

EASTHAMPSTEAD PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Children Looked After Policy



Rationale

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of children looked after and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Raising levels of achievement has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of children looked after and schools play a pivotal role in this.

Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

Furthermore, the term “looked after”, which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term “in public care”, which has been adopted by the DfES in their publication, “The Education of Young People in Public Care”.

Legal Framework

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of Children Looked After (CLA).

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education to all children looked after
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all children looked after
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and truancies for all children looked after
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of children looked after
- Develop systems of communications and protocols
- Promote the attendance of children looked after

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each child looked after has a current Personal Education Plan in place.

- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the curriculum, careers guidance, extracurricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation and joint Department for Education and Skills / Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavour to support all children looked after educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

Many children looked after 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 do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

The Named Governor will work in co-operation with the Headteacher and Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all children looked after have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Headteacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with children looked after.

The named Governor is Mary Temperton

The named Governor should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for children looked after
- the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines
- the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- children looked after have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- the Governing Body receives an annual report

The Headteacher will:

- appoint the designated teacher
- ensure that the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- oversee the development of the policy on children looked after
- be responsible for all systems to support children looked after.
- report to the Governing Body on an annual basis on the following:
 - the number of looked after pupils in the school
 - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
 - the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils
 - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils
 - the number of complaints

The Designated Teacher*

The designated teacher will serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support children looked after within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all children looked after in the school.

The designated teacher will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding children looked after of the school by:

- Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all children looked after and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis
- Ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children looked after and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements
- Acting as an advocate for children looked after in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances

The designated teacher will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children looked after. S/he will:

- have an overview and co-ordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children who are looked after
- maintain records regarding all children looked after, 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
- monitor the educational progress of all children looked after and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern
- The designated teacher will facilitate effective communication by:
- building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue
- being proactive and participating in setting goals for the child's PEP
- playing 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 looked after
- helping co-ordinate education and PEP meetings
- serving as the named contact* for colleagues in social services and education
- ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties
- Inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The designated teacher is a qualified SENCO and will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- by meeting with the child looked after to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role
- by ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues this is generally the tutor.

- by ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan
- by requesting SEND provision and/or outside agencies, including the Virtual School, if a looked after child requires additional academic or behavioural support
- To ensure all children looked after with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning
- by having a strategy for key stage Discovery – Destiny or new school transitions
- by ensuring the involvement of careers support during KS4
- by encouraging all children to continue on to further or higher education
- by ensuring all children looked after are made to feel a part of the school environment

*The Designated Teacher at Easthampstead Park Community School is Ms Sarah Buchanan, who may delegate actions to the CP Officer or the Extended Services coordinator to represent her in meetings.

Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of *staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and weaknesses
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child

It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children looked after are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LA's published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the designated teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school. Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In 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 fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as the use of the student planner to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that children looked after experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that children looked after enjoy the same extracurricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

Complaints

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Head teacher's response.

Devised:

January 2020

Responsibility for Implementation and Review: **Assistant Headteacher Inclusion
Student Support Committee**

Date of Next Review:

January 2022