St Mary's CVA New Mills

Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children Policy

Policy owner: Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children
Named Designated Teacher: Mrs L. Chapman (SENDCO)
Named Governor: Ms M. Laverick
Approved by: LGB Governing Body CoG Mrs E Reynolds and Vice Chair Mrs SJ Kenyon
Date approved: [12/10/26]
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1. Policy Statement

St Mary's CVA is committed to promoting the educational achievement, welfare, inclusion and personal development of all pupils, including children who are looked after by a local authority and children who were previously looked after.

We recognise that children in care may have experienced trauma, loss, disrupted education, changes in placement and difficulties with relationships, trust and emotional regulation. These experiences may affect their learning, attendance, behaviour, wellbeing and ability to achieve their potential.

The school will provide a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment in which every child is valued, supported and encouraged to achieve their best.

This policy applies to all staff, governors and relevant professionals working with pupils at St Mary's CVA. It will be implemented alongside the school's safeguarding and child protection, SEND, behaviour, attendance, admissions, equality and data protection policies.

The policy has been developed with reference to Derbyshire County Council's Virtual School guidance and relevant national legislation and statutory guidance.

2. Legal Framework and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with the current versions of:

- Children Act 1989, particularly section 22.
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008, including the requirement for a Designated Teacher.
- Children and Families Act 2014, where applicable.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Education Act 2002 and applicable safeguarding duties.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- School Admissions Code and the academy's published admission arrangements.
- Department for Education statutory guidance on the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.*
- Relevant statutory guidance on safeguarding, care planning and promoting the education of looked-after children.
- Derbyshire County Council's Virtual School guidance, Personal Education Plan (PEP) procedures and Pupil Premium Plus policy.

The policy will be reviewed whenever a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance or Derbyshire County Council procedures makes an amendment necessary.

3. Aims and Objectives

St Mary's CVA aims to:

- Promote high educational expectations, achievement and progress for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Ensure equal access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.
- Identify and address barriers to learning, attendance, participation and achievement.
- Support pupils' emotional wellbeing, mental health, relationships and sense of belonging.
- Provide consistent, appropriate support during changes in care arrangements or school placement.

- Ensure that pupils' views, wishes, feelings and aspirations inform decisions about their education.
- Work effectively with carers, parents, social workers, the local authority and Derbyshire Virtual School.
- Ensure that additional funding is used appropriately to improve educational outcomes.
- Promote positive relationships, inclusion and participation in all aspects of school life.
- Prepare pupils for successful transitions between classes, schools and stages of education.

4. Definitions

4.1 Looked-after children

A looked-after child is a child who is in the care of a local authority or who is accommodated by a local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, within the meaning of the Children Act 1989.

Children may be looked after by Derbyshire County Council or by another local authority while attending St Mary's CVA.

For the purposes of this policy, the terms *looked-after child*, *child in care* and *child looked after by a local authority* may be used where appropriate. The school recognises that children and young people may have their own preferences about the language used to describe their circumstances.

4.2 Previously looked-after children

Previously looked-after children are children who are no longer looked after by a local authority in England or Wales because they became subject to an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order following care.

The definition also includes children adopted from state care outside England and Wales where the relevant statutory criteria are met.

The school recognises its responsibilities towards previously looked-after children, including the Designated Teacher's role in promoting their educational achievement and the importance of appropriate communication with parents and carers.

4.3 Children with a social worker

The school also recognises that children who have a social worker may face additional barriers to education and wellbeing. Derbyshire Virtual School has a strategic role in promoting the educational achievement of children with a social worker, as well as children in care and previously looked-after children.

This wider strategic role does not mean that every child with a social worker has looked-after status or is automatically eligible for the same funding and arrangements.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governing Body and Academy Trust

The governing body and academy trust will:

- Ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities towards looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Ensure that a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff is appointed as Designated Teacher.
- Provide appropriate time, training and resources for the Designated Teacher to carry out the role effectively.
- Appoint a named governor to maintain oversight of the school's work with looked-after children.
- Receive appropriate reports on pupils' progress, attendance, achievement and wellbeing, while protecting their confidentiality.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for its implementation.

5.2 Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and senior leadership team will:

- Ensure that staff understand their responsibilities towards looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Support the Designated Teacher in coordinating provision and working with external agencies.
- Ensure that concerns about attainment, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding or emotional wellbeing are addressed promptly.

