



Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

Children Looked After Policy

1. Context

The 1989 Children Act introduced the concept of Corporate Parenting – central to supporting and improving the education of children in public care.

“Children in public care are our children – we hold their future in our hands and education is the key to that future”.

“Education protects because in addition to acquiring skills and qualifications, day-to-day schooling provides the chance to build and sustain friendships with peers and adults: to develop positive self-esteem: to receive praise and encouragement and to acquire skills and interests”.

Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care contained five directives for local councils, two of which directly refer to schools:

- provide all children with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of entering care or joining a new school;
- appoint a Designated Teacher in schools to act as a resource and advocate for looked after children; liaise with Social Services and other key partners on behalf of children.

2005 Statutory Guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 recommends that;

- Schools and governing bodies are aware of the duty and the key reasons why looked after children as a group underachieve in education.
- Ensure the school understands the powerful role they play in significantly improving the quality of life and the educational experiences of looked after children and understand the impact of care on education.
- Ensure that the designated teacher is aware that the child is looked after and has an up to date copy of each child’s PEP on admission and after each statutory review of care plan.

2007 Care Matters; Time to deliver for Children in Care- DCSF

2008 White Paper

Children and Young Persons Act 2008 highlights the need for delivering a first class education. This includes;

- Clear focus on narrowing the gap in educational achievement
- Access to high quality early years provision
- Highest priority in school admissions
- Ensure that education is not disrupted by care planning. A move of school in year 10 or 11 takes place only in exceptional circumstances
- Statutory guidance on the role of designated teacher
- High quality Personal Education Plans

- Head of Virtual School
- Pupil Premium allowance each financial year for each child in care
- £2,000 higher education bursary
- Guidance to school governors (2008)
- Pastoral support toolkit for the full range of FE providers

Schools should;

- Appoint a designated teacher
- Keep a register of looked after children
- Ensure all Children in Care have up to date PEPs
- Monitor their attendance
- Admissions – Section 106 Education Act 2005 – gives looked after children priority in admissions procedures.
- Track achievement – identify underachievement – take actions to address issues
- Have clear School policies
- Work with Multi agency involvement and excellent communication.

2. Definition of Looked After Pupils

Following the Children Act 1989 there were changes in terminology. The term 'in care' refers solely to children who are subject to care orders. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'Looked After' by the local authority.

Care Order – Section 31 Children Act 1989 If a child is on a full care order this means that the parental responsibility for that child/young person is shared by Social Care and Parents. However the local authority can make all important decisions. It is advisable for the school to check any requests made by the parents with Children's Services.

Interim Care Order – Section 38 – In this case the child is subject to on going court proceedings. The child has the same legal status as a child on a full care order but only for the time the interim care order has been granted.

Accommodated – Section 20 children Act 1989 If a child/young person is accommodated this means that the parental responsibility for that child remains with the parents, and there is agreement with the authority about day to day care arrangements.

However, whether a child/young person is subject to Section 31 or Section 20 does not affect where that child lives whilst being looked after by the local authority. This can be with:

- foster carers
- in the residential network
- in a residential school
- with kinship carers.
- placed at home with parents

If a child/young person is in receipt of respite care which exceeds 20 days in one episode or is over 120 days in a year, that child is also considered to be an accommodated, a looked after child.

3. Objectives of the Policy

To achieve positive outcomes for all students who are in care both educationally, socially and emotionally so that they can fulfil their potential and progress onto further education.

4. The Role of the Designated Teacher within the School

The designated teacher should:

- have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how looked after children learn and achieve;
- promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how looked after children learn;
- make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets;
- be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Assessment for Learning;
- make sure that looked after children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home;
- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within the school.

The Pupil Premium Grant

All Children Looked after for at least one day are eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant. The basis on and amounts which the Department has allocated funding to each local authority is set out in the conditions of grant. Guidance and information on the conditions of the grant can be found in the associated resources section.

The grant allocation is managed by the Virtual School Head and must be used for the benefit of the child's educational needs, as outlined in their termly Personal Education Plan (PEP).

Further information can be found in the DfE's 2014 publication 'Pupil Premium 2014 to 15: Conditions of grant'.

The role of the designated teacher in developing the personal education plan (PEP)

- All looked after children must have a PEP as part of their overall care plan. The PEP should be sent to the designated teacher when the child becomes looked after or joins the school.
- The PEP is a shared document which includes the information that everyone needs to help their conversations, planning and the delivery of strategies required to make sure the child gets the support and provision needed to succeed.

- The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is used as a tool in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored. S/he makes sure that it is updated and available in time for the local authority review of the child's wider care plan.

For each statutory review of the care plan the PEP must include:

- any new information about progress towards education targets since the last PEP review.
- information about what has not been taken forward.
- the designated teacher has a key role in helping looked after children make a smooth transition to their new school or college, including making sure there are effective arrangements in place for the speedy transfer of information.

