Physis Academy

Designated Teacher for Looked-after Children and Previously Looked-after Children Policy

Contents	Page(s)
1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and statutory guidance	2-3
3. Definitions	3-4
3a. Equality and Diversity	4-5
4. Identity of our Designated Teacher	5
5. Role of the Designated Teacher 1. Leadership responsibilities 2. Supporting Looked-after Children 3. Supporting both Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children 4. Relationships beyond the school	5-10
6. Monitoring arrangements	10-11
7. Links to other policies	11

Postholder responsible: Katherine Mooney (SENDCo)	**Date: 23/06/2026**
Last reviewed on:	23/6/2026

Postholder responsible: Katherine Mooney (SENDCo)	**Date: 23/06/2026**
Next review due by: 01/04/2027	

---

1. Aims

Physis Academy aims to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the Designated Teacher (DT) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- The Designated Teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children and supports other staff members to do this too.
- Staff, parents, carers, guardians and other stakeholders (Social Workers, Virtual Schools) are aware of the identity of the Designated Teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Additionally, we aim to:

- Promote equality and eliminate discrimination for all looked-after and previously looked-after children, recognising and celebrating their diverse identities, backgrounds, and needs.
- Ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) take a holistic, individualised approach that considers the whole child, including all aspects of their identity and any protected characteristics.
- Create an inclusive environment where every looked-after and previously looked-after child feels valued, safe, and supported to achieve their full potential.

---

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on The Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (2018).

It also takes into account Section 20 and Section 20a of the Child and Young Persons Act (2008). Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

This policy also has regard to:

- **The Equality Act 2010** – which protects individuals from discrimination based on protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** (latest version) – statutory safeguarding guidance for schools.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (latest version) – statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard children.
- **The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years** (2015) – statutory guidance on supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

---

3. Definitions

Looked-after Children (LAC) are registered students that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours.

Previously Looked-after Children (PLAC) are registered students that fall into either of these categories:

- They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as result of the following:
    - A child arrangements order, which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
    - A special guardianship order
    - An adoption order
- They appear to the governing board to have:
    - Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
    - Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Personal Education Plan (PEP) is part of a looked-after child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, previously looked after children and children with a social worker, working across schools to monitor and support these students as if they were in a single school. The VSH is also responsible for providing information and advice to schools, parents and guardians in respect of previously looked-after children. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Protected Characteristics are the nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

3a. Equality and Diversity

Physis Academy recognises that looked-after and previously looked-after children are a diverse group with a wide range of identities, backgrounds, and needs. We are committed to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination for all looked-after and previously looked-after children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, or marriage and civil partnership.

We recognise that:

- Looked-after children may have **multiple protected characteristics that intersect** to create unique experiences and needs. For example, a child may be Black, LGBT+, and have SEND, and each of these aspects of their identity will shape their experiences and the support they need.
- Some groups are **overrepresented in the care system**, including children from ethnic minority backgrounds, children with SEND, and LGBT+ young people.
- Children in care may face **additional challenges related to their protected characteristics**, including discrimination, loss of cultural identity, lack of appropriate support, or family rejection.
- **Personal Education Plans must take a holistic approach** that considers the whole child, including all aspects of their identity, strengths, and needs.
- Supporting a child's **cultural identity, heritage, religious beliefs, gender identity, and sexual orientation** is essential to their wellbeing and educational success.

The Designated Teacher will ensure that:

- **PEPs explicitly consider and address needs related to protected characteristics**, taking an individualised approach that recognises each child's unique identity and circumstances.
- **Cultural identity, heritage, and religious beliefs are respected and supported**, including facilitating connections with cultural or faith communities where appropriate and safe.
- **LGBT+ looked-after and previously looked-after children receive affirming support**, including access to specialist services where needed, and that all staff use correct names and pronouns consistently.
- **Transgender and non-binary children** are supported with gender-affirming practice, and that continuity of medical and psychological support is maintained during any placement changes.
- **Reasonable adjustments are made** for children and parents/carers with disabilities, including ensuring accessibility of PEP meetings and school communications.
- **Staff receive appropriate training** on equality, diversity, inclusion, and trauma-informed practice, including specific training on supporting LGBT+ children in care and cultural competence.
- **Outcomes are monitored by protected characteristics** (where appropriate and with sensitivity to confidentiality) to identify and address any disparities in achievement, attendance, exclusions, or other key indicators.
- **Specialist support services are accessed where needed**, such as cultural organisations, LGBT+ support services, mental health services, or disability support organisations.
- **Any experiences of discrimination or prejudice** are addressed promptly and effectively, in line with the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies.
- **Positive aspects of each child's identity are celebrated** and that the curriculum, resources, and school environment reflect and value diversity.

