



# *Policy*

## **The Gainsborough Parish Church CE Primary School**

### **Looked After Learners', including Previously Looked After Learners' Policy 2023-2025**

*"Let all that you do be done in love." Corinthians 16:14*

#### **How does our vision impact our support of looked after learners at Parish?**

Inspired by our Church school vision, we use our core four values to guide all aspects of our thinking and practice. Below is an explanation of how each of the core four impacts upon this policy at Gainsborough Parish.

#### **Dignity**

Through understanding every child's personal circumstances, we treat them as the unique and precious individuals that they are.

#### **Community**

We work together, recognising the importance of home, school and external agency communication to ensure the best for our children.

#### **Hope**

We are committed to ensuring that all children have ambitious and enriching learning experiences, irrespective of any challenges that they may have faced.

#### **Wisdom**

We recognise the barriers to learning that may be more prevalent with children who have been looked after, and work together with carers and external agencies to overcome these.

#### **Contextual Background.**

Across the county of Lincolnshire there are children who are classified as being in the care of the Local Authority. Additionally, there are children in care who belong to other local authorities but have been placed into foster care in Lincolnshire. These, like any other child, will become admitted to schools in Lincolnshire in the same way to access the entitlement curriculum. This means that at some stage any school is likely to need to make the appropriate support and provision for a child who is in care.

Over recent years commencing 2006, Children's Services of Lincolnshire County Council have introduced a focus of support toward raising the educational attainment of children in care. This has proven successful in that the academic performance indicators of children in care at KS4, are increasing. This has led to more young people who have come through the care system going on to further and higher education.

**With the right support and influence, effectively coordinated between local partnerships, (schools and children's services, health etc.) children in care are capable of achieving as well as their peers.**

Children are taken into care or can become 'Looked After' for a number of different reasons. This can often be a traumatic experience in itself and is usually a result of the emotional stress, abuse or trauma arising from family upheaval and domestic turbulence involved.

There are 4 main groups or definitions of looked after learners as identified under the Children Act 1989. These are:

- **Section 20** Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents.
- **Section 21** Children who are compulsorily accommodated; this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to criminal justice supervision order with a residence order.
- **Section 31** Children who are the subject of a care order or an interim care order known as **Section 38**.
- **Sections 44 & 46** Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection.

The effects of being taken into care via any of the above group definitions can impact severely on the child's social and emotional stability. This in turn limits their educational development and the impact of this varies depending upon the age at which the turbulence is experienced. It is an increasingly known fact in professional circles (e.g. research educationalists and psychologists) that **the emotional and social well-being of children and young adults is inextricably linked to their ability to learn**. If a child is taken into care during early years this can mean that language and literacy skills are underdeveloped. Such children are more likely to have missed out on opportunities for regular reading development at home with e.g. a parent. As education professionals we know that in a majority of cases 'good parenting' is synonymous with getting off to a good start with developing the essential core skills needed for accessing education and schooling. Additionally, children frequently come into care at later stages after having started schooling.

There is much evidence to show there are higher numbers of children coming into care in particular during KS2 & KS3, as well as in KS4. Being taken into care during these ages or stages is equally disrupting to educational development. The turbulence and insecurity involved serves to detract from and limit educational progress. It causes major distraction and is highly unsettling for the child involved. Such emotional upset can cause a child to behave differently or to lose control of their emotions. These behaviours are classified as 'attachment disorder' and are associated with looked after learners in a high proportion of instances.

Looked after learners are a highly vulnerable group of young people. Through no fault of their own they have a disadvantaged start in life. The Care Matters White Paper 2007, Time for Change, sets out the expectation to which all schools, staff and Governors should adhere in order to bring about a step change in providing for this group of underachieving young people. Further guidance is provided through the publication: **Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (DfE 2018)**.

Dependent upon the type, age, stage and severity of the traumatic experience the child has suffered, looked after children are recognisable as they can display varying degrees of some or all of the following characteristics:

- low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- a negative response to praise
- poor educational standards in core skills due to missed schooling
- a reluctance to ask for help
- delayed social, emotional and cognitive development
- the victim of bullying or bullying others
- prone to mental health issues
- isolated, with few friends
- behavioural challenges in class or group situations
- in conflict with rules, organisational arrangements and expected standards.

Once children have left care, i.e. are adopted, become the subject of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or a Residency Order (RO), they are known as being “post-LAC” or “previously looked after”. This does not lessen the traumatic experiences they may have suffered.

Since September 2009, all schools have been required to have a suitably experienced Designated Teacher who is tasked to ensure that provision and support are given to the looked after learner in a fully coordinated and planned way across the school. This needs to be carried out sensitively and appropriately by raising the awareness of staff to key aspects and circumstances affecting the young person’s learning. Where necessary the Designated Teacher should liaise appropriately for support with the responsible Local Authority.

Since April 2010 all local authorities have been required to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher, or equivalent, to take a countywide strategic monitoring role for children in care. The central aim of this is to drive up the standards of support for their education, aiming to close the gap in achievement between them and their peers.

## **SCHOOL POLICY**

***Within this policy, where children are referred to as looked after learners this also includes previously looked after learners.***

1. As Governors and teachers of The Gainsborough Parish Church C.E. Primary School, we aim to:
  - make a real difference in helping to provide the best possible education for looked after learners;
  - seek to give our young people in care professional help, encouragement and support, so they find our school a welcoming and friendly place;
  - be fully inclusive and challenge negative views and stereotypes;
  - offer support to, and work with, foster carers on how to assist the young person’s learning and enhance educational opportunities.

2. We support the Government's agenda for giving all looked after learners the same life chances as any other child, in that we want them to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society, and achieve economic well-being.
3. The Children Act 2004 places duty on us all as corporate parents to work together to promote the educational achievement of looked after learners. We recognise that schools and teachers must be at the very heart of this process; a good education increases the life chances of this vulnerable group.
4. We recognise our responsibilities as governors and teachers and we actively support the local authority in undertaking its statutory responsibility, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004. This is to help this vulnerable group to succeed in education, champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative assumptions at all levels.
5. As school Governors, we are aware we can make a significant difference. We recognise that we have a key role and major influence to ensure that the needs of looked after learners are considered at the improvement planning and policy level, through to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.
6. As a governing body we have systems in place to monitor the progress looked after learners are making in our school and identify if there are barriers to their next steps of learning and progress.
7. We have an annual reporting cycle on the progress and performance of looked after learners, to be presented to the full governing body by our appointed Designated Teacher during the autumn term of each academic year.
8. We require our appointed Designated Teacher to undertake the recommendations set down in the statutory guidance entitled: **The designated teacher for looked after children and previously looked after children (DfE 2018)**.
9. In this context the **Designated Teacher** will:
  - Become the central point of contact at this school for all professionals and agencies working with and supporting the individual looked after learners we have on roll.
  - *Where the child is currently looked after:* Take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Personal Education Plan (electronic for Lincolnshire children). The PEP should be established within a 10-school working day period for any looked after learner starting on roll. This also includes the gradual addition and updating of further information over time e.g. attendance, attainment and progress results.
  - *Where the child has previously been looked after:* With the agreement of the child's carer, take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Personal Education Plan that we have developed. This also includes the gradual addition and updating of further information over time e.g. attendance, attainment and progress results.
  - Attend relevant update training and cascade information for staff development and updating regarding looked after learners.

- Ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account.
- Establish good working relationships and communications with carers, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend meetings and reviews.
- Provide support and sanctuary to help settle a looked after learner into the school, and at other times; ensure the looked after learner feels safe, knows who to trust and who to go to if they feel the need for support.
- Ensure the transfer of records if a looked after learner moves school.
- Provide written information to assist planning, reviews and reporting as required.
- Seek and prioritise meetings with and referrals to appropriate external agencies in situations that require external support.

10. In addition, we require our school **Teaching and Support Staff** to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after learners by requiring all to:

- Ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained.
- Be familiar with and respond appropriately to requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP (if required) and other documentation necessary for reviews.
- Respond appropriately to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with.
- Ensure that no child in care becomes a victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and eradicated.
- Positively promote the self-esteem of looked after learners.
- Convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

11. As a **Governing Body** we endeavour to raise expectations for achievement of looked after learners and encourage them to do well by combining high expectation and standards with inclusion.

12. We consider and set appropriately challenging targets and in so doing facilitate the appropriate resources in order to support the child to reach those targets.

13. We monitor and evaluate the impact of our school provision, teaching and learning and support for looked after learners. The annual reporting cycle informs on the following key aspects of provision:

- The number of looked after learners on roll.
- Attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence.
- The frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded exclusion.
- How they are performing in core subjects, their progress and any value-added measure when compared against initial baseline assessment.
- The frequency of them taking part in extra-curricular activities.
- The attainment relative to the targets set in core and foundation subject.
- The provision arrangements for additional support identified to include 1:1 tuition at school and any externally added booster work provided in the care home.
- The quality and updating of the educational targets recorded in the PEP (where the child is currently in care).

14. We are aware that the new OFSTED inspection framework will consider the provisions that we, as a whole school, have put in place to support looked after learners (this includes our previously looked after learners). We understand that a judgement will be made within the OFSTED framework in terms of how far this school is able to support looked after young people. The formal report will include comments about the progress and support provided to these vulnerable young people.

**Reviewed April 2023**

**This policy was established, and approved for implementation by the full Governing Body.**

**Signed by the Chair of Governors: ..... Dated .....**

**The name of our school's Designated Teacher is: Mrs K Arnold**

**This policy is to be next reviewed on: April 2025**