

1.3: Looked after children (LAC)

Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

(Early Years Setting – Gloucestershire)

1. Policy Statement

Hopton School house is committed to promoting the welfare, safety, and positive outcomes of all children, including those who are Looked After (LAC), previously looked after, or subject to special guardianship or child arrangement orders.

We recognise that children in care may have experienced trauma, loss, neglect, or instability. We are committed to working in close partnership with carers, social workers, and relevant professionals to ensure these children feel secure, valued, and supported to achieve their full potential.

This policy operates in line with:

- The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework**
- The **Children Act 1989 and 2004**
- Guidance from the Department for Education
- Procedures set out by Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Guidance and support from Gloucestershire County Council

2. Definition of a Looked After Child

A Looked After Child (LAC) is a child who is:

- In the care of a local authority under a Care Order
- Accommodated by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- Living with foster carers
- Living in a residential children's home
- Placed with relatives or friends under a care arrangement

Previously looked after children include those adopted, placed under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), or subject to a Child Arrangements Order.

3. Key Principles

Within Gloucestershire, we will:

- Promote stability and secure attachments
- Provide a nurturing, inclusive and trauma-informed environment
- Maintain high aspirations for all Looked After Children
- Ensure confidentiality and sensitivity
- Work collaboratively with local authority professionals
- Promote equality and prevent discrimination

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Act as the main contact for the child's social worker and other professionals
- Liaise with the child's allocated social worker from Gloucestershire Children's Services
- Work alongside the Virtual School for Gloucestershire where applicable
- Attend or contribute to Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings
- Monitor attendance, progress and wellbeing
- Ensure relevant staff understand attachment needs and trauma-informed approaches

All staff will understand that Looked After Children are considered particularly vulnerable and require heightened safeguarding awareness.

5. Admission and Transition

When a Looked After Child joins the setting, we will:

- Gather relevant information from carers and Gloucestershire Children's Services
- Identify the child's social worker and key professionals
- Clarify who has parental responsibility
- Develop a supportive transition plan
- Allocate a consistent key person to promote attachment security

Transitions to school (including maintained schools and academies within Gloucestershire) will be carefully planned in partnership with carers, the receiving school, and relevant professionals.

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Early Years Pupil Premium

Where required, we will:

- Contribute to the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Provide clear information about developmental progress
- Support agreed targets and interventions
- Use Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) effectively to narrow gaps

We will work in partnership with Gloucestershire's Virtual School Head to ensure funding is used strategically to improve outcomes.

7. Emotional Wellbeing and Trauma-Informed Practice

We recognise that Looked After Children may:

- Experience attachment difficulties
- Display behaviour linked to trauma or disrupted early experiences
- Have speech, language or developmental delays

Our setting will:

- Provide predictable routines and consistent boundaries
 - Use restorative and supportive behaviour strategies
 - Offer nurturing interactions and emotional coaching
 - Access external support services within Gloucestershire where appropriate (e.g., Early Help, health services, SEND support)
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8. Safeguarding and Information Sharing

Safeguarding remains paramount.

- Concerns will be reported in line with our Safeguarding Policy and Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.
- Information will be shared appropriately and securely.
- Records will be stored confidentially in accordance with GDPR and local safeguarding guidance.

We recognise that Looked After Children may be at increased risk of exploitation, neglect, or emotional harm and require vigilant professional oversight.

9. Partnership Working

We will maintain strong communication with:

- Foster carers or kinship carers

- Parents (where appropriate and agreed)
- Gloucestershire Children's Services
- The Virtual School for Gloucestershire
- Health visitors and other health professionals
- Early Help and SEND teams where involved

Meetings and communication will remain child-centred, respectful, and solution-focused.

10. Staff Training

Staff will receive:

- Safeguarding training in line with Gloucestershire requirements
 - Awareness of attachment theory and trauma-informed practice
 - Guidance on supporting children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
 - Ongoing professional development where appropriate
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11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if:

- Local safeguarding procedures change
 - Gloucestershire guidance is updated
 - National legislation or EYFS requirements change
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Gloucestershire Local Safeguarding & Referral Contacts

Urgent Safeguarding Concerns (Children)

If you **believe a child is at immediate risk of significant harm**:

- **Emergency Services: Call 999**
- **Gloucestershire Children's Services (MASH) Front Door**
 - Phone: **01452 426565** (professional and non-professional concerns)
 - Email: childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Out of Hours

- **Emergency Duty Team (EDT): 01452 614194**
- If in immediate danger and not urgent safeguarding: **Police – 101**

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

For **allegations against adults who work or volunteer with children:**

- **Nigel Hatten – LADO**, Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
 - Tel: **01452 426994**
 - Email: amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk

The LADO oversees the response to concerns about professionals' conduct and ensures local guidance is followed.

Children's Services & Professional Advice

- **Community Social Work Team (Non-urgent child protection advice):** 01452 426263
- **Early Help and Targeted Support:** Contact via MASH Front Door ...01452 426565

Other Useful Local Support

- **Family Information Service (General support for families):**
 - Phone: **0800 5420202 / 01452 427362**
 - Email: familyinfo@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- **Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) Support Unit:**
 - Tel: **01452 583629**