



**Northern Lights**  
LEARNING TRUST

# LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Review Date: Summer 2020

Next review date: Summer 2021

Person in charge: CEO

Link Director: Chair of Board

Pastoral Care/Spiritual Development

**The quality of relationships between all members of school, staff and pupils, and the relationship with parents and carers is the area that is most commonly associated with the ethos of a church school. It is expressed in the terms of sharing and caring. Jesus was clear in his instructions to the disciples on this matter.**

**‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ – Matthew 22:39.  
‘This is my commandment: love each other’ - John 15:17.**

Everyone associated with the school is made in the image of God and is to be loved. This is the commandment from which schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust derives its policy for pastoral care.

We have a series of overlapping networks of relationships, which includes governors, staff, children, parents, church members, and members of the community which the academy seeks to serve. Our pastoral work will strive to meet the significant challenge to create and maintain such networks in ways which reflect the Gospel. Those who are in leadership roles, which includes all who have a particular responsibility, ensure that by their personal example they set the highest standards expected.

It is from this premise that Christian love will pervade all aspects of life at schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust. It will influence how we reward and teach discipline. It will affect how we value work and the achievements of pupils and staff. It will be seen in the way in which the school environment is created and cared for, in the way in which the needs of pupils, parents, and community are met, and in the way in which teaching and non-teaching staff work together effectively as a team. Pastoral care pervades all aspects of school life and therefore will be reflected in the way the school is organised and the policies are written and implemented.

The Trust's policy to promote welfare of "Looked After Children" is part of the Trust's pastoral system.

Other policies that link and should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- *SEND Policy and Local Offer*
- *Admission Policies*

**Whilst this policy is pertinent to Northern Lights Learning Trust we will consider the Local policies of the Looked After Authority if a child is admitted, to ensure we provide the best possible provision for children.**

At Northern Lights Learning Trust we believe that 'Looked After Children (LAC) have distinct identities, aspirations and particular needs. They all have the potential and the right to succeed. We will endeavour to enable the LAC to achieve his or her true potential by creating a climate which is conducive to achieving measurable improvements and by providing a broad and balanced curriculum. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to set out the joint commitment of Northern Lights Learning Trust to the promotion of good educational outcomes for children and young people who enter, remain in, and pass through, public care.

The policy provides a context for schools within the TRUST, the Education and Community Services and Children's Services Departments to work, together with other departments of the authority, schools and Governing bodies, to ensure that the Local Authorities are able to fulfil their duties and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

The policy also acknowledges that whilst absence or exclusion from education is a common factor in family or placement breakdown, successful integration and inclusion into education can be a contributory determinant of successful placements, or to successful reintegration into family life.

#### **We will strive to**

- **To create an environment which provides continuity and stability**
- **To help to build self-confidence and self-esteem**
- **To work in partnership with parents or LAs**
- **To encourage robust home-school links**
- **To support and improved educational progress and promote achievement**
- **To ensure that the LAC has equal access to the Academy Curriculum and associated assessments**
- **To identify the roles and responsibilities of staff in providing for LAC**
- **To develop close liaison with, and effective co-operation between, all relevant agencies eg Children's Services, Department of Health, Attendance team**

#### **Designated Teacher**

The Designated teacher within each academy at Northern Lights Learning Trust will be a senior member of staff.

The roles and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher are as follows:

- To ensure speedy transfer of educational information between agencies and individuals
- To supervise the smooth induction of the LAC, treading a path between the child's need for confidentiality and making the child feel welcome
- To ensure that the LAC has an Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- To co-ordinate and integrate plans
- To ensure access to a broad and balanced education
- To have a flexible approach when providing support to the LAC, eg the LAC may prefer to choose who they would trust to talk to, and this may not necessarily be the designated teacher, however the designated teacher must ensure that support is properly co-ordinated.

- To provide counselling, if appropriate
- To keep abreast of good practice, both locally and nationally
- To plan at an individual level, and in collaboration with all those involved in the care of the LAC
- To maintain an up to date register of all LAC in school
- To attend LAC Reviews whenever possible and appropriate. When this is not possible the Designated Teacher, in consultation with the class teacher, should provide a written report to be presented at the LAC Review
- To be involved in the drawing up of the Care Plan.

The local authorities will provide training for Designated Teachers and Northern Lights Learning Trust will support a commitment to this training.

### **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

Every LAC needs a PEP which ensures access to services and support; contributes to stability; minimizes disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs, establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement.

