

Children in Care Policy



Rationale

Primary Schools have a key role in improving the life chances of children in care. They are ideally placed to be able to raise children's aspirations, give children a sense of the control they have over their own lives and foster positive attitudes and behaviours. When these are achieved, Primary Schools will improve the educational attainment and achievement of all children in care and give them the greatest chance of success.¹

Our vision is that we work together to enable all children to 'fly high like an eagle' and this ambition is particularly inclusive of children in care. Our school should be a safe place for all children, but it is essential that it is a haven for children in care. It is vital we provide a source of continuity and 'normality' for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption. To enable children in care to fly high, our school is a place where they can learn, be themselves and make friends. Critically, we want to engender a sense of belonging so they can recognize themselves as integral members of our school community.

We aim to ensure that children in care excel and reach their full potential. We aim to overcome their barriers to learning and enable them to leave us happy and secure in themselves, understanding that they do have control over their destiny and that education does matter. We will listen to what children in care tell us about what they want from their education and try to address any concerns or issues raised through their pupil voice as part of the PEP process.

St John's C of E Primary School strives to ensure that the culture and ethos of the school are such that, whatever the heritage and origins of members of the school, pupils should be provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and celebrate diversity.

Definition

The terms Looked After Child (LAC) and child in care (CiC) are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy we are using the term CiC. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They include the following:

- children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;

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- children who are the subject of a care order or interim care order;
- children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child;
- children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement.

A child in care may be in residential care, a foster placement or could be living with their parents. If living with their parents, this could be on a part time basis or possibly before returning home permanently after a care placement.

Legal Framework

Legislation and guidance from the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of children in care.

Schools must:

- ensure access to a balanced and broadly-based education to all children in care;
- prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of children in care;
- prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all children in care;
- ensure there is a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of all children in care who are on the school roll;
- develop effective systems of communications and protocols;
- promote the attendance of children in care.

Objectives

At St. John's Primary School we aim to ensure that those key qualities found by the DCSF (2009)³ and Ofsted (2008)⁴ to be features of best practice in supporting children in care and those previously in care (sometimes called previously looked after) are embedded in our practice, enabling them to 'fly high like an eagle'.

St. John's Primary will support children in care by:

- Ensuring an effective induction when joining the school or when coming into care whilst already on the school roll;
- Balancing high levels of support with real challenge;
- Ensuring that each child has a high-quality Personal Education Plan;
- Linking each child to a key person they relate well to;
- Making it a priority to know the children well and to build strong relationships;
- Developing strong relationships with carers, local authorities including the Virtual School Head and specialist agencies;
- Encouraging and supporting children in care to take responsibility for their learning;

- Engaging children in care in learning outside the classroom and after-school activities;
- Intervening promptly if a problem emerges such as with behaviour or attendance;
- Giving integrated but low-profile support in school for each child in care or previously in care so that they are not made to feel different from other children;
- Planning for future transitions e.g. to secondary school.

Roles and Responsibilities⁵

The Role of the Governing body:

- the appointment of a designated teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009;
- to ensure that, in partnership with the Headteacher, the designated teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of children in care
- to ensure that the designated teacher is on the Senior Leadership team;
- to ensure that the designated teacher is appropriately supported in order to fulfill their role;
- to ensure that the school has a coherent policy in place for children in care;
- to ensure that the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DCSF/DfE guidelines;
- to make sure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, children in care;
- to consider an annual report from the designated teacher covering attainment, attendance, progress, Personal Education Plans, CiC with Special Educational Needs or who are gifted and talented, impact on school development plans and how the school supports the work of The HOPE (Bristol's virtual school for children in care);
- to act on any issues raised in the annual report and to ensure that:

The school has a clear overview of the educational needs and progress of CiC on roll;

The school's policies are effective in reflecting the needs of CiC.

The name of the Governor with special responsibility for children in care is:

Mrs Caroline Davenport.

The role of the Headteacher:

- to ensure that, in partnership with the Governing body, the designated teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of children in care;

- to make sure that the designated teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting children in care to achieve;
- in partnership with the Governing body, monitor the effectiveness of the role of the designated teacher;
- oversee the development of the policy on children in care;
- evaluate the standards and achievement of CiC and report these termly to the governing body and discuss them at Core SIO/HOPE meetings;
- ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to attend training courses etc that help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to support children in care.

The role of the designated teacher:

- promoting the educational achievement of every child in care or previously in care on the school's roll;
- promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every child in care matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised;
- have lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which can affect how children in care learn and develop;
- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put children in care at a disadvantage;
- promote a culture in which children in care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- promote a culture in which children in care are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are in care;
- make sure that children in care are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/ interventions derived by the Department for Education;
- promote good home-school links through contact with carers and effective communication;
- set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children in care or previously in care;
- monitor the educational progress of children in care and intervene, in cooperation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern;
- maintain records regarding all children in care, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child;
- establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer;
- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children in care;

- maintain and respect confidentiality of all children in care and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis;
- play an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of children in care;
- serve as the named contact for colleagues in social services and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties;
- ensure that strategies are in place for effective transitions;
- ensure that each child in care has a hand picked, named adult who can act as a confidant and advocate for the child.

