

PERCY HEDLEY EDUCATION SERVICES

Policy for Looked After Children

Introduction

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 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, who may also face additional barriers because of their race, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. 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 learning and 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. 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
- 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.

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 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.

Purpose

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of children looked after on the roll of the school.

Scope

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 where relevant, accelerated.
- To advise on most effective use of the Pupil Premium during the Personal Education Planning meeting.
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium funding and additional budget share funding where relevant is used to support the learning objectives for the pupil and to be accountable for how it is spent with outcome evidenced.
- 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' 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 in care, and to promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.
- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care.

- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in Children's Services, (CS) and birth parents where appropriate.
- To hold a supervisory brief for all children in care, 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 progress.
- To track and support 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 by use of the Pupil Premium 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 ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan are implemented fully, reviewed regularly and that all relevant school staff are aware of them.
- To report to the Governing Body at least on an annual basis on the outcomes for children looked after.
- Designated Teachers should attend training as appropriate.

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 pupils.
- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan.
- To ensure that the pupils have a voice in decisions about them.
- 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 child looked after 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 fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available.

Liaison

- To liaise with the member of school staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Plan.
- To develop good communication with Children's Services, staff so that the Personal Education Plan is supported by the child's Care Plan.
- To attend, 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 Children's Services.
- 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 role as requested.

Training

- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.
- To develop knowledge of procedures by attending training events organised by the Children's Services.
- To keep informed of any updated guidance from DfE or other research or policy.

Scope of the Named Governor

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 after leaving the school
- The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that looked-after pupils have equal access to:
 - The curriculum
 - Public examinations
 - Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. One to One tuition
 - Careers and employability guidance
 - Additional education support

- Extra-curricular activities
- Work experience
- The most effective use of the Pupil Premium to raise attainment

Scope of 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 Associate Director and/or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

It is appropriate for a classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is in care 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/therapist covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Associate Director or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil'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 Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will 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 sections 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 pupils 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 if appropriate parents/carers.

Schools, education and social work colleagues within Children's Services should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual or a Statement Review and a Personal Education Plan meeting or review.

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

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

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

- Education Health and Care Plan
- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise)
- Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences)
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations)
- Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages
- Extended learning opportunities
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities
- Attendance
- Behaviour

The PEP will be updated and reviewed at least annually 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 within the Plan.

The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all children looked after against the key indicators outlined above.