The PEP should be an integral part of the LAC's Care Plan, which is drawn up by Children's Services, in close collaboration with the child, his or her family, the social worker and teacher and primary carers. It should be agreed as soon as possible and at least within 20 school days of entering care or of joining a new school. The PEP will normally be reviewed concurrently with the Care Plan, i.e. within 28 days, 3 months, 6 months etc.

#### **1. The LAC and SEND**

- **The needs of the LAC should be known to the SENDCo, the designated teacher, their carer and their social worker.**
- **Their PEP should detail their needs and the support already provided**
- **It is important to ensure that any special educational needs are identified and assessed**
- **We must not assume that all LAC have special educational needs**
- **It is essential to respond to emotional, behavioural and mental health needs with well planned support**
- **It is important to promote inclusive policies within the context of the school's robust pastoral systems**

### **Definitions**

#### **2.1 Corporate Parenting**

Responsible parents hold together many strands of their children's lives, caring about their safety, health, education and leisure interests, their friendships and their futures. They play a particularly significant continuous role in the education of their children. The serious underachievement of children who are without this continuous parental advocacy is testimony to this. For children who are in public care, just as for children in settled families, care, health and education are closely linked.

Corporate Parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of local authorities to achieve good parenting.

The whole local authority, including the Children's Services and other departments, including the LA and schools, together with health authorities, constitute the corporate parent.

Schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust will support the whole local authority in their care of children in the looked after system.

### **Local Authority Responsibility**

Local Authorities recognise their responsibility as the Corporate Parent. All departments, officers and members share the duty to promote the life chances of children who are looked after, including their education. The Local Authorities recognise that Looked After Children are not different from children in the general population, but that Corporate Parenting differs from natural parenting, not only in the use of paid carers and paid professional staff to manage their care, upbringing and education, but in the need for particular effort to overcome the disadvantage to each child of a fragmented and forgotten history. For the Corporate Parent to be an effective, good parent, it requires those involved with the education of any looked after child to be more deliberate in their role, and more proactive in advocating on their behalf, in order to ensure that the Looked After Child has the benefit of the support, encouragement and advocacy, which any other child may enjoy at the hands of a good parent.

### **Needs of Looked After Children**

Local Authorities recognise that children and young people who become looked after not only have needs greater than those in the general population, but are at risk of those needs being overlooked, and compounded as a direct consequence of becoming looked after by the loss of continuity of home and family life, friendships, health care and surveillance, personal identity and education,

The education of Looked After Children is recognised as essential to their well-being in childhood and adolescence, and a passport to their enjoyment of universal rights to citizenship and access to opportunity in adulthood.

The Education and Community Services and Children's Trust Departments will jointly and, where necessary, in partnership with other departments of the local authority, statutory and independent agencies work to actively promote the educational interests of those children for whom the local authority is the Corporate Parent.

All looked after children of compulsory school age will be provided with an educational placement suited to their age, aptitude and ability. The local authority will seek to achieve provision of full time education for all Looked After Children of compulsory school age in mainstream education or other appropriate settings.

## **Reducing the incidence of changes of care and education**

All services will work together to promote continuity of care and education for looked after children. Northern Lights Learning Trust and the local authorities acknowledge the need to consider care and education provision together, recognising that secure integration into school life is a major contributor to the maintenance of placement stability, and to the healthy development of personal identity and lifelong friendships essential to success in adulthood.

The local authorities will endeavour to ensure that no Looked After Child will experience more than three changes of placement within the first year of becoming looked after, and thereafter will seek to ensure that permanent placement, and school enrolment, has been achieved for each child at the earliest opportunity.

## **Management of changes**

Arrangements for the child's education will be agreed and confirmed before a child becomes looked after and before any planned placement change is completed. Where children or young people become looked after in an emergency, or experience unplanned placement changes, arrangements for resuming or continuing education will be confirmed and actioned within 20 days of the change.

Any child who becomes, or is, looked after who does not have a current education placement will be provided with a school place within 20 days of the termination of his/her previous enrolment or of his/her becoming looked after.

The Local Authorities recognise that for most children even this standard represents a serious interruption to a child's education. Children's Services will work together and with schools to develop standards and promote practices to ensure that unavoidable breaks in education are managed to ensure that loss of educational provision does not exceed 10 school days in any instance.

All services will jointly develop agreed standards and criteria to maintain educational continuity, to determine when changes in educational arrangements will occur, when they should be avoided and to ensure that the best interests of children are served in the management of any such change.

All schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust will seek to ensure continuity of education for children in the looked after system, working in close partnership with the services.

## **Personal Education Plans**

A Personal Education Plan will be put in place for each child of compulsory school age entering the looked after system, and for each looked after child who commences school, in accordance with the DFE guidance on The Education of Young People in Public Care.