- Promote an inclusive school culture and high expectations for all pupils.
- Ensure that appropriate support is available during transitions and changes in care or school placement.
- Monitor the impact of provision and interventions on pupils' educational outcomes.

5.3 Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher will have lead responsibility within the school for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Maintain an overview of looked-after children on roll and ensure that relevant information is accurate and up to date.
- Promote high expectations, achievement, attendance and participation.
- Ensure that the child's educational needs and views are central to planning.
- Lead the school's contribution to the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process for looked-after children.
- Liaise with Derbyshire Virtual School, the child's social worker, carer and other relevant professionals.
- Monitor attainment, progress, attendance, exclusions or suspensions, participation and wellbeing.
- Identify barriers to learning and coordinate appropriate support.
- Ensure that relevant staff understand the child's needs and the strategies that support their learning.
- Promote educational stability and effective transitions.
- Support appropriate use of Pupil Premium Plus in accordance with Derbyshire County Council's current procedures.
- Ensure that information is handled securely and shared appropriately.
- Access relevant training and professional development.
- Provide appropriate reports to the Headteacher and governing body.

The Designated Teacher will also support staff and parents or carers of previously looked-after children and promote appropriate use of available advice, support and funding.

5.4 All School Staff

All staff will:

- Maintain high expectations for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Provide an inclusive, supportive and predictable learning environment.
- Recognise that behaviour may communicate unmet needs, distress or difficulties with emotional regulation.
- Follow agreed strategies and reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Promote positive relationships, participation and a sense of belonging.
- Maintain confidentiality and follow safeguarding and information-sharing procedures.
- Raise concerns about a pupil's safety, progress, attendance or wellbeing promptly with the appropriate member of staff.

5.5 Derbyshire Virtual School

The school will work with Derbyshire Virtual School, which supports and promotes the educational achievement of children in care and provides guidance, training and advice to schools and professionals.

The Virtual School's responsibilities include supporting the PEP process, monitoring educational outcomes, advising on educational interventions and supporting appropriate use of Pupil Premium Plus.

The school will follow the current Derbyshire Virtual School procedures and seek advice when a child's educational progress, needs or circumstances require additional support.

6. Admissions and Educational Stability

St Mary's CVA will follow its published admission arrangements, the applicable School Admissions Code and relevant statutory requirements.

The school recognises that looked-after children may need to join or leave a school at short notice because of changes in care arrangements. Such changes can be disruptive to a child's education and emotional wellbeing.

When a looked-after child joins the school, the school will:

- Provide a positive and sensitive welcome.
- Liaise with the placing local authority, social worker, carer and previous school as appropriate.
- Obtain relevant educational and safeguarding information promptly and securely.
- Establish the child's current attainment, strengths, needs and support arrangements.

- Check whether a PEP is already in place and liaise with the responsible professionals to establish or update it.
- Identify any immediate learning, attendance, wellbeing or safeguarding concerns.
- Arrange appropriate transition support, which may include pre-entry visits, a named trusted adult or a phased introduction where suitable.

When a child leaves the school, the Designated Teacher will support an effective transition and ensure that relevant educational records and PEP information are transferred securely and promptly to the receiving school and appropriate professionals.

The school will work with the responsible local authority and other professionals to promote educational stability wherever possible.

7. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Every looked-after child accessing education must have a Personal Education Plan as part of their care planning arrangements.

The PEP is a working document intended to support the child's educational progress and ensure that everyone involved understands their needs, targets and agreed actions.

7.1 Establishing and maintaining the PEP

The Designated Teacher will work with the child's social worker, carer, Derbyshire Virtual School and other relevant professionals to contribute to the development and review of the PEP.

The school will act promptly when a child enters care or joins the school to establish whether a PEP exists and what action is required to create or update it. Educational support must not be delayed while these arrangements are being completed.

The school will use Derbyshire County Council's electronic PEP system and follow current local procedures.

7.2 PEP content

The PEP should, as appropriate to the child's age and circumstances, include:

- The child's educational history, current attainment and progress.
- The child's strengths, interests, aspirations and views.
- Attendance, participation and any barriers to learning.
- Specific, measurable educational targets.

- Strategies, interventions and adjustments needed to achieve those targets.
- The responsibilities of school staff and other professionals.
- Any relevant SEND provision, including how the PEP complements an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- The intended use of Pupil Premium Plus, where applicable.
- Arrangements for monitoring progress and reviewing the impact of support.
- Transition planning, where relevant.

