**Windy Nook Primary School**

**Looked-After Children Policy**

## Introduction

This policy outlines the approach of Windy Nook Primary School to supporting the educational achievement and well-being of Looked-After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked-After Children (PLAC). We are committed to ensuring that these children have the same opportunities for educational success and personal development as their peers.

**Who Are Our Looked-After Children?**

Looked-After Children (LAC) are those who are in the care of the local authority, either through a care order under the Children Act 1989 or through a voluntary agreement with their parent(s) under Section 20 of the same Act. These children may live in a variety of settings, including:

* Foster care
* Residential children’s homes
* With extended family members or connected carers
* In some cases, with their birth parents under supervision

Each Looked-After Child is assigned a social worker who oversees their welfare and coordinates a **Care Plan**, which includes a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** to support their educational progress.

# Our Commitment at Windy Nook Primary School

The Governing Body of Windy Nook Primary School is fully committed to providing high-quality education for all pupils, including Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children. We recognise the national trend of educational underachievement among LAC and are determined to close this gap through inclusive, equitable, and aspirational practices.

Our approach is guided by key legislation and statutory guidance, including:

* **Children Act 1989 & 2004**
* **Children and Families Act 2014**
* **Children and Social Work Act 2017**
* **DfE Guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (2018)**

These frameworks place a legal duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the educational achievement of Looked-After Children, ensuring they are supported to reach their full potential.

# Guiding Principles

We embrace the six core principles outlined in national guidance:

* Prioritising education
* Having high expectations
* Promoting inclusion and challenging stigma
* Ensuring continuity and stability
* Acting early and proactively
* Listening to the voice of the child

# Key Measures in Practice

To meet these principles, we ensure:

* A **Designated Teacher** is appointed to champion the needs of Looked-After Children.
* Every Looked-After Child has a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** in place, reviewed regularly in collaboration with the child, carers, social workers, and relevant professionals.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## The Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children

The Designated Teacher plays a pivotal role in promoting the educational achievement and well-being of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children. At Windy Nook Primary School, the Designated Teacher will:

* Act as a strong advocate for Looked-After Children within the school.
* Ensure a smooth, supportive, and inclusive induction for each child and their carer(s), and parent(s) where appropriate.
* Coordinate the timely completion of a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**—within 20 school days of a child entering care or joining the school—developed collaboratively with the child, carers, social worker, and relevant professionals.
* Ensure the PEP reflects and aligns with any existing plans, such as an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP), or career plan.
* Identify a trusted adult within school for each Looked-After Child to speak with when needed.
* Ensure access to and support for public examinations.
* Coordinate in-school support and liaise with external agencies and carers.
* Provide training and updates to staff and governors on the needs of Looked-After Children.
* Maintain confidentiality and share personal information only on a need-to-know basis.
* Prepare written reports and attend planning and review meetings wherever possible.
* Encourage participation in extracurricular and enrichment activities.
* Convene urgent meetings with relevant professionals if a child is experiencing difficulties or is at risk of exclusion.
* Maintain regular communication with Gateshead Virtual School staff.

# All School Staff

All staff at Windy Nook Primary School share responsibility for supporting Looked-After Children. Staff will:

* Maintain high aspirations and celebrate the achievements of Looked-After Children.
* Ensure access to public examinations and academic opportunities.
* Be familiar with statutory guidance and contribute to the completion of PEPs and other relevant documentation.
* Communicate with the Designated Teacher if a Looked-After Child is experiencing challenges or requires additional support.

# The Governing Body

The Governing Body of Windy Nook Primary School is committed to ensuring that the needs of Looked-After Children are met. The Governing Body will:

* Ensure that admission arrangements give priority to Looked-After Children, in line with the School Admissions Code.
* Ensure all governors are aware of their statutory duties and the specific needs of Looked-After Children.
* Appoint a named Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children (currently **Andrea Preece**).
* Nominate a governor to liaise with the Designated Teacher and report to the full governing body (currently **Lynn Coulson**).
* Ensure that data and reports are anonymised to protect the confidentiality of individual pupils.
* Review the implementation and effectiveness of this policy annually, or at least every three years.
* Ensure that all school policies and procedures promote equal access for Looked-After Children in areas such as:
* Admissions
* The National Curriculum and public examinations
* Additional educational support
* Extracurricular activities
* Work experience and careers guidance

# Gateshead Virtual School (GVS)

Gateshead Virtual School (GVS), formerly known as the REALAC service (Raising the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children), plays a vital role in supporting the educational outcomes of Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children across Gateshead. GVS works in close partnership with social care teams, schools, carers, and a range of multi-agency professionals to ensure that every child in care receives the support they need to thrive academically and personally.

In addition to supporting children currently in care, GVS also provides guidance and resources for children who were previously looked after, offering advice to parents, carers, and educators to help maintain continuity and progress in education.

**Key Aims of Gateshead Virtual School**

The Gateshead Virtual School is committed to enabling Designated Teachers and school staff to fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. Its core aims include:

* **Monitoring and supporting** the educational attainment and attendance of Looked-After Children.
* **Ensuring all LAC have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP)**, reviewed twice annually (typically in February/March and October/November).
* **Quality assuring PEPs** and responding to identified actions or needs.
* **Supporting transitions** between educational settings or into alternative provision.
* **Reducing school exclusions** through early intervention and targeted support.
* **Providing training opportunities** for teachers, school staff, and foster carers.
* **Offering specialist advice and mentoring**, including in-school support for primary and secondary pupils.
* **Advising on alternative placements** when required.
* **Facilitating work experience placements** through the *Pathways to Work (PTW)* programme during school holidays.
* **Delivering 1:1 tuition** via external providers to boost academic achievement.
* **Monitoring provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)** to ensure appropriate support is in place.
* **Guiding schools on the effective use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)** and allocating funding to maximise impact.
* **Promoting successful transitions** into further and higher education, apprenticeships, or employment.