The Personal Education Plan will be established within 20 days of a child entering the looked after system, (or of a Looked After child commencing school) and will be reviewed at the start of, and at least once during, each academic year.

Where other education plans are in force in respect of a child, such as a plan associated with a Statement of Special Educational Need, an Individual Education Plan, Pastoral Support Plan, or any other educational plan, they will be incorporated for the purpose of Review into the Personal Education Plan. The minimum arrangements for the review of the Personal Education Plan will be made in a manner, which meets the statutory requirements of any other education plan, which may at the time be in force.

In addition to the statutory requirement to maintain Personal Education Plans for young people of compulsory school age, the Local Authority will ensure such plans are in place for Looked After Children receiving nursery education to ensure access to Early Years opportunities. The Local Authorities will also maintain such continuing education plans as necessary to ensure that young people who are Looked After are encouraged and supported in accessing opportunities in Further and Higher Education.

Personal Education Plans will be developed in formats which assist in meeting the needs of children in mainstream education and those children receiving special educational provision for reason of special needs and disabilities. PEP formats may differ across Local Authorities and schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust will adhere to their own LA policies.

All schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust will support the development of a Personal Education Plan, will contribute relevant information to the review of such a plan and will ensure that all “Looked After” children receive appropriate education, specifically targeted to a child’s needs.

### **Access to Services and Resources**

Where children who are looked after require additional services in order to raise their attainment and promote achievement, the Looked After Children in Education Team will give priority to their needs in recognition of the fact that they are likely to experience disadvantages resulting from being looked after in addition to and needs associated with the need for them to enter the looked after system.

Additional services in this context include SEN and Learning Support provision, access to Educational Psychology Services and relevant health provision.

The authority will actively seek opportunities for looked after children to access extra curricular opportunities for achievement in sport, recreation, leisure and cultural activities.

All schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust will liaise closely with previous schools and external services to ensure that a child in the looked after system has equal access to education, and their needs are met in the school setting, where possible.

### **Information Sharing**

Children’s Services will establish and maintain systems, which facilitate shared access to all information necessary to the promotion of the educational attainment of looked after children, subject to the relevant application of the Data Protection Act.

Information concerning individual looked after children will be shared between the Education &

Community Services to ensure that planning for Looked After Children is undertaken with access to the best possible information about the child's educational history and potential. In addition, Designated Teachers will be provided with information concerning Care and Placement Plans and Reviews.

In all schools within the Northern Lights Learning Trust, the designated teacher will be responsible for ensuring that individuals receive information which is relevant to a child's education. The designated teacher will collect information about progress and achievement for meetings where appropriate. Any such information will remain confidential to the individuals concerned.

### **Advocacy.**

All those involved in the care of a looked after child have a responsibility to ensure that the child has prompt access to services to meet any educational need identified. They also will be responsible for ensuring that his/her being looked after does not compromise the child's access to additional opportunities arising within and in association with their education.

In planning to meet the needs of each individual we will:

- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Ensure that we use a range of classroom practice and teaching style appropriate to the needs of the learners in the group.
- Use the full range of differentiation strategies to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to access the curriculum and make progress and adopt teaching methods that reflect the differing learning styles of the individuals in the group.
- Address the literacy and numeracy needs of each individual and make full use of ICT in the provision of learning opportunities for all learners with additional educational needs, setting appropriate yet challenging targets for improvement.
- Monitor progress against targets and share the information with the learner.
- Seek to overcome potential barriers to effective inclusion.

### **TRUST BOARDS and Local Governing Bodies**

The Board of Northern Lights Learning Trust and staff within the schools of the Trust are committed to providing an inclusive range of high quality learning opportunities for everyone involved with the school and Community. We will ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to access the full range of provision available through our schools and will actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.

The Board of Northern Lights Learning Trust will be responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place in all schools to support the role of the Designated Teacher, and to ensure that the educational interests of Looked After Children within the school are actively promoted. The Board of Northern Lights Learning Trust has a duty, under the DFE guidance, to identify a member to have special responsibility for Looked After Children within each school and the Local Governing Body has the responsibility for ensuring their work is of the highest standard and support for the Looked After child.

The Headteacher will provide a report to the Board of Northern Lights Learning Trust, via the CEO, indicating the number of Looked After Children in the school, and sufficient information concerning their educational needs to enable the Board to consider whether their contribution to the role of corporate parent



is being effectively fulfilled. Children’s Services will jointly provide training for members of the Local Governing Bodies and Trust Board, and guidance to Local Governing Bodies to facilitate their development of their school policies for Looked After Children.