The relationship of the designated teacher to others beyond the school

- The designated teacher has a key role in making sure there is a central point of initial contact within the school who can manage the process of how the school engages with others (e.g. social workers, virtual school heads), works in a joined up way and minimises disruption to the child's education.
- The designated teacher should make sure that:
 - there is an agreed process in place for how the school works with others in focusing on how everyone contributes to promoting the child's educational achievement;
 - school policies (e.g. around Home School Agreements) are co communicated to social workers and carers;
 - the school does everything possible to maximise educational stability for the child, especially by finding ways of sharing information through the PEP and in providing advice to the local authority about the impact of disrupting education.

**Further information can be found in Statutory Guidance for Schools
"Roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children
"downloaded at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications
Ref;DCSF-01046-2009**

5. The Role of the Designated Governor for Looked After Children

The role of the Governing Body

- The Governing Body must ensure that the designated teacher undertakes appropriate training (section 20(2) of the 2008 Act).
- As a minimum Governors must consider an annual report from the designated teacher which contains the information that should enable the governing body to make overall judgements about the designated teacher role in the context of wider school planning in relation to:
 - any workload issues arising as a result of the number of looked after children on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved;
 - levels of progress made by looked after children who are currently or have been on roll within the past twelve months in relation to all children at the school (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress);
 - whether the pattern of attendance and exclusions for looked after children is different to that of all children;
 - any process or planning issues arising from personal education plans (PEPs);
 - whether any are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met;
 - whether any have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are met through statements or School Action or School Action Plus;
 - how the teaching and learning needs of looked after children are
 - reflected in school development plans and are being met in relation
 - to interventions and resources;
 - training provided for the designated teacher in order to impart
 - knowledge and understanding about the education and well-being
 - of looked after children to colleagues;
 - work with virtual school heads or their equivalents in local authorities;
 - the impact of any of the school's policies, for example on charging for educational visits and extended school activities, on looked after children.
- The Governing Body and school leadership team should consider the report and act on any issues it raises so as to support the designated teacher and maximise the impact of the role.

DFES guidance entitled "Supporting Looked After Learners – a practical guide for school governors" can be downloaded at www.techernet.gov.uk/publications

The statutory guidance *The roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked-after children* explains the things to which the school governing body should have regard in relation to this role.

The questions the school governor should be asking are:

- Who knows which children in the school are looked after? Who should know? What is done with information about looked after pupils?
- How are looked after pupils consulted about what they want other pupils and teachers to know about them and why they are in care?
- Who in school has an over-view of their educational needs and progress?

- Who is responsible for liaising with Social Services and ensuring that school has relevant information about the child's care history?
- How do the school's policies and ways of working ensure that looked after pupils will be given the same opportunities and encouragement as other pupils?
- What training do the School's Staff and Governors need to help them understand and meet the needs of children in care?
- How do test scores, attendance, exclusion rates etc, for children in care, as a discrete group, compare with those of other pupils?
- Who will draw up an educational plan for the child when he/she enters the school, and monitor progress?
- How does the school communicate with foster families and residential children's units?

The designated school governor should monitor policy and practice in school to ensure that:

- There is a designated teacher for children in Cheshire's Care
- Children in care have equal access to all aspects of school life, including the National Curriculum, examinations, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience and additional educational support
- There is an ethos of support and acceptance in the school for children who do not live with their birth families
- Targets for children in care are realistic but aspirations for these pupils shall be high
- Where the child/young person is at risk of exclusion, or excluded, they shall be treated in the same way and offered the same support as any other pupil.

Within Children's Services the 'STEPS Team' based at First Floor of Wyvern House, can offer advice and support to school governors who are the champions of children in Cheshire West and Chester's Care.

6. The Responsibilities of All Staff/the Whole School

- be aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibility
- provide an ethos of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes
- ensure appropriately high expectations for Children who are in our care
- consult and involve children in the decisions taken about themselves if deemed age-appropriate
- be aware that, for many Looked After Children, bullying is an issue; ensure that the school's anti-bullying policy operates
- consider how extra academic and pastoral support can be provided for Children in our Care if it is needed
- ensure that all Children in our Care have every opportunity to participate fully in the national curriculum, examinations, careers guidance, extra curricular activities, work experience and additional educational support
- ensure there is sensitivity to the background of Children in Care in teaching, especially in work on families and/or family trees
- respect the confidentiality of Children in our Care and ensure that any information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis

- ensure that behaviour management policies recognise and make suitable provision for the needs and difficulties of Children in our Care
- take appropriate action as soon as there may be any problems with behaviour or attendance
- involve appropriate carers/parents in home/school arrangements
- ensure that any Children in our Care who may have learning difficulties are appropriately supported/assessed/resourced

STEP Team Contact Details for Children in Care

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Signed:
Mrs Myers-Whittaker
Headteacher

Date:

Signed:
Mr R Crompton
Chairman of Governors

Date: