



School's Children Looked After Policy

Reviewed: March 2023
Review Date: March 2024

Ratified by the full governing board: 16 March 2023

Introduction

Who is in Public Care?

Our school sometimes has children who are Looked After by the Local Authority (in Public Care). Within this policy they are referred to as Children who are Looked After (CLA). This means the children are subject to a care order or are in care. The carers of the children are responsible for day to day needs but the Local Authority has responsibilities towards each child as corporate parent and (under the Children Act 1989 sec. 22[4]) must work in partnership with parents in order to maintain links with their family which are as strong as possible. Many children in Public Care return home after long or short periods in care.

Education of Children in Public Care

The DfE/Department of Health Document on Children in Public Care (April 2000) has stated that:

“Children in Public Care must have an entitlement to full time education in mainstream schools, wherever possible. Pupils in Public Care should have equal access to the National Curriculum and associated tests, and to public examinations and career guidance.”

The Public Law Outline was issued on 1st April 2008 and revised in April 2014. It applies to all Care and Supervision Proceedings and, where practicable, to all other Family Public Law Proceedings. It brought about a new approach to care proceedings and replaced the old protocol for judicial management of cases.

The themes were continued with the new Family Proceedings Rules which came into force in 2011.

Research indicates that expectations of children in care, tends to be lower. We believe that challenging negative attitudes about Young People in Public Care is critical to changing their experiences of education and improving outcomes.

In line with 'Promoting the education of looked after children' (2020), we see our school as a place where children can be like everyone else and can provide a source of continuity and stability in an otherwise turbulent life. There is a clear relationship between schooling difficulties and placement breakdown: either may precipitate the other. Repeated changes of school and care placement are damaging, not only because of the disruption they cause, but because each change represents another ending.

With the above in mind we have developed this policy which should be read together with our Policies on Behaviour, Special Educational Needs and Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Sheffield Virtual School Team

This department within the local authority coordinates educational services for children in care from 2 to 18 years old. This team works in partnership with a child or young person's school (or the education establishment at which they are registered) and social worker to ensure they are supported to fulfil their potential at all stages of their education. The virtual school offers support to school in the following areas:

- How Personal Education Plans and Grants work, and process
- Training

0114 273 4452 or email virtualschool@sheffield.gov.uk

Designated Teacher

The Deputy Head Teacher (Sheree Doyle), has been assigned the role of designated teacher with responsibility for CLAs, as specified in the DfE/DoH document on the Education of Children in Public Care. They may delegate aspects of the role to the SENDCo, which the head teacher will monitor. (see Appendix A for Roles and Responsibilities)

Ratified by the full governing board: 16 March 2023

Aims and Objectives

In accordance with Government legislation regarding children in Public Care we aim to:

- Raise pupil attainment and achievement, developing positive outcomes for pupils who are in Public Care in Sheffield
- Identify all children on our school roll who are in Public Care, and regularly monitor and update data as is required to maintain a register of Children in Public Care
- Monitor the needs of the whole child, specifically those needs which arise because a child is in Public Care (see appendix B)
- Monitor attendance
- Work together with other agencies to support school placement
- Identify the pupils' individual needs, monitor and review pupil progress by implementation and review of a Personal Education Plan.
- Ensure appropriate working practices and systems are in place to work in partnership with all appropriate agencies and individuals.

Procedures

Working practices and systems supportive to Children in Public Care

- Information (number, compliance and safeguarding information) on Children in Public Care will be incorporated into the Annual Report to Governors.
- We will ensure that our staff understand the relevant legislation regarding Children in Public Care. For example, that changes of care status should not take place without consultation between education and social services personnel. However, if circumstances arise in which social services take pre-emptive action, education personnel will be informed of any change in care status and the school will ensure an updated PEP is put into place
- School staff will be proactive in communicating information to relevant personnel. If the designated teacher is not already aware of changes in circumstances of a child or changes in care status, information should be passed on and a review meeting will be convened in consultation with all those involved with the child.
- Issues of confidentiality will be sensibly and sensitively raised. Confidentiality will be balanced sensibly with appropriate information sharing. The designated teacher will collate all relevant background information.
- When a child moves from this school, copies of all information will be forwarded immediately to the receiving school.
- If a pupil's circumstances change, the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) will be amended accordingly.
- Children Looked After (CLA) will receive the Pupil Premium after being in care for 6 months. This must be applied for from the LA and not from the Government. However, they will not also qualify for the Pupil Premium under the Free School Meals criteria.
- The Pupil Premium should be spent to support the needs of that individual child. The deputy head teacher monitors the Pupil Premium budget and its impact.

Staff training

- All staff will receive regular information regarding the difficulties encountered by Children in Public Care as part of the wider programme of safeguarding training. At a staff meeting an opportunity will be taken by the designated teacher to describe the operation and function of their role, and its implications to the teaching group. Staff will be updated on the pupils in Public Care and the teachers' responsibility for collecting and communicating information. Confidentiality issues will be addressed. The designated teacher will lead any training on CLA as appropriate and will take responsibility for organising any INSET on this subject which may include input by Social Services Personnel
- School is conversant with the Local Authority expectations for the Attainment of Children in Public Care.

Procedures regarding involvement of Parents/Carers

Ratified by the full governing board: 16 March 2023

- All parties with parental responsibility have entitlement to details relating to the education of CLA. The school will therefore ensure that carers are given details regarding
 - School trips
 - Parent Meetings
 - Information from School
 - School reports
 Carers should share this information with others who have contact with the child, as stated in the care plan.
- The school will ensure that effective communication takes place with other agencies that are involved with the pupil. These may include health agencies, social services departments, Local Authority, Youth Justice Teams and voluntary agencies. This will also include, as appropriate, natural parents, foster or residential carers, responsible officers of the local Authority and those known to have parental responsibility for the child.

The Personal Education Plan

- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) will be developed for each Child in Public Care. Clear targets for academic achievement, personal development and behaviour, if appropriate, will be included. If the pupil is the subject of a Statement of Special Educational Needs the PEP will relate to the Individual Education Plan. The designated teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school in consultation with the social worker and class teacher, SENDCO and other relevant staff as appropriate. The designated social worker is also responsible for sharing the PEP with all concerned parties.
- The PEP will be written within 21 days of the child coming into public care and will be reviewed at least every 6 months.
- The PEP is essential to address issues which arise from frequent school transfer, e.g. the child should not miss entry to SATs because of school transfer.
- In line with 'Promoting the education of looked after children' (2020) the PEP should cover the full range of education and development needs including:
 - A record of progress and achievement
 - Developmental educational needs
 - Short term targets and
 - Long term Plans and aspirations
 - Support and strategies needed and how this will make/has made a difference to achievement levels
- The PEP should be accessible and effective and should inform next steps.
- CLA should have a voice in developing their PEPs.

Health Assessment

An initial health assessment will be carried out by the local authority within 20 days of coming into public care. The Health Assessment will be reviewed annually by the School Nurse or Health Visitor. The health history of the birth parents is key information to be contained in this report. The school is responsible for reviewing the health assessment and using the information to support the child in school where appropriate.

References:

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children' DCSF -00342-2010.

'The Roles and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children'. DCSF-01046-2009.

'Practitioner's Handbook for Looked After Children'.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/lachandbook

All Sheffield Safeguarding policies can be found on the following website:

www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org.uk/welcome/schools

Appendix A

The Role of the Designated Teacher

It will be the duty and responsibility of the designated teacher for Children in Public Care to:

- attend courses and update knowledge on issues relevant to children in public care
- be available for consultation as required by the pupil, staff, parents, social workers, school governors and school staff
- act as an advocate for children in public care within the school providing for an opportunity for their views to be heard and their feelings made known
- be the primary contact within the school for all social services personnel regarding children in public care
- make known to carers and pupils the responsibility held by the designated teacher for children in public care
- be responsible for the collection and collation of all relevant information on children in public care and to make available and transfer the information in an efficient manner as required
- monitor, evaluate and ensure the maintenance of the PEP for all pupils who are on roll and are in public care
- ensure that a relevant home/school agreement is drawn up with the pupil's primary carer
- participate in any network of designated teachers coordinated by the Virtual School to aid sharing of good practice and continuity for children in public care
- be responsible for amendment and updating of this policy as required.

Appendix B

Checklist relating to Children in Public Care

1. Check whether the children are happy and settled in school (via pupil voice termly)
 2. Check if they are integrated socially (via pupil voice termly)
 3. Check if they are achieving educationally (via the PEP meetings and day to day teacher assessments)
- Review the child's emotional and social wellbeing and current challenges and how we can best meet those needs (via inclusion meetings as a school and with carers and social workers at professional meetings)
4. Check if they are being bullied (via class teacher / pastoral check ins)
 5. Check how much they want their looked after status known and by whom (via child and carer voice before the child starts at our setting)
 6. Ask carers whether they have facilities for homework and quiet study (at the initial transition meeting)
 7. Question the need for any move to another school – can it be prevented? (as appropriate at professional meetings)
 8. Incorporate pupils into meetings if relevant
 9. Be sensitive to agreed names for pupils
 10. Be aware of the possibility of the pupil feeling:
 - a sense of loss
 - a lack of trust in adults
 - a sense of rejection or isolation
 - confused about the reasons for going in Public Care
 - fear of children at their residence
 11. Promote the child's knowledge of their rights.

•