



Katherine Warrington School

Children Looked After Policy

Approved by: Education Committee on 13th March 2024

Next Review Date: March 2025

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(Education Committee)

Background

There has been concern since the mid-Seventies that the education of children in care has been neglected. Conversely, from about the same time, attention was also being drawn to the important part that successful schooling could play in helping children escape from social disadvantage. In 1995, a joint report by the Social Services Inspectorate and Ofsted stated that the care and education systems were failing to promote the educational achievement of children in care and drew attention to:

- Poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- A high level of disruption and change in school placements
- Lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
- Inconsistent or no attention paid to homework
- Underachievement in further and higher education

It is, therefore, essential that schools promote the achievement of such vulnerable children, who may also face additional barriers because of their race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. All schools should have a policy for Children Looked After that is subject to review and approval by the Trustee Board. The policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of Children Looked After by a local authority, but also the procedures that will ensure participation in high quality teaching and learning and in making good or accelerated progress.

The Children Act (1989) introduced changes in terminology. The term 'in care' now 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 children' (LAC), or children in care or 'Children Looked After' (CLA) by the local authority; the latter term is used by Hertfordshire. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days a year.

It is important not to confuse a young person's legal status with their living arrangements. For example, a child on a Care Order can be living:

- With foster carers
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- With relatives, or
- Even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services

Similarly, an ‘accommodated’ child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children’s home, or
- In a residential school

This policy incorporates requirements set out in the 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, namely the *Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher – Statutory Guidance for School Governors (2009)* and the *Hertfordshire Policy Statement on Children Looked After*, and should be read in conjunction with them. All schools have been issued with a copy of each document and may also refer to the Virtual School page on the Hertfordshire GRID for Learning, <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/Virtual-School/Hertfordshire-Virtual-School.asp>

The Children and Families Act 2014 amends section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. This officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH). In Hertfordshire, Felicity Evans is the Virtual School Head.

It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day to day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential school / children’s home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

The objectives of this policy align closely with those of the school’s Single Equality Scheme; this provides the broader policy context for the implementation of this policy and they should be read in conjunction with each other.

Previously Looked After Children

While this policy does not cover Previously Looked After Children, there are resources and policies in place to support them too. This is because previously looked-after children start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs.

For previously looked-after children, the Virtual School will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible.

Previously looked-after children are those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special

guardianship or child arrangements order; or

- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

Pupil Premium funding for previously looked after children is allocated directly to and managed by their school.

The Policy

The Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After who are on the school roll.

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After for the school:

Mrs Sarah Hobson

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After *Within School Systems:*

- To ensure that the educational achievement of each Child Looked After on roll is monitored, tracked and promoted and wherever possible, accelerated;
- To ensure that there is an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) stored on the ePEP system with SMART targets that will promote progress;
- To advise on most effective use of the core Pupil Premium Plus during the Personal Education Planning meeting;
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus funding and any additional funding (where relevant) is used to support the learning objectives for the student and to be accountable for how the funding is spent and able to produce evidence of good progress and outcomes;
- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children and young people 'in care' including a basic knowledge of attachment and trauma on behaviour and learning, and understanding of the need for positive systems of support within the school to overcome these;
- To actively inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are in care;
- To promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.;
- To ensure that members of staff who teach the Children Looked After on roll provide accurate progress data and advice on specific learning targets to inform the target setting at the Personal Educational Planning meeting;
- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care;
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, colleagues in Children's Services (CS) and birth parents where appropriate;
- To hold a supervisory brief for all children in care on roll, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff where relevant and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date, used on a need to know basis to help the student overcome obstacles to learning and to make good progress;
- To intervene quickly if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding to accelerate progress;
- To intervene if there is evidence of absence from school or internal truancy;

- To inform the planning and where relevant, transition for Children Looked After post 16;
- To report to the Trustee Board, at least on an annual basis (preferably each term), on the outcomes for Children Looked After. The CLASEF can be used as the report to the Trustee Board, (a model proforma is available on the GRID);
- To have completed the iLearn online learning module/s specifically for Designated Teachers and to attend other training as appropriate;
- To ensure that school staff have an awareness of the impact of attachment disorder and pre-care trauma on learning and mental health.
- To support the Quality Assurance Process for PEPs and for schools by HfL to support the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with Children Looked After.

Work with Individual Children Looked After

- To discuss with individual children, possibly alongside a carer, to arrive at a statement about their care arrangements and circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or students;
- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan;
- To ensure that the Pupil Voice section of the PEP is completed for each child and is the result of a one to one meeting so that the views of the student are faithfully represented;
- To ensure that a Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer and signed by the Social Worker;
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new CLA into the school;
- To develop in-school strategies to track, promote and accelerate the achievement of looked after children and close the gap between them and their peers;
- To adjust the curriculum where required so as to prevent the CLA being placed in an awkward situation, i.e History/Art project into family.
- To fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available from the Virtual School and partner agencies.