7.3 PEP reviews

In accordance with Derbyshire Virtual School guidance, PEPs should normally be completed and reviewed three times each academic year.

Additional PEP activity may be needed following a change of school, a significant change in circumstances or concerns about educational progress.

The school will ensure that the child's views are sought in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. Targets and actions will be reviewed to determine whether the support is effective and what further action is required.

The social worker remains responsible for the child's overall care planning arrangements. The school is responsible for its contribution to educational planning and for implementing the actions agreed within its remit.

8. Monitoring Attainment, Progress and Attendance

The school will monitor the educational progress and wellbeing of looked-after children as part of its normal assessment and monitoring arrangements, with additional attention where required.

The Designated Teacher will work with relevant staff to:

- Assess attainment and identify learning needs when a child joins the school.
- Monitor progress against age-related expectations and the child's individual targets.
- Review attendance, punctuality and participation.
- Identify patterns of absence, disengagement or reduced progress.
- Ensure that concerns are discussed with relevant professionals.
- Agree and implement timely interventions.
- Evaluate whether interventions are improving outcomes.

- Share relevant information through PEP meetings and other appropriate review processes.

The school will maintain high expectations and will not assume that a child's care status determines their ability or potential.

Where a child is not making expected progress, the school will consider a range of possible explanations and support needs, including disrupted schooling, SEND, emotional wellbeing, attendance and other barriers to learning.

9. Inclusion, SEND and Wellbeing

Looked-after and previously looked-after children are entitled to an inclusive education that meets their individual needs.

The school will:

- Provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Identify and address barriers to participation and achievement.
- Consider whether a child requires additional learning support or reasonable adjustments.
- Follow the school's SEND procedures and the SEND Code of Practice where applicable.
- Ensure that any existing Education, Health and Care Plan is considered alongside the PEP.
- Promote positive relationships, emotional regulation and a sense of safety and belonging.
- Consider the impact of trauma, loss, separation and changes in placement without making assumptions about an individual child.
- Work with relevant health, educational and social care professionals where additional support is needed.

Support will be tailored to the individual child. The school will avoid unnecessary stigmatisation or disclosure of the child's care circumstances.

10. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Looked-after children must receive the same high standard of safeguarding as all other pupils, with due regard to their individual circumstances and any additional vulnerabilities.

The school will follow its safeguarding and child protection policy and *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.*

Staff will:

- Follow the school's procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Share concerns promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the appropriate safeguarding professional.
- Work with social workers and other agencies when safeguarding or welfare concerns arise.
- Ensure that information about the child's care arrangements and safety is handled sensitively.
- Follow agreed arrangements concerning authorised collection, contact restrictions and other relevant safeguarding measures.
- Avoid making assumptions that a child is safe solely because they are looked after by a local authority.

The Designated Teacher and DSL have distinct responsibilities and will liaise where educational planning and safeguarding concerns overlap.

11. Pupil Premium Plus and Allocation of Resources

The school recognises the importance of using additional educational funding effectively to improve outcomes for eligible pupils.

Pupil Premium Plus for looked-after children is administered through arrangements involving the responsible local authority and Virtual School. Funding eligibility, allocation and approval must be checked against the current Derbyshire County Council policy.

The school will:

- Identify educational needs and barriers through the PEP process.
- Agree appropriate interventions and resources in line with current funding requirements.
- Work with Derbyshire Virtual School and the responsible local authority regarding applications, approvals and expenditure.
- Ensure that expenditure is linked to clear educational objectives.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of funded interventions.
- Record relevant funding decisions and outcomes through the required processes.

Pupil Premium Plus will not be treated as an automatic individual entitlement to a cash payment. Decisions will be based on applicable funding rules and the child's identified educational needs.

The school will also make appropriate use of its own resources and other available support to ensure that looked-after children can participate fully in school life.

12. Partnership with Parents, Carers and Professionals

Effective partnership working is essential to supporting the child's education and wellbeing.

The school will work with, as appropriate:

- The child and their parents, where appropriate.
- Foster carers, kinship carers and residential care staff.
- The child's social worker and other relevant social care professionals.
- Derbyshire Virtual School.
- The placing local authority where different from Derbyshire County Council.
- Educational psychologists and SEND services.
- Health professionals and school nursing services.
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing services.
- Other agencies involved in the child's care or education.

The school will encourage regular communication and shared planning, ensuring that the child remains central to decisions affecting their education.