---

4. Identity of our Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher for Physis Academy is **Katherine Mooney (SENDCo)**. You can contact her via the school office: 01948 841070 / 01948 667164.

Our designated teacher takes lead responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children at our school. They are your initial point of contact for any of the matters set out in the section below.

5. Role of the Designated Teacher

Physis Academy recognises that looked-after children may have very specific emotional needs, with many coming to terms with or coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and that personal distress and uncertainty is an everyday lived experience for them. Here at Physis Academy, we believe the educational experience of all children and young people should be positive. We aim to offer a learning environment in which every looked-after child or previously looked-after child is successful, remains healthy, feels safe, achieves academic success, makes a positive contribution within the wider school community, is guided to map out future pathways at Post 16 and ultimately achieve economic, social and emotional wellbeing. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

We also recognise that looked-after children bring diverse identities, strengths, and experiences to our school community, and we are committed to celebrating and supporting all aspects of who they are.

5.1 Leadership responsibilities

The Designated Teacher will:

- Act as a central point of initial contact within the school for any matters involving looked-after, previously looked-after children and children with a social worker.
- Promote the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on roll by:
    - Working with Virtual School Headteachers (VSH)
    - Promoting a whole school culture where the needs of these students matter and 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
    - How the whole school supports the educational achievement of these students
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure they consider the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

- Promote a culture in which looked-after and previously looked-after children are encouraged and supported to engage with their education and other school activities.
- Act as a source of advice for teachers about working with looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Work directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents, and guardians to promote good home-school links, support progress and encourage high aspirations.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked-after children's PEPs.
- Work closely with the school's designated safeguarding lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.
- Involve parents and guardians of previously looked-after children in decisions affecting their child's education. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Additionally, the Designated Teacher will:

- **Ensure that equality and diversity considerations are embedded** in all aspects of support for looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- **Champion the needs of looked-after children with protected characteristics**, ensuring their voices are heard and their identities are respected.
- **Monitor outcomes by protected characteristics** (where appropriate) to identify and address any disparities or patterns of concern.
- **Lead staff training and development** on supporting the diverse needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including equality, diversity, and inclusion.

5.2 Supporting looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Make sure looked-after children's PEPs meet their needs by working closely with other teachers to assess each child's specific educational needs. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

This assessment will include consideration of:

- Any needs related to protected characteristics (disability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, etc.)
- Cultural identity, heritage, and language
- Religious beliefs and practices
- Communication needs and preferences
- Any experiences of discrimination, prejudice, or hate incidents
- Strengths and positive aspects of the child's identity
- Age-appropriate developmental needs and transitions
- Have overall responsibility for leading the process of target-setting in PEPs.
- Monitor and track how looked-after children's attainment progresses under their PEPs.
- If a child is not on track to meet their targets, be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in their PEP.
- Ensure the identified actions of PEPs are put in place.
- During the development and review of PEPs, help the school and relevant local authority decide what arrangements work best for students.
- Ensure that:
    - A looked-after child's PEP is reviewed before the statutory review of their care plan – this includes making sure the PEP is up to date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered.
    - PEPs are clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced.
    - The updated PEP is passed to the child's social worker and VSH ahead of the statutory review of their care plan.
- Transfer a looked-after child's PEP to their next school or college, making sure it is up to date and that the local authority responsible for looking after them has the most recent version. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Additionally, the Designated Teacher will ensure that:

- **PEPs include provision for any needs related to protected characteristics**, such as prayer time and space, dietary requirements, access to LGBT+ support groups, reasonable adjustments for disabilities, or support for pregnant students.
- **Cultural and religious needs are identified and met**, working with families, carers, and community organisations where appropriate.
- **Gender identity is respected**, with correct names and pronouns used consistently across all documentation and by all staff.
- **Reasonable adjustments are in place** for children with disabilities, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice.
- **PEP meetings are accessible** to all participants, including making reasonable adjustments for parents/carers with disabilities.

