

# Rutlish School



## CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (“CLA”)

This Policy was approved by the Inclusion  
Committee

Date Approved – June 2018

## SCHOOL POLICY FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

### Background

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 Looked After 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 children looked after by a local authority, but also the procedures that will ensure participation in high quality learning and progress.

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 even with parents – under supervision of Children's Services
- Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:
  - In foster care
  - In a children's home, or
  - In a residential school

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, [the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked after-children – statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities \(February 2018\)](#). The Children and Families Act 2014 amends section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children is properly discharged. This officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH). In Merton, Cathy Goodman is the Virtual School Head.

It is also important to remember that while Parental Responsibility (PR) for the young person normally lies with the Local Authority and/or the parents, responsibility for day to day decisions is often delegated to the foster carers or staff at the residential home. It is therefore important to ascertain who holds PR and what if any authority has been delegated to carers as soon as possible. Each case will be different as to who will have responsibility and who will need to be kept informed.

## **The Policy**

### **The Objective:**

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of children looked after on the roll of the school.

### **The role of the Headteacher is to:**

- Nominate an appropriate person to fill the role of Designated teacher.
- Liaise on a regular basis with the Designated teacher on issues relating to CLA
- Monitor the statutory requirement that every CLA has a Personal Education Plan (initiated by their social worker)
- Keep Governors informed about the achievement of CLA
- Maintain the difficult balance of offering children in public care greater support and/or more formal education planning, without appearing to treat them differently.

### **The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After for the school:**

Mr Heather Ford - Line Manager

### **The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After**

#### *Within School Systems:*

- To ensure that the educational achievement of each child looked after on roll is monitored, tracked and promoted and wherever possible, accelerated;
- To ensure that there is an up to date Personal Education Plan or ePEP with SMART targets that will promote progress;
- To advise on most effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus during the Personal Education Planning meeting;
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus funding and additional budget share funding (where relevant) is used to support the learning objectives for the student and to be accountable for how the funding is spent with outcomes evidenced;
- 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, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.;
- To ensure that members of staff who teach the children looked after on roll provide accurate progress data and advice on specific learning targets to inform the Personal Educational Planning meeting;
- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care;
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in Children's Services, (CS) and birth parents where appropriate;
- 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 where relevant and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date, used on a need to know basis to help the student overcome obstacles to learning and progress;
- To track and support the educational progress of all children who are looked after in order to inform the school's development plan;

- To intervene quickly if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding to accelerate progress;
- To intervene if there is evidence of absence from school or internal truancy;
- To inform the planning and where relevant, transition for children looked after post 16;
- To ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan are implemented fully, reviewed regularly and that all relevant school staff are aware of them;
- To report to the Governing Body, at least on an annual basis (preferably each term), on the outcomes for children looked after.
- To ensure that school staff have an awareness of the impact of attachment disorder and pre-care trauma on learning;
- To support the Quality Assurance Process for PEPs and for schools on the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with children looked after.

#### *Work with Individual Children Looked After*

- To discuss with individual children, possibly alongside a carer, to arrive at a statement about their care arrangements and circumstances that they would be happy to share with staff and/or pupils;
- 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 and signed by the Social Worker;
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new child looked after into the school;
- To develop in-school strategies to track, promote and accelerate the achievement of looked after children and close the gap between them and their peers;
- To fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available from the Virtual School and partner agencies.

#### *Liaison:*

- To liaise with the member of school staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Plan;
- To develop effective communication with Children's Services, (CS) staff so that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is congruent with the child's Care Plan;
- To attend, or arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings and statutory reviews;
- To be named contact for colleagues in Children's Services, (CS);
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between schools, agencies and individuals, and report on the progress and attendance of all children in care on the school roll to the Virtual School as requested – Progress and attainment data submitted each term.

#### *Training:*

- 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.
- To develop knowledge of procedures by attending training events organised by the Children's Services, (CS), the Virtual School or local Designated Teachers cluster groups.

**The role of the Head of Year is to:**

- Liaise with the Designated teacher on issues relating to CLA in their year group
- Ensure that relevant information is presented at PEP meetings
- Liaise with relevant carers, informing them of school issues, and providing opportunities for them to discuss educational progress

**The role of the SENCO is to:**

- Liaise with the Designated teacher and class teacher relating to issues of CLA on the SEN register/Code of Practice
- Liaise with the borough SENAT and SEN GEN team regarding CLA who have statements
- Liaise with relevant carers and advise them of strategies that can support educational needs of the children in their care who are on the SEN register/Code of Practice

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Headteacher and/or the Designated teacher have responsibility for informing all appropriate members of staff who are in contact with the child or young person of their care status.

In each case, the Headteacher and the Designated teacher will determine the extent of the information shared. In every case, only information that is critical to an effective working relationship will be passed on.

