

Children in Care Policy

We are aware that Looked After Children constitute a group in the sense that they may share common experiences as a result of having been taken into Public Care, but that they are also individuals and members of other groups. We will take this into account when planning to meet their needs and avoid any action that may lead to stigmatisation. Westwood College understands that we have a major part to play in ensuring that Looked After Children are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

Westwood College believes that in partnership with Staffordshire County Council as Corporate Parents we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of Looked After Children.

Who are Looked After Children?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

The term ‘in care’ refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 - they may live with foster carers, in a Children’s home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are ‘accommodated’ by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children’s home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be ‘Looked After Children’ -LAC. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

LAC reviews, involving the school, will take place up until an adoption order has been granted. However Student Premium Plus funding will continue for LAC until they are 16 years old.

Aims

To provide a safe and secure environment, where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.

To support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential, enjoy learning and take as full a part as possible in all school activities.

To ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for LAC as for all children.

To work with the Virtual School and ensure that carers and social workers of LAC students are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment.

To fulfil our school's role as corporate parents to promote and support the education of our Looked After Children, by asking the question, 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Our school's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Looked After Children is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education
- Promoting attendance
- Targeting support
- Having high expectations
- Promoting inclusion
- Achieving stability and continuity
- Early intervention and priority action
- Listening to children
- Promoting health and well-being
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals

Roles and Responsibilities

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children:

Janette Reader, Assistant Headteacher

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

Within School Systems:

- To know all of the children in care within the school and those who have recently left care, e.g. Through adoption, special guardianship etc and who will still require support;
- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children 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 school, homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, accelerated reading scheme at home, student council, prefects etc.
- To act as an advocate for Looked After Children, making sure that their voice is heard and responded to;
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, the Social Services Department and the Virtual School;
- To hold a register and tracking form for all children who are being looked after e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date;

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- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for the achievement of children in care;
- To monitor the educational progress of all children who are looked after in order to inform the school's development plan; and
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy.
- Have sufficient up to date knowledge and training in the education, care and health [physical and psychological] needs of Children in Care to be able to respond helpfully and proactively to these needs, support and challenge staff and seek support and advice from professionals when they reach the limits of their professional knowledge;
- Ensure a full data set [achievement history, current and target levels and attendance] for Children in Care is recorded in the PEP, tracked and monitored;
- Ensure appropriate interventions and assessments are carried out so barriers to learning are overcome and record these in the PEP;
- Make sure that Children in Care are prioritised in support arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home;
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's electronic personal education plan (PEP), ensuring that all children in care have an up to date high quality personal education plan with multi agency support for SMART targets which will enable the child achieve their potential;
- Work closely with other agencies, sharing information as appropriate;
- Ensure that there are well supported plans for transition;
- Attend training;
- Keep the Senior Leadership Team up to date with the needs, issues and outcomes for Children in Care by including Children in Care as an agenda item in leadership meetings, at least once per term;
- Provide an Annual Report for Governors regarding Looked After Children.

Work with Individual Looked After Children:

- To work with individual children, possibly through a carer, to arrive at a statement about their circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or other students;
- To enable the child to make a contribution to their Personal Education Plan; and
- To help ensure that each student has a Personal Education Plan (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's social worker).

Liaison:

- To help co-ordinate the Personal Education Plan meeting;
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Looked After Children care planning meetings;
- To be the named contact for colleagues in Education and Social Care and Health; and
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies.

Training:

- To develop knowledge of SCH/Education procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority; and
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate

The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Looked After Children:

Mr Craig Balderstone

The role of that Governor

- Ensure that the needs of Children in Care within the school are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Teachers;
- Support the Designated teachers in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training on Children in Care;
- Ensure that the needs and outcomes of Children in Care are incorporated in all policy decisions wherever relevant;
- Ensure the school's work with Children in Care is reviewed at least annually by the Senior Leadership Teams and Local
- Governing Body;
- Attend training.