Information will be shared in accordance with safeguarding duties, applicable data protection legislation and the child's best interests.

13. Pupil Voice and Participation

The school recognises that children should be listened to and involved in decisions about their education.

The Designated Teacher and relevant staff will ensure that pupils have appropriate opportunities to express their views about:

- Their learning, progress and aspirations.
- The support they receive.
- Their experience of school and relationships with staff and peers.
- Their PEP targets and educational planning.
- Transitions and changes that may affect their education.

Children will be encouraged to participate in PEP meetings and reviews in ways appropriate to their age, understanding, wishes and circumstances.

Where a child does not wish to attend a meeting, their views should still be sought and represented appropriately.

14. Previously Looked-After Children

The school recognises that children who have left care may continue to experience educational, emotional or social challenges.

The Designated Teacher will:

- Promote the educational achievement and wellbeing of previously looked-after children.
- Work with parents and carers to understand the child's needs and provide appropriate support.
- Offer advice on educational planning, inclusion and available support.
- Signpost parents and carers to relevant services, including Derbyshire Virtual School where appropriate.
- Promote appropriate use of Pupil Premium funding where the child is eligible.
- Respect family privacy and avoid unnecessary disclosure of the child's history.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to inform the school of any relevant information that may help staff support the child, while recognising that disclosure should be handled sensitively and confidentially.

15. Staff Training and Development

The school will ensure that the Designated Teacher has access to appropriate training and professional development.

The Designated Teacher will keep up to date with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, Derbyshire Virtual School procedures and good practice in supporting looked-after and previously looked-after children.

The school will encourage staff to access relevant training on:

- The educational needs of children in care.
- Trauma-informed and relationship-based approaches.
- Attachment, emotional regulation and wellbeing.
- Safeguarding and information sharing.
- PEPs and educational planning.

- SEND and inclusive teaching.
- Supporting successful transitions.

Training will be used to improve practice and strengthen staff understanding of how to promote educational achievement and stability.

16. Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The school will maintain accurate and appropriate records relating to looked-after children, including relevant educational information, PEP documentation and contact details for professionals involved in the child's care.

Information will be held securely and managed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the school's information governance procedures.

Access to sensitive information will be restricted to staff and professionals who need it to fulfil their responsibilities.

The school will share information lawfully, proportionately and promptly when necessary to support education, welfare or safeguarding. Confidentiality will not be used as a reason to withhold information where sharing is necessary and lawful to protect a child.

The child's care status and personal history will not be disclosed unnecessarily to other pupils, families or staff who do not require the information.

17. Complaints and Concerns

Any concerns about the implementation of this policy should initially be raised with the Designated Teacher or Headteacher, as appropriate.

Where concerns cannot be resolved through the school's normal procedures, the school's complaints policy should be followed.

Safeguarding concerns must be reported and managed through the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures without delay.

18. Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- Review of attainment and progress.

- Attendance and participation data.
- PEP quality and completion.
- Evaluation of interventions and funding.
- Feedback from pupils, carers and relevant professionals.
- Reports from the Designated Teacher to the senior leadership team and governing body.
- Review of educational stability and transitions.
- Consideration of relevant guidance from Derbyshire Virtual School.

Monitoring will focus on improving outcomes for individual pupils and identifying areas where school practice can be strengthened.

19. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Designated Teacher and senior leadership team and submitted for approval through the academy's governance arrangements.

The policy will also be reviewed when required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or Derbyshire County Council procedures.

The review will consider whether the policy remains effective in promoting educational achievement, inclusion, safeguarding and wellbeing for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

20. Useful Contacts and Guidance

Derbyshire Virtual School

Derbyshire County Council
Telephone: 01629 538028
Email: virtualschool@derbyshire.gov.uk

Official guidance:

- Derbyshire Virtual School: https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/the-virtual-school/the-virtual-school.aspx
- Statutory guidance for schools, settings and colleges: https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/the-virtual-school/statutory-duties-for-schools-settings-and-colleges/statutory-guidance-for-schools-settings-and-colleges-on-looked-after-children.aspx

- Personal Education Plans and Pupil Premium Plus: https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/the-virtual-school/personal-education-plans/personal-education-plans-and-pupil-premium-plus.aspx
- Safeguarding looked-after children: https://www.schoolsnet.derbyshire.gov.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-education/safeguarding-policies-guidance-and-protocols/safeguarding-looked-after-children-children-in-care-cic.aspx
- Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- Department for Education: Designated Teacher guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children