5.3 Supporting both looked-after children and previously looked-after children

The designated teacher will:

- Ensure the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children are understood by staff and reflected in how the school uses pupil premium funding.
- Work with VSHs to agree how pupil premium funding for looked-after children can most effectively be used to improve their attainment.
- Help raise the awareness of parents and guardians of previously looked-after children about pupil premium funding and other support for these children.
- Play a key part in decisions on how pupil premium funding is used to support previously looked-after children.
- Encourage parents' and guardians' involvement in deciding how pupil premium funding is used to support their child and be the main contact for queries about its use.
- Ensure teachers have awareness and understanding of the specific needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children in areas like attendance, homework, behaviour, and future career planning.
- Be aware of the special educational needs (SEN) of looked-after and previously.
- Ensure the SEND code of practice, as it relates to looked-after children, is followed.

- Make sure PEPs work in harmony with any education, health, and care (EHC) plans that a looked-after child may have.
- Ensure that, with the help of VSHs, they have the skills to identify signs of potential SEN issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and know how to access further assessment and support where necessary.
- Ensure that they and other staff can identify signs of potential mental health issues in looked-after and previously looked-after children and understand where the school can draw on specialist services.
- Put in place robust arrangements to have strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) completed for looked-after children and use the results of these SDQs to inform PEPs.
- Put in place mechanisms for understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of previously looked-after children. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Additionally, the Designated Teacher will:

- **Ensure that PEPs and support strategies are culturally sensitive and affirming** of all aspects of the child's identity, including:
    - Supporting children to maintain connections with their cultural or religious community where appropriate and safe
    - Ensuring LGBT+ children (including those who are transgender or non-binary) receive affirming support and access to specialist services if needed
    - Addressing any experiences of discrimination, prejudice, or hate incidents promptly and effectively
    - Celebrating diversity and promoting positive identity development
    - Supporting pregnant students or young parents to continue their education, working with maternity services and early years support as needed
- **Monitor the use of Pupil Premium funding** to ensure it is benefiting all groups of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including those with protected characteristics.
- **Ensure reasonable adjustments are made** for children and parents/carers with disabilities throughout all processes and communications.

- **Work with specialist mental health services** that have expertise in supporting specific groups (e.g., LGBT+ young people, children from ethnic minority backgrounds, children who have experienced trauma related to their protected characteristics).

5.4 Relationships beyond the school

The designated teacher will:

- Proactively engage with social workers and other professionals to enable the school to respond effectively to the needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children.
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom.
- Be open and accessible to parents and guardians of previously looked-after children and encourage them to be actively involved in their children's education.
- Proactively build relationships with local authority professionals, such as VSHs and SEN departments.
- Consider how the school works with others outside of the school to maximise the stability of education for looked-after children, such as:
    - Finding ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
    - Ensuring mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
    - Talking to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
    - Making sure that, if a looked-after child moves school, their new DT receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians.
- Make sure that for each looked-after child:

    - There's an agreed process for how the school works in partnership with the child's carer and other professionals, such as their social worker, in order to review and develop educational progress
    - School policies are communicated to their carer and social worker and, where appropriate, birth parents
    - Teachers know the most appropriate person to contact where necessary, such as who has the authority to sign permission slips
- Where a looked-after child is at risk of exclusion:
    - Contact the VSH as soon as possible so they can help the school decide how to support the child to improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion becoming necessary
    - Working with the VSH and child's carers, consider what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place to address the causes of the child's behaviour
- Where a previously looked-after child is at risk of exclusion, talk to the child's parents or guardians before seeking advice from the VSH on avoiding exclusion. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Additionally, the Designated Teacher will:

- **Work with specialist organisations and services** to support children with specific needs related to protected characteristics, such as:
    - Cultural or faith-based community organisations
    - LGBT+ support services (e.g., local LGBT+ youth groups, national organisations such as Stonewall, Mermaids, or the Albert Kennedy Trust)
    - Services supporting children with disabilities
    - Mental health services with expertise in specific areas (e.g., supporting LGBT+ young people, culturally appropriate therapy, trauma-informed practice)
    - Services supporting pregnant students or young parents
    - Anti-racist or hate crime support organisations
- **Ensure foster carers and residential settings are aware** of the school's commitment to equality and diversity, and work with them to ensure consistent, affirming support for children with protected characteristics.

