



Hester's Way Primary School

Children in Care Policy

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BACKGROUND

The Policy sets out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of Children in Care (CIC) also known as Looked After Children (LAC) but also the procedures. This Policy has been written in conjunction with other policies; including Safeguarding Children Policy, Pupil Premium, Special Education Needs, Attendance, Early Offer and Behaviour Policy.

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 draw 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.

The Objective of the Policy:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of children in care

Definition of Looked After Pupils:

The Children Act (1998) 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. Accommodated children also include those in receipt of respite care – if it exceeds 20 days in one episode or over 120 days in 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
- With parents – under the supervision of the Social Services Department

An "accommodated" child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home
- In a residential school
- Or unusually with parents

Mrs. Mel Richards is the designated teacher for Children in Care

Within School Systems:

- to ensure that 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;
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Children 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 in Care;
- to develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, Social Workers, the Virtual School and the Education Inclusion Department.
- 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), and that this information is kept up to date;
- to monitor the educational progress of Children in Care in order to inform the school's development plan; to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy.

Work with individual Children in Care: to enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their care plan.

- to help ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's social worker)
- to ensure that a home-school agreement is drawn up with the primary carer and signed by the social worker.

Liaison:

- To liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on Child Protection Plans;
- To help co-ordinate education and Children in Care review meetings, so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan, along with the Social Worker and Learning Mentor from the Virtual School.
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to Children in Care planning meetings;
- To be the named contact for colleagues in Social Care and the Virtual School
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals.

Training:

- To develop knowledge of Vulnerable Children/Education Inclusion procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority
- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate

The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Children in Care is the SEND Governor.

The role of that Governor

The named governor will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- a comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils;
- the attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared with other pupils;
- the level of fixed term/permanent exclusions
- pupil destinations.

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that Children in Care have equal access to:

- the national curriculum;
- public examinations;
- additional educational support;
- extra-curricular activities; and responsibility for Children in Care in School

It is important that all teaching staff that 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 Learning Support Assistants 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 Head teacher or the Designated Teacher for Children in Care. Such details are kept in the same place in all classrooms so that staff can refresh their knowledge of such pupils when needed.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records (including the P.E.P.) will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/social worker. A date will be agreed upon for a new Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

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 the Virtual School, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

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. Schools, the Social Services and all involved agencies should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual Review of a Statement combined with a Statutory Care Review. Social Services, the Independent Reviewing Service, the Virtual School and Schools 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.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each looked-after pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that the Social Worker takes a lead in developing. 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);
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and Aspirations).

The PEP will be updated at least every six months, as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by Children's Services. The named governor will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all Children in Care against the key indicators outlined above.