



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN CARE POLICY

NORTHMEAD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Designated Teacher for Children in care (CiC): Sarah Stocking

Governor with responsibility for Children in care: Victoria Blatchford

CONTEXT

The terms 'Looked After Children' and 'Children in Care' (CiC) are often used to define the same group of young people. When a child or young person is taken into Care by a local authority under a Court Order, the key feature is a change in parental responsibility, which is then undertaken by the local authority – who become their 'Corporate Parent'. Young people can also be in Care under a voluntary arrangement with parents (a status known as Accommodated) where parental responsibility remains with birth parents, but this arrangement is monitored and supported by social services. Most children in care will be living in foster homes but some may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their birth parent(s). Foster carers will very rarely hold parental responsibility – this is assumed by the social worker. Children placed for adoption remain looked after by the local authority until the Final Order

A Personal Education Plan is required for every Child in Care and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed termly.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to 'achieve to and reach their full potential'. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles;

- Prioritising education;
- Having high expectations and aspiration;
- Inclusion – changing and challenging attitudes;
- Achieving continuity and stability;
- Early intervention and priority action;
- Listening to children.

The role of a Virtual Head teacher for Children in Care is now statutory for every local authority; their job is to scrutinise, challenge and support schools with their teaching and learning for all children in care and assist each other in this task where children cross physical borders to live and attend education provision.

RATIONALE

Children in care may have some of the following issues:

- Poor educational standards due to time out of school or movement between different schools;
- Delayed social / emotional / cognitive development;
- Be prone to mental health issues;
- Have low self-esteem;
- Be isolated and struggle with forming friendships;
- Have behavioural issues due to past trauma;
- Be bullied or bully others;
- Have poor attachment.

This makes them extremely vulnerable in terms of education and future life chances.

We believe that schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improve the life chances of children in care. Schools can also provide a source of continuity for children who have been subject to abuse, emotional distress and disruption. School can be a place where children can feel safe and build friendships.

AIMS

The aims of the school are to:

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for CiC as for all children;
- ensure that all CiC have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability;
- ensure that CiC take as full a part as possible in all school activities;
- ensure that carers, parents and social workers of CiC pupils are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment;
- ensure that CiC are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision;
- Ensure there is sensitivity to the background of CiC, especially around work on family;
- Ensure there are high expectations for all CiC to achieve their fullest possible academic potential;
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

a. THE HEAD TEACHER AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- To promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education, without being labelled or singled out.
- To appoint a Designated Teacher for CiC (*Designated Teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team*).
- To empower the Designated Teacher to fulfil their role and responsibilities

(This will include the provision of time to undertake the role; supporting training needs and providing opportunities for the cascade of training to all staff and governors in the school).

- To ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them *(a young person's ability to engage in learning can be undermined by feelings of loss, rejection, confusion, insecurity and low self-esteem – being or becoming 'in Care' has a major impact on children's lives).*
- To recognise the particular circumstances of CiC and provide for these in all other School Policies and the school's Development Plan.
- To ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children.
- To be committed to working with local authority Virtual Head teachers to promote the achievement of children in care.

b. THE DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CIC

- To have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress.
- To monitor the educational progress of all Children in Care in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible.
- To act as an advocate for Children in Care.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children in care.
- To promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning.
- To be the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners.
- To ensure every child in care has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard.
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings.
- To provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate.
- To present regular Reports to School Governors, including an Annual Report
- To access statutory training events organised by Surrey Virtual School (as a minimum requirement).
- To cascade training to school staff and governors as appropriate.

c. THE GOVERNING BODY

- To ensure the appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations (*Designated Teachers must have Qualified Teacher Status and ideally be a member of the SLT in school, or have direct access to the team*).
- To ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role.
- To monitor the school's policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care
- To ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- To monitor the effectiveness of the role, governing bodies should, as a minimum, receive an annual report from the Designated Teacher.
- To examine whether the school is making the fullest possible use of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for CiC to achieve at least two levels of progress within a key stage.
- To scrutinise the school's admission procedures to ensure students are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for children in care
- To champion the needs of those in care and support the work of the Designated Teacher on a more regular basis.

SCHOOL STAFF:

- To follow school procedures.
- To keep the Designated Teacher informed about a CiC's progress.
- To have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of CiC.
- To positively promote the raising of a CiC's self-esteem.
- To ensure any CiC is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained.
- To be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on CiC and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings.
- To liaise with the Designated Teachers where a CiC is experiencing difficulties.
- To give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the a
- To contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times.
- To keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/ parents/carers/pupil as appropriate.
- To make extra copies of reports available when required.

ADMISSIONS

Children in care are a priority for admission, following the LEA's admission criteria. On admission, the child will meet the Designated Teacher for CiC and discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, to ensure the child is made to feel welcome

and comfortable in our school. Records will be requested as a priority from the previous school and a meeting will be held with the Carer and social worker and other relevant professionals as appropriate.

INCLUSION

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broadly based curriculum. Our Children in care policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all CiC pupils. The Designated Teacher ensures that this information is shared with staff at 'Surrey's Virtual School.'

MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF CHILDREN IN CARE

The social worker for the CiC should initiate a Personal Education Plan – PEP - within 20 days of joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the child is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each CiC's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. PEPs are completed electronically each term and uploaded onto the Virtual School's portal.

The PEP will consider:

- The child's strengths and areas for development;
- Interests, both in and out of school;
- Targets for the child, both educational and pastoral;
- Future plans and how these can be supported;
- Issues for the child.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. A child in care will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing office or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP. This information will be shared with 'The Virtual School'.

RECORD KEEPING

The Designated Teacher will know who are all the CiC in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and social worker. The Designated Teacher will also know about any CiC from other authorities. It is important that the school flags CiC status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required. The Designated Teacher is responsible to ensure 'The Virtual School' receive relevant paperwork and regular attendance updates.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/CARERS AND CARE WORKERS

At school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable CiC to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

LINKS WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES/ORGANISATIONS

We recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting Children in Care. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual CiC:

- Educational Psychologists and others from Local Authority SEN services;
- Medical Officers;
- School Nurses;
- CAMHS;
- Education Welfare Officers;
- Social care worker/ Community care worker/ Residential child care worker;
- School age parents' officer.
- The Virtual School.

Date of Policy **February 2020**

Date of next review **February 2021**