Liaison:

- To liaise with the member of school staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Plan;
- To develop effective communication with CS staff so that the PEP is congruent with the child's Care Plan;
- To attend, or arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings and statutory reviews;
- To be named contact for colleagues in CS;
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between schools, agencies and individuals, and report on the progress and attendance of all children in care on the school roll to the Virtual School as requested – Progress and attainment data submitted each term.

Training:

- To ensure all school staff have training on working effectively with vulnerable learners;
- To attend the annual Designated Teachers' conference and participate in area termly briefings and to be willing to share good practice;
- To develop knowledge of procedures by attending training events organised by CS and the Virtual School.
- To complete the annually updated iLearn on-line learning module;
- To keep informed of any updated guidance from Ofsted, DfE, other research or policy. This may be done easily by following the Virtual School on Twitter @VS_HCC.

Trustee

The name of a trustee with special responsibility for Children Looked After in the school:

Dani Cook

The role of that trustee

The named trustee will report to the Trustee Board on an annual basis using the report from the Designated Teacher as source information:

- The number of looked after students in the school;
- A comparison of progress as a discrete group, compared with those of other students in school and nationally;
- A comparison of attainment measures as a discrete group, compared with those of other students in school and nationally;
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other students;
- The number of fixed term/permanent exclusions; and
- Student destinations after leaving the school.

The named trustee should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that looked-after students have equal access to:

- Full time educational provision – at least 25 hours;
- Public examinations;
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. One to One tuition
- Employment Excellence careers guidance;
- Additional education support;
- Extracurricular activities;
- Work experience;
- Pupil Premium Plus funding to raise attainment.

The named trustee is encouraged to support the development of the school by endorsing the SIP (school improvement plan) that will confirm the schools' best practice.

The named trustee may want to ensure that the whole Trustee Board have a full understanding of the efficient and effective use of Pupil Premium including Pupil Premium Plus.

School Responsibility

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

It is appropriate for a member of the support staff team to have knowledge that the young person is in care only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person. However, it is important that these staff are aware of the effect of attachment and trauma on the behaviour and learning of these children.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Headteacher or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the student's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility. This will provide information to inform the PEP. An appropriate school induction must take place.

Involve the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

It is important that the young person is supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the Personal Education Plan by the Designated Teacher to inform the PEP and Care Plan review meetings

It is important to establish the child's view of their changed circumstances and what they want others to know. It is also important to ensure that a Social Worker/ teacher/ carer prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home, e.g. by other students in the playground.

Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. End of year reports) should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker and the Virtual School, and where appropriate, the birth parents. A copy should also be attached to the child's PEP.

School, education and social work colleagues within CS should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual Statement or EHC plan Review and a Personal Education Plan meeting or review.

Good communication is essential between professionals. It is important to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if the school is considering a change of course, there is a change of care placement or there are significant issues that will affect educational provision e.g. behaviour or attendance.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each student in care will have a Care Plan that will include a PEP that is developed jointly by the Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This will identify specific areas of focus and include targets and associated actions to improve performance, progress or educational achievement. Areas for consideration will include:

- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise);
- Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences); and Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations);
- Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages;
- Effective use of the Pupil Premium and evidence of impact;
- Extended learning opportunities;
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities;
- Special needs (if any);
- Attendance;
- Behaviour.

The named trustee will report annually to the Trustee Board on the progress of all Children Looked After against the key indicators outlined above.

Two final points:

PEP meetings focus on education and are closely followed by a CLA review, where all agencies that are working with the CLA meet to discuss how the placement is going. The PEP will be updated and reviewed each term or at the point of any major change and contribute to the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Designated Teacher is accountable for the implementation and review of the educational action to meet the targets in the Plan.

It is not uncommon for a family to be made up of carers' children and additional foster/adopted children. Staff should be aware of these connections and support any siblings in school wherever and however necessary.

Glossary of Terms

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| CLA | Looked After Children/Children looked after. The term 'in care' now 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 groups are said to be 'looked after children' (LAC) or children in care or 'Children Looked After' (CLA) by the local authority. |
| PLA | Previously Children looked after |
| PR | Parental Responsibility |
| VSH | Virtual School Head. Local authority officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. |
| Post-CLA | Children adopted from care, subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order. |
| PEP | Personal Education Plan (held on the ePEP system) |
| ePEP (system) | Electronic Education Plan |
| CS | Children's Services |
| CLASEF | School self-evaluation process |
| EHC/CP plan | Educational Health Care Plan |