The Park Federation Academy Trust
James Elliman Academy

Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Policy 2026-2027

Approval

Signed by Principal	Mrs T Johal
Signed by Chair	Ms E Herod
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Date of review	September 2027

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Version History

Version	Date	Status	Changes overview
1	01/09/2021	Final	Policy created
2	22.08.2023	Final	Updated key contacts
3	07.08.2024	Final	Updated key contacts and review dates.
4	29.07.2025	Final	Updated key contacts for Post 16 and updated links to KCSIE 2025.
5	21.08.2026	Update	-Updated links to KCSIE 2026 throughout. -Added a sub-section on what previously looked after means in section 3. -Added more reference to supporting wellbeing throughout. -Added more information in the DTs role in liaising with the VSH. and being involved in decision making of PP+ funds. -Added information on ensuring parents, carers and guardians know about PP+ funding. -Added a new section 8 on the VSH and deleted any duplication from section 5 so that section 5 was purely the DT role and section 8 was the role of the VSH. - Added an automatically updating contents page, page numbers and updated section titles for better clarity and flow.

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Section 1: Introduction

James Elliman Academy is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. This academy recognises that, nationally, Looked After Children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion, compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children, and Previously Looked After Children, are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being. James Elliman Academy has a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of children who are looked after, and previously looked after, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, (February 2018)'.

Section 2: Related Guidance and Legislation

This guidance is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This means that it must be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify departing from it. The guidance sets the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under 22(3A) of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children. That includes those children placed out of authority. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children is properly discharged. There is additional guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

The guidance also sets the framework through which local authorities discharge their statutory duty under 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (added by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children. Local authorities are required to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote their educational achievement is properly discharged.

Section 3: Who are Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children?

Who are Looked After Children?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are subjects to a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term 'in care' refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 – they may live with foster carers, in a children's home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a children's home or a residential school. All these groups are said to be Looked After Children – LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in care of another authority but living in ours

It is important to note that throughout this document the terms Looked After Children – LAC and Children Looked After – CLA are used interchangeably. Our school has been advised by the Slough Virtual School Head (VSH) that children who are looked after prefer to be referred to as Children Looked After. Therefore, we endeavour to use this term when talking about this group.

Who are previously looked after children?

A previously looked-after child (PLAC) is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating 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 and Wales.

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.

The categories for children who are previously looked after:

- **Children adopted from care** - Those who were looked after by a local authority and then adopted
- **Children under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)** - Where a special guardian has parental responsibility
- **Children under Child Arrangements Orders** - Specifically those orders that determine where a child lives
- **Children adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales** - Those adopted from public authorities, religious organisations, or other organisations whose main purpose is to benefit society

Section 4: Difficulties and Barriers

Children looked after and previously looked after may, or may not, have some or all of the following difficulties/barriers:

- low self esteem
- poor attendance
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/cognitive development
- experience, or be involved in child on child abuse e.g be bullied or bully others, including cyber bullying
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues
- poor attachment to others
- have a need to be very private
- be at risk of other wider safeguarding issues such as child criminal exploitation or child sexual exploitation, on or off line
- be at risk of grooming for radicalisation and extremism, on or off line
- have difficulty identifying and regulating their emotions
- find transitions difficult and require additional support when change happens e.g a change of teacher, year group, during a change of placement

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances. James Elliman Academy is committed to ensuring that these children are supported as fully as possible and will ensure that the following are in place, and are working effectively:

- a designated teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After
- personal education plans (PEPs) for all Children Looked After
- attendance at and participation in relevant meetings to discuss the progress of a child looked after e.g Looked After Child review meetings and any other planning meetings that the lead social worker invites them to
- all staff have a clear understanding of confidentiality and issues that affect children who are looked after and previously looked after

- effective strategies that support the education and wellbeing of this vulnerable group
- for children previously looked after, the school will liaise with the virtual school head who will provide suitable advice and information in order to promote their educational achievement. The school will undertake any activity they consider appropriate where that activity will promote the educational achievement and wellbeing of children who are previously looked after.

Section 5: Role and Responsibility of the Designated Teacher

The school follows the 'Guidance on The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children' (February 20218) which states what effective designated teachers should do. The designated teacher works in close partnership with the Virtual School Head (VSH). Full details of this partnership and when to contact the VSH are set out in Section 8.