The designated teacher is: Mr. Tony Weir.

The role of all those involved in supporting children in care:

- ensure that all children in care are made to feel welcome and included;
- have high expectations of children in care's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a child's behaviour, and why he/she may need more support than other children;
- understand how important it is to see children in care as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers;
- appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status;
- understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help him/her achieve his/her potential.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)⁶

All children in care must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority which looks after them. Children formerly in care do not require a PEP but will be thoroughly supported and monitored in school. The care plan must include a Personal Education plan (PEP), which forms part of the child's official school record. Where they are used effectively, PEPs improve the educational experience of the child by helping everyone gain a clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the child's education needs and how that will be provided. The school and the Local Authority have a shared responsibility for making sure that the PEP is a useful document and for helping children in care to achieve and enjoy. Discussion about how together they can make that happen through the content, implementation and review of the PEP should be done through a meeting involving the young person, carers, the social worker, a teacher

and others such as, where appropriate, staff from the HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care.

The Local Authority will:

notify the school's designated teacher if a child on the school's roll becomes looked after and ensure that they receive the PEP paperwork, which should already include any information which the school will need to know.

The Social worker will:

- initiate the PEP as part of the wider care plan (A new Personal Education Plan will be needed at least two weeks before each LAC Review and whenever there is a change of circumstances [e.g. change of school or placement or where there are concerns arising in school]. If the young person has a Statement of Special Educational Needs this should be reviewed annually and should, where possible, tie in with a PEP.)
- arrange the meeting and ensure that all the relevant people are invited;
- bring the previous PEP and a PEP form to the meeting with relevant sections completed.

The designated teacher will:

- ensure all children in care have a current PEP which sets high quality expectations of rapid progress and put in place additional support which the child needs in order to succeed;
- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary;
- ensure each child eligible for PEA allowance has this discussed at the PEP meeting and an application is made once a year;
- ensure arrangements are in place for the speedy transfer of a child's PEP if they change schools;
- attend PEP meetings prepared with relevant sections of the PEP completed and attendance and current attainment information for the child;
- agree who will chair the PEP meetings and who will take notes;
- circulate completed forms and appendices after a PEP meeting.

To be an effective tool the PEP should:

- Set long- and short-term educational attainment targets, agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate.
- It will identify the developmental and educational needs of the child.
- It will be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in wider activities and provide information which helps all involved in supporting the child know what does and does not work for them.
- It will provide accountability and be a record of planned actions; identifying who is responsible for carrying out each of these actions.

It will consider:

- The child's strengths and weaknesses, their interests, both in and out of school and their developmental, educational, and pastoral needs.
- It will consider their aspirations, their future plans, and how these can be supported, as well as any issues arising for the child.

Pupil Premium

All children in care who are of compulsory school age are entitled to Pupil Premium money to help improve their outcomes. The school is responsible for reporting on how the money has been spent and the impact.

One to One tuition

Research has shown that children in care benefit from one-to-one tuition in English and/or maths even if they appear to be progressing in line with age related expectations. This school is committed to prioritising all children in care for one-to-one tuition.

Additional funding

Children in long-term care are entitled to additional funding to help improve their outcomes and narrow the gap between them and their peers. Which young people are eligible and the amount of such funding available will be determined as a result of government policy.

The school is committed to ensuring effective use of this dedicated funding where available for all eligible children in care on roll to provide additional, personalised support to ensure accelerated progress to improve outcomes. The dedicated funding for children in Year R to Year 11 is currently called the LAC Pupil Premium Grant.

The appropriate use of allocated funding is to be assessed through the Personal Education Plan. The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care expects 80% of LAC Pupil Premium money to be spent on improving outcomes in English and/or maths.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children in care are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the Local Authority's published admission criteria.

On admission to the school or to care, carers will be given an introductory booklet about the school's expectations and processes and the child will meet with the designated teacher for children in care. The designated teacher will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel supported in our school. Consideration will be given to giving the child a peer mentor. On admission, records will be requested from the child's previous school. As soon as practicable after the records are received, a meeting will

be held with the carer/parent, social worker, other relevant professionals, and the child, as appropriate, to put together a new Personal Education Plan, this early meeting will ensure that communication systems are established early. If records are not received promptly, we will assess our own assessment to ensure that the teaching and support received are appropriate. We will endeavour to meet the statutory time scales for PEPs as outlined in the guidance.

When children already on school roll enter care, the school will ensure that the student meets with the designated teacher as soon as possible and is fully informed of the school procedures and additional support arrangements available. A meeting with other parties will be arranged and PEP prepared as soon as possible in the same way as for those children already in care admitted to school.

At the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting, any means of communication to aid the exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed.

Many children in care do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel “different”. Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However, we recognise that in some cases, such as if the child has severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

Leaving Arrangements

When a child in care leaves the school, we will find ways to say goodbye. We will also ensure the swift transfer of information to the next school.