitions.

## **8. Attendance**

All Trust schools will:

- promote the attendance of Looked After Children, and where the attendance for a Looked After Child becomes a concern and falls below 95%, inform the Virtual School and work with them and the EWO to improve attendance;
- implement a first day of absence procedure for all Looked After Children whose attendance falls below 95%;
- inform the carer / Virtual School / Education Welfare Service / social worker / parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance;
- make attendance a priority in any education meeting, celebrating success and setting realistic targets, if it is a concern.

## **9. Exclusion**

The Trust recognises that the challenging behaviour of some Looked After Children and those previously in Care are strongly related to traumatic life experiences. The Trust will:

- aim to use alternatives to exclusion as a sanction for Children in Care, for example restorative approaches and attachment-based support;
- inform the Virtual School as soon as there is an exclusion or a risk of exclusion;

- apply the principles outlined in 'The Shropshire Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy'<sup>1</sup>;
- engage with interventions provided by the Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service to avoid exclusion, such as ELSA support, Motivational Interviewing, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy.

## 10. Student Mental Health

Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children are more likely to experience the challenge of social, emotional and mental health issues which can impact their behaviour and education. Designated Teachers will have awareness, training and skills regarding a child's needs and how to support them in relation to behaviour management and mental health.

The Designated Teacher will work with the Virtual School to ensure the school is able to identify signs of potential mental health issues, understand the impact issues can have on Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, and knows how to access further assessment and support, where necessary.

To measure, if necessary, the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by Previously Looked After Children A Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire will be used to help social workers and other relevant professionals to form a view about Looked After Children's emotional wellbeing. Teachers will regularly complete their element of the questionnaire to assist social workers in their assessment.

## 11. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All Looked After Children must have a care plan; Personal Education Plans are an integral part of this care plan. The Personal Education Plan is an evolving record of what needs to happen for a student to enable them to make the expected progress and fulfil their potential. The Personal Education Plan will reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which meets the identified educational needs of the child.

All Trust schools will work with other professionals and the child's carers to use the Personal Education Plan to support the child's educational needs, raise the child's aspirations and Personal Education Plan will address the student's full range of education and development needs, including:

- [Primary schools only] access to quality nursery provision that is appropriate to the child's age;
- on-going catch-up support, which will be made available for children who have fallen behind with work;
- suitable education provided by the LA, where the child is not in school because of suspension or exclusion;
- transitional support where needed, such as if a child is moving to a new school;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/16216/behaviour-regulation-policy-guidance-jan2019.pdf>

- school attendance and behaviour support, where appropriate;
- support to help the child meet their aspirations, which includes:
  - support to achieve expected levels of progress for the relevant national key stage and to complete an appropriate range of approved qualifications;
  - careers advice, guidance and financial information about FE, training and employment, that focusses on the child's strengths, capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve;
  - out-of-school hours learning activities, study support and leisure interests.

## **12. Information sharing**

Appropriate and specific arrangements for sharing reliable data are in place to ensure that the education needs of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children are understood and met.

The arrangements set out:

- who has access to what information and how the security of data will be ensured;
- how students and parents are informed of, and allowed to challenge, information that is kept about them;
- how carers contribute to and receive information;
- mechanisms for sharing information between the school and relevant LA departments;
- how relevant information about individual students is passed between authorities, departments and the school, when pupils move.

## **13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Development**

It is the responsibility of all Marches Academy Trust staff to implement this policy.

The Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Safeguarding, LAC and SEND will monitor and evaluate the impact of all schools' provision, teaching and learning, and support for Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children.

## 14. Appendix A - Trust Designated Teachers

School	Designated Teacher
Marches Academy Trust	Amy Chevin-Dooley
Grange Primary School	Beth Dean (SENDCo)
Grove School	Gwen Nutting (SENDCo)
Longlands Primary School	Sarah Morris
Lower Heath CE Primary School	Deb Sadler (Executive Headteacher)
Marches School	Sali James
Oakmeadow CE Primary School	Samantha Hill (Head of School)
Shrewsbury Academy	Angela Grant
Sir John Talbot's School	Laura Richmond
Tilstock CE Primary School	Rowena Kaminski (Head of School)

## 15. Appendix B - The LAC Mentor

The LAC Mentor is a model that may be adopted by any of the Trust schools. Where this is the case, the responsibilities of the post-holder include, but are not restricted to those listed below. The LAC Mentor will:

- provide an additional service to existing teachers and pastoral staff in school by addressing the specific needs of Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children, who need help to overcome barriers to learning both in and outside of school, in order to achieve their potential;
- develop a 1:1 supportive relationship with the Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children, and identify aspects of their learning which they find difficult, such as organization, communication, motivation, etc.;
- maintain regular contact with families/carers of children in need of extra support in order to ensure they are fully informed of the child's needs and progress, and to secure positive family support and involvement;
- contribute to the maintenance of records and information systems, both computerized and manual, with due regard for GDPR and confidentiality;
- work closely with all Trust staff on targeting efforts at those at risk of underachieving, who are not already receiving effective intervention;
- working closely with the Designated Teacher and SENDCo to ensure that the needs of Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children, who also have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND), are met;
- liaising with relevant staff, in the comprehensive assessment of children and young people, to identify and address barriers to learning;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of strategies to the relevant stakeholders, for example, the Virtual School, social worker, etc.;
- facilitating in the sharing of information between school staff and partner agencies;
- networking with a range of authorities to share best practice;
- ensuring an up-to-date knowledge and full appreciation of the range of extended services that could be drawn upon to provide extra support to students;
- complying with all relevant legislation, school policies and procedures;
- extending expertise through regular and comprehensive training;
- attending all relevant meetings.

**Document Control**

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Related Policies/Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Children Act 1989</li><li>▪ The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010</li><li>▪ Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000</li><li>▪ Children and Young Persons Act 2008</li><li>▪ Children and Families Act 2014</li><li>▪ Children and Social Work Act 2017</li><li>▪ DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children'</li><li>▪ DfE (2017) 'Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and student referral units in England'</li><li>▪ MAT Admissions Policy</li><li>▪ MAT Behaviour Policy (Primary or Secondary, as appropriate)</li><li>▪ MAT Attendance Policy</li><li>▪ MAT Equality Policy</li><li>▪ MAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy</li><li>▪ MAT Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy</li></ul>