Effective Designated Teachers should:

- be a central point of initial contact within the school to make sure that the school plays its role in making sure arrangements are joined up and minimise any disruption to a child's learning.
- have a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on the school's roll
- work with the Virtual School Head to promote the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children and promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked-after and previously looked-after child matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised
- take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked after children learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils
  This means making sure that all staff:

    - have high expectations of looked-after and previously looked-after children's learning and set targets to accelerate educational progress;
    - are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment and trauma awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour;
    - understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their looked-after or previously looked-after status;
    - appreciate the central importance of the looked-after child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported;
    - have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child; and
    - for previously looked-after children, understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education and wellbeing, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress or wellbeing at school.
- have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation.

This can be achieved by contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that:

- they do not unintentionally put looked-after and previously looked-after children at a disadvantage;
- there is effective induction for looked-after and previously looked-after children starting school, new to the school and new to care;
- there are effective procedures in place to support a looked-after child's learning;
- particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve;
- transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground – e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion;
- thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment;
- when enrolling at the school, parents and guardians of previously looked-after children are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+; and
- there are no barriers to looked-after children accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its pupils (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for looked-after children to attend meetings).

- promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children;

  - are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously, and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
  - are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support;
  - are encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system;
  - believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs; and
  - can discuss difficult issues (such as SEN, bullying, attendance) in a frank manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult.

- be a source of advice for teachers about:

  - adaptive teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are looked-after or previously looked-after children; and
  - the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of looked-after and previously looked after children, and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning (including any knowledge gaps), where they need to go, and how to get there.

- work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents or guardians to:

  - promote good home-school links;
  - support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians;
  - ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition

and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy; and
- encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment.

- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked after children's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary; and
- work closely with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, if different, to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.
- Prepare reports and attend PEP review meetings and Looked After Child Review meetings each term.

When supporting previously looked-after children, designated teachers should be aware of the following:

- The designated teacher should help raise previously looked-after children's parents' and guardians' awareness of the PP+ and other support for previously looked-after children - this includes encouraging parents of eligible previously looked-after children to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+ funding.
- The designated teacher should "encourage parents and guardians' involvement in deciding how the PP+ is used to support their child and be the main contact for queries about its use.

Section 6: Roles and Responsibilities of all staff

Staff will:

- ensure that any child in public care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained;
- be familiar with and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPS and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- respond positively to a child in public care's request to be the named person that they can talk to when they feel it is necessary;
- contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate;
- as with all children, ensure that no child in public care is stigmatised in any way;
- provide a supportive climate to enable a child in public care to achieve stability within the school setting;
- as with all children, have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of children who are looked after and previously looked after
- positively promote the wellbeing of children looked after and previously looked after.

Section 7: Role and Responsibility of the Academy Council

The school's academy council will:

- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. ;
- be aware of whether the school has children who are looked after or previously looked after and how many (no names);
- ensure that there is a named Designated Teacher for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After;

- liaise with the Principal to ensure that the Designated Teacher is enabled to carry out their responsibilities in relation to Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After;
- support the Principal, Designated Teacher and other staff in ensuring the needs of these pupils are met;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Teacher, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the Academy Council
- review the effective implementation of this policy, annually.

The following questions are taken from the DfE Guidance *The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children* (February 2018) and aims to help governors support the role of the Designated Teacher.

The governing body, head teacher and school leadership team will want to consider the following in supporting the designated teacher role:

- Does the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership, training, information, challenge and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children?
- Does the designated teacher have appropriate seniority and skills to work with the school's senior leadership and governing body to help ensure school policies and approaches appropriately reflect the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children and act as a champion for them?
- Does the designated teacher have training opportunities, including time away from timetable commitments[5], to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including a good knowledge of SEN?
- How does the designated teacher role contribute to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children to achieve?
- What resource implications might there be in supporting the designated teacher to carry out their role?
- What expertise can designated teachers call on within and outside the school such as SENCOs, health and mental health support?
- What monitoring arrangements might be appropriate to ensure that the role of the designated teacher is providing appropriate support for looked-after and previously looked-after children on the school roll?

Section 8: Role and Responsibility of the Virtual School Head

What is the Virtual School Head (VSH)?

The Virtual School Head (VSH) is a statutory role within the local authority responsible for promoting the educational achievement of all looked-after children in that authority, wherever they are placed or educated. The VSH monitors and supports these children as if they attended a single school. The VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's looked-after children, including those placed out-of-authority.

Key responsibilities:

- Maintaining an up-to-date roll of looked-after children and gathering information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress

- Ensuring up-to-date, effective and high-quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes
- Managing Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for looked-after children
- Reporting regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of looked-after children

The role of the VSH for previously looked-after children is to promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others. The VSH is not the corporate parent for previously looked-after children. Any intervention must be with the agreement of the person(s) who have parental responsibility

Key responsibilities:

- VSHs must respond to parental requests for advice and information
- VSHs must respond to requests for advice and information from designated teachers in maintained schools and academies in respect of individual children
- VSHs should make general advice and information available to schools to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children

How the Designated Teacher works with the VSH

For looked-after children
The designated teacher will work closely with the VSH to ensure the best outcomes for looked-after children. This includes liaising with the VSH to contribute to decisions about how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is used to support each child's educational outcomes. The VSH should be consulted when a child becomes looked-after to minimise disruption to their education, and when planning any placement moves. The designated teacher will maintain strong communication with the VSH to identify looked-after children who are absent without authorisation and will contact the VSH at the earliest opportunity where there are concerns about a child's behaviour, particularly if there is a risk of exclusion. The VSH is responsible for supporting social workers to ensure timely provision of suitable education placements, and the designated teacher will work with them to facilitate this.

For previously looked-after children
The designated teacher will establish a good working relationship with the VSH. With the agreement of the child's parents or guardians, the designated teacher may seek advice from the VSH about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children. This could include guidance on effective use of PP+, understanding the child's specific needs, or accessing appropriate support and training.

When to contact the VSH

The designated teacher should contact the VSH:

- When a child becomes looked-after or when we are notified a looked-after child will be joining our school
- When seeking advice on PP+ use for looked-after children
- When there are concerns about a looked-after child's behaviour or attendance
- When a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion
- When planning transitions or placement moves for looked-after children
- For training and professional development opportunities
- When seeking advice about previously looked-after children (with parental agreement)

Section 9: Confidentiality

Information on children who are looked after and who have been previously looked after will be shared with school staff on a 'need to know basis'. The designated teacher will discuss what information is shared with school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Section 10: Training

The Principal and the Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy. The Designated Teacher will attend network meetings and any relevant training arranged by the Virtual School Head in order to remain up to date with knowledge, skills and application of practice.

Section 11: Completion of the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- The child's social worker informs the school of a child becoming looked after, or informs the school of a child who is looked after who is due to join the school.
- A date is set for the completion of the PEP and the next Looked After Child Review Meeting (LAC Review).
- The Designated Teacher is set up with the electronic PEP system and is instructed how to access it by the child's social worker or the child's Virtual School.
- The PEP paperwork is completed prior to the PEP and is a collaboration of work from the child's social worker, the Designated Teacher (and/or other appropriate staff who work with the child), carer and child, if appropriate.
- The PEP shares the child's care status, child's wishes and feelings around home life and school life, indications on attendance and academic attainment and progress, how pupil premium plus funds are being spent to support the child's progress, any details on SEND provision, any details on support for emotional health and wellbeing, reports of any exclusions and additions of any aspirations and successes.
- The child may attend some, all or none of the PEP. This will be dependent on the child's age, developmental and emotional ability to manage the meeting.
- The use of the pupil premium plus funding is approved or challenged by the Virtual School. If successful the school may use the funding as intended.
- At the end of the PEP, a date is set for the next PEP meeting where progress is reviewed again.
- The PEP is sent by the child's social worker to the LAC Team.
- The PEP is taken to the child's statutory review (LAC Review) and discussed within a wider context of the child's life.
- The LAC Review is chaired by an independent reviewing officer (IRO) and is attended by the social worker, the designated teacher, the carers, fostering agency, advocate, any other relevant professional and parents (if appropriate).

More detailed information on the PEP can be found in The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, February 2018, pg 14-21.

Section 12: Policy Management and Review

This policy is updated and reviewed annually by the Designated Teacher and is approved by the Academy Principal and Chair.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force Policy
- Pupil Wellbeing Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy
- SEND Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, February 2018
- 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children, February 2018