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that looked-after students have equal access to:

- The national curriculum;
- Public examinations;
- Careers guidance;
- Additional educational support; extra-curricular activities; and work experience.

Senior Leadership Team

- Listen to and take account of the views of Children in Care;
- Review regularly provision and outcomes for Children in Care;
- Follow guidance/statutory guidance on admissions, exclusions etc;
- Prioritise Children in Care in resource decisions and ensure that resources directly targeted at Children in Care [Student Premium, money for special needs etc.] are used directly for them;
- Work with and support wider partnerships in providing the best possible educational provision and support for children in care at the school;
- Ensure Children in Care have access to the best of what the school has to offer and that barriers to do with being in care which might make this difficult are overcome;
- Promote multi agency working and a solution focused child centred approach;
- Ensure the outcomes for Children in Care are tracked, monitored and appropriate interventions are put in place and included in the PEP.

Looked After Children 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 Headteacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

It is appropriate for a Teaching 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 Headteacher or the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

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.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the student's previous school and a discussion will be held with carer/parent/social worker, as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

- We will act in accordance with the law and admissions codes as they apply to the school.
- Work with the Local Authority and other authorities to plan for admissions, by ensuring that a 'pre-admission professionals [and if appropriate PEP] meeting' is held and that support arrangements are in place.
- Ensure the PEP is reviewed within 28 days of admission.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each looked-after student will have an electronic Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the Social Worker initiates. 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);
- 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 at least once per term, as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Social Services Department. If there are significant concerns surrounding the young person, an earlier PEP may be requested.

Access to an appropriate curriculum

Children in Care will have access to the best curriculum that we can offer. We will work proactively with others to ensure that the curriculum is developed to meet needs.

Access to support at SEN Support or Education, Health and Care Plan

We will work proactively to ensure children's needs are assessed early and their needs met.

Where this involves support or assessment from other agencies the Designated Teacher or person nominated by them will take the lead in ensuring that this is in place.

Preventing exclusion and improving attendance

- The Local Authority will be informed of fixed term exclusions.
- Where attendance is falling or low the school will work with other agencies, including Education Welfare Officer, to address the underlying issues and ensure a plan is in the PEP.
- The school will work, when necessary, with other agencies [including foster carer, social worker, psychology services] on prevention strategies. The school will seek support in a timely manner according to the availability of resources [including from the Virtual PRU] if a pattern of exclusion is developing and ensure plans to address issues are in the PEP.
- Funding and resources already in the school budget to prevent exclusion [e.g. Student Premium] will be used for this purpose.
- Our aim is to seek to never exclude a child in care.
- Permanent exclusions will only occur when all other options have been exhausted or because of a one-off extreme incident.
- Where a permanent exclusion can be anticipated because of a developing pattern of behaviour, alternatives will be explored before this occurs.
- If there is a permanent exclusion or managed transfer, we will not take a child off roll until a new placement is found. The current placement will take a lead in working with others to find an alternative placement.

Communication with Other Agencies

The school will ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year reports) are forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker.

Social Services, the Virtual School and other school settings will need 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.

Supporting transition

We will not change education placements without a multi-agency review of the PEP and agreement by all those involved, unless in emergency, in which case a review of the PEP will be held within 20 days.

The Designated Teacher from the next education placement will be invited to the professionals and PEP meetings in the current placement. The Designated Teacher in the current placement will attend professionals and PEP meetings in the new placement as requested and appropriate with other professionals as required.

Working with other LAs

We will expect other LAs to provide the same support for their children in care in our school, as we do for our children, including planning, funding and support. This will include all the stipulations of this policy and a particular emphasis on:

- Pre-planning for new education placements. Where there are issues, a pre- placement admissions meeting should be held with all professionals involved;
- Continuing financial support;
- Continuing professional support via the PEP process.

ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNORS ON: **November 2017**

POLICY REVIEW DATE: **November 2019**