

St. Andrew & St. Francis CE Primary School



Looked After Children Policy

Chair of Governors	A.Frederick
Acting Head teacher	J.Kelly
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Statement of intent

The Objective: To promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in care.

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 in Care 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 that will ensure participation and learning for all.

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.

Definitions

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.

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

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

1. The Designated Teacher

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care for the school: Mr. K Minns (or in her absence the Head teacher, Mr. J Kelly).

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care

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 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, extracurricular activities, home reading schemes;
- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care;
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers;
- 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 and carer(s), - where appropriate - 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;
- To ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan are implemented fully and that all relevant staff are aware of them;
- To ensure best value when spending the additional budget share made available specifically for children looked after to support achievement;

- To be responsible for the appropriate allocation of the Pupil Premium for children looked after and to be accountable for how it is spent;
- To report to the Governing Body at least on an annual basis (preferably each term) on the outcomes for children looked after.

Work with Individual Children in Care

- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan;
- To ensure that a Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer (where applicable) and signed by the Social Worker;
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new looked after child into the school;
- To develop in-school strategies to promote and accelerate the achievement of children in care and close the gap between them and their peers;
- To fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available from other partner agencies.

Liaison:

- To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register;
- To help communication with Social Worker so that the Personal Education Plan can inform 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 ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals, and report on the progress of all children in care.

Training:

- To develop knowledge of CP and safeguarding procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority (where applicable);
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate;
- To attend the annual Designated Teachers conference and participate in area cluster groups for additional training and to share good practice.

2. Governors

The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Children in Care in the school:

The role of that governor

The named governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis using the report from the Designated Teacher as source information:

- 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;
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. Making Good Progress;
- Additional education support;
- Extracurricular activities.

3. 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 in Care.

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 covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Head teacher or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

4. 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 responsibility¹. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

5. Involving 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/carers prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home, e.g. by other pupils in the playground.

6. 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 parent/s .

Schools and education and social work colleagues 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 an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

7. 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 concern and include achievable targets. Areas for consideration will include:

- Attendance;
- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise);
- Behaviour;
- Extended learning opportunities;
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities;
- Special needs (if any);
- 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).

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 of the educational targets within the Plan.

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

¹Education Law defines who is a parent very widely. It includes anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care for them. This means it is possible for someone who does not have parental responsibility to be a 'parent' because they have care of the child in question for example the foster carer.

Ref

Section 576 Education Act 1996

Children Act 1989 (amended)

'If this were my child' (Local Government Information Unit 2003)