- **Share good practice** with the Virtual School about supporting diverse looked-after children and raise any concerns about gaps in local provision.
- **Ensure that any information shared during transitions** (e.g., to a new school or Post-16 provision) includes relevant information about the child's identity and needs related to protected characteristics, with appropriate consent and in line with data protection requirements.
- **Monitor exclusion data by protected characteristics** (where appropriate) and work with the VSH to address any disparities or patterns of concern.

---

6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed at least annually or following any government updates, by the Headteacher or other appropriate member of the school's senior leadership team. The policy will also be approved by the school's Governing body. Designated Teacher of LAC and PLAC Polic...

Data collection and monitoring

To ensure this policy is effective and that we are meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Designated Teacher will collect and analyse the following data for looked-after and previously looked-after children (where numbers allow and with appropriate attention to confidentiality):

- **Educational outcomes** (attainment and progress) by protected characteristics where appropriate
- **Attendance rates** and patterns of absence
- **Exclusion data** (fixed-term and permanent exclusions)
- **Pupil Premium impact** and how funding is being used for different groups
- **PEP quality and completion rates**
- **Placement stability** and any patterns in placement breakdowns
- **Post-16 destinations** and progression
- **Incidents of discrimination, prejudice, or hate incidents**

Review questions

During monitoring and review, we will ask:

- Are all looked-after and previously looked-after children making expected progress?

- Are there any disparities in outcomes by protected characteristics?
- Do PEPs adequately address individual needs, including those related to protected characteristics?
- Are children, carers, and parents satisfied with the support provided?
- Are there any patterns in placement breakdowns or exclusions?
- Is Pupil Premium funding being used effectively for all groups?
- Are staff appropriately trained and confident in supporting diverse looked-after children?
- Are we working effectively with specialist organisations and services?
- Have any incidents of discrimination been addressed appropriately?

Review cycle

- **Annual policy review:** April 2027 as scheduled, or sooner if there are government updates
- **Termly data review:** The Designated Teacher will review outcomes and progress for all looked-after children each term
- **Half-termly PEP review:** The Designated Teacher will review all PEPs to ensure they are up to date and meeting children's needs
- **As needed:** The policy will be reviewed following any significant incidents, concerns, or changes in legislation

---

7. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- **Child protection and Safeguarding** – including procedures for responding to discrimination and hate incidents
- **Pupil Premium** – including how funding is allocated and monitored for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** – including the SEND Code of Practice and EHC plan processes
- **Behaviour** – including anti-bullying procedures and responses to discrimination
- **Exclusions** – including procedures for avoiding exclusion and working with the VSH

- **Equality and Diversity** (if separate policy exists) – setting out the school's broader commitment to equality
- **Anti-Bullying** – including procedures for addressing bullying related to protected characteristics
- **Attendance** – including procedures for monitoring and improving attendance

---

Monitoring

	Signature	**Date**
Policy Reviewed By:		
Next Review Date:		
Interim Review Comments:		
Policy Reviewed By:		
Next Review Date:		
Interim Review Comments:		
Policy Reviewed By:		
Next Review Date:		
Interim Review Comments:		

Appendix: Training and Development

For the Designated Teacher (Katherine Mooney)

Essential training:

- Designated Teacher statutory training (refreshed annually)
- Equality and diversity in education

- Supporting LGBT+ children in care
- Cultural competence and anti-racist practice
- Trauma-informed practice
- Mental health awareness
- SEND and the SEND Code of Practice

Recommended training:

- Attachment and trauma
- Adolescent development
- Supporting young parents
- Working with Virtual Schools
- PEP best practice

For all staff

Awareness training on:

- The needs of looked-after and previously looked-after children
- Equality and diversity
- Trauma-informed practice
- How to support looked-after children in the classroom
- Recognising and responding to discrimination