

School Policy for Looked After Children

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 education and social services report 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 extra curricular 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. All schools should have a policy for Looked After Children (LAC) that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. The Policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of Looked After Children but also the procedures.

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' by the local authority. Accommodated children can also include those in receipt of respite care.

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
- With parents-under the supervision of Prevention and Social Care Department

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living;

- In foster care
- In a children's home; or
- In a residential school

Care Orders

- **Accommodated**(section 20)- fully parental rights
- **Interim Care Order-** , either Parents or Social Services to sign
- **Special Guardianship-** Represents the Local Authority and can sign
- **Residence Order-**the court states where the child lives
- **Full Care Order-**the Local Authority are the Corporate Parents and sign

Barker's Lane Community School Policy for Looked After Children (LAC)

1. The Objective

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Looked After pupils

2. The Name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children:

.....Mrs C Harrison-Edwards (Headteacher).....

3. The Role of the Designated teacher for Looked After Children

Within School Systems:

- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children and young Looked After People and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them;
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are Looked After, and to promote the involvement of these children in homework clubs, extra curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils etc
- to develop monitoring systems for liaising with carers, the Social Services Department and the Education service
- to hold a supervisory brief for all children being looked after e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carers and that this information is kept up to date
- to monitor the educational progress of all children who are looked after in order to inform the school's development plan
- to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy; and
- to ensure the involvement of the Careers Service with children in Years 10 and 11 who are Looked After.

Work with Individual Looked After Children

- to enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan
- to help ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan (N.B. the PEP should be initiated by the young person's Social Worker)
- to ensure that a Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer and signed by the Social Worker and
- to supervise the smooth induction of a new looked after child into the school

Liaison

- to liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register
- to help co-ordinate education review meetings so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan
- to attend , arrange for somebody else to attend or to contribute in other ways to the Social Care Departments care planning meetings
- to be the named contact for colleagues in Education and Social Care

- to ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals, and report on the progress of all Looked After Children

Training

- to develop knowledge of Social Care Department/ Education procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority and
- to cascade training to school staff as appropriate

4. The Name of a Governor with Special responsibility for Looked After Children

.....Mrs Pauline FitzHugh.....

5. The Role of that Governor

The named governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- the number of Looked After pupils in the school
- a comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils
- the attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
- the level of fixed term/permanent exclusions and
- pupil destinations

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that Looked After pupils have equal access to:

- the National Curriculum
- public examinations
- careers guidance
- additional educational support
- extra curricular activities and
- work experience

6. Responsibility for LAC in School

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

It is appropriate for any classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is being looked after only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person

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 Head teacher or the Designated teacher

7. Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with the carer/parent/Social worker-but always somebody with parental responsibility. This meeting **MUST** take place within 20 days and is the Personal Education Plan meeting.

8. Involving the Young Person

It is important that the young person is aware that the school, the Social Worker and their carers are working together to promote their education

It is also important to establish the child's point of 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 pupils in the playground

9. 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 in the case of a Children's home.

Schools, the Education service and Social Care department should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual Review of Statement combined with a Statutory Care Review

Social care Department, the Education service and schools will need to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances e.g. if the school is considering an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues

10. Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each Looked After pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the Social Worker takes a lead in developing. This will identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. Areas for consideration will include:

- Attendance
- Achievement record (academic or otherwise)
- Behaviour
- Homework
- Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities
- Special needs if any
- Developmental 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)

The PEP will be up dated regularly as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by Prevention and Social Care Department.

The Designated Person / named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all Looked After children against the key indicators outlined above.

This policy was updated in June 2023 by Mrs C Harrison-Edwards in consultation with staff and governors. It will be reviewed as and when necessary in line with any changes to legislation.