**ADMISSIONS**

On admission to the school, records will be requested from the previous school, where appropriate and a PEP meeting held. If required, an appropriate school induction will take place.

**INVOLVING THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON**

The child/young person will be consulted and involved in decisions about themselves according to their age and understanding.

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

## **INVOLVING THE PARENT/CARERS**

The school recognises that support from home greatly assists a child's educational progress and aims to involve parents and carers.

The school will maintain regular communication with the primary carer and will ensure copies of reports are forwarded to the social worker in addition to the carer and parent.

## **INVOLVING OTHER AGENCIES**

The school recognises that multi-agency working is critical to the support and progress of CLA. Agencies involved may include Social Services, Education Welfare Officer, and School Nurse etc. The School will, therefore, work closely with other agencies involved in supporting the achievements and welfare of the child.

## **ASSESSMENT, PLANNING, MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES**

Each Looked after Child will have a PEP as part of their Care Plan that is developed jointly by the Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This will identify basic information, act as a record of progress, identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The PEP will be reviewed 3 times a year and will feed into the Care Plan. Areas for consideration will include:

- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise)
- 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)
- Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages
- Effective use of the Pupil Premium and evidence of impact
- Extended learning opportunities
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities
- Special needs (if any)
- Attendance
- Behaviour.

The PEP will be updated and reviewed each term 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 and review of the educational action to meet the targets within the Plan.

**The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Children Looked After in the school: Graham Mills**

### **The role of the 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 progress as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils in school and nationally;
- A comparison of attainment measures as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils in school and nationally;
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils;
- The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions; and
- Pupil destinations after leaving the school.

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

- Full time educational provision – at least 25 hours;
- Public examinations;
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. One to One tuition
- Employment Excellence careers guidance;
- Additional education support;
- Extracurricular activities
- Work experience
- Pupil Premium Plus funding to raise to raise attainment

The named Governor is encouraged to support the Quality Assurance Process for schools on the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with children looked after if offered to ensure and confirm the schools' best practice.

**Ms Heather Ford - Designated teacher**

**Mr Graham Mills - Designated Governor responsible for Look After Children**

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/virtualschool/policies/>

## APPENDIX 1 - Glossary

**Care Plan** Every child in care should have a care plan which will include details of their needs and how these will be met, and contain information about their placement and the longer-term planning for their care.

**Children's Social Worker** A social worker who is provided by the responsible authority to work with a child and to plan for their care. They are also responsible for meeting with the child to ensure that their needs are being met.

**Children in Care** Children in care are subject to a care order, an emergency protection order or are compulsorily accommodated.

**Children Looked After (CLA)** Please see below for Looked After Children

**CIN** Abbreviation used for Child in Need. A child will be *in need* if they are disabled, or they are assessed by children's Services to be *in need* of extra support for their safety, health and/or development. If a child is assessed as a child *in need*, Children's Services may provide the child and other people in the family, with extra help to look after the child, but it is not an absolute requirement.

**Delegated authority** This is where the responsibility for making day to day decisions about a child has been delegated to the Foster Carer. This can include decisions on health, education, leisure (including permission slips for school trips and activities)

**Designated Teacher (DT)** The DT is responsible for prompting the educational achievement of CLA in their school. The DT has lead responsibility for helping school staff understand how CLA can learn and achieve.

**Family and friends carer** When a child is living full time with someone who is a family member, friend or was previously known to them. The majority of family and friends care is made up of informal arrangements between parents and relatives, but there are other situations and sometimes legal orders too. Where the child is looked after by a Local Authority and the family and friends carer is approved as the Foster Carer, this is known as family and friends foster care.

**Family and friends foster care** Where a child was previously known to their Foster Carer and their Foster carer was approved to look after them, this is known as family and friends foster care. More comprehensive guidance on family and friends foster care in England is given in Family and Friends Care: statutory guidance for local authorities.

**Foster care agreement** An agreement between the fostering service and the Foster Carer which sets out matters such as terms of approval, the obligations of the Foster Carer, and what training and support the fostering service will provide for them. More information on what should be included in the Foster Care Agreement can be found In Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

**Independent Fostering Provider (IFP)** An IFP is an organisation that places children into foster placements on behalf of the Local Authority. Some are profit making companies while other are charities or not for profit companies. A listing of IFP's that are members of the Fostering Network is available on Find a Fostering service.

**Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** The IRO is a social worker who is responsible for the review of children looked cases. They chair the review for each individual child and monitor implementation of the care plan, as well as ensuring that the child's voice is heard and that their wishes are taken into account. You can find out more about the work of the IRO on the Department for Education's website.

**Looked after child (LAC) or Child Looked After (CLA)** Anyone under age 18 who is looked after by the Local Authority, either because they are on a care order or they are accommodated through a voluntary agreement with their parents.

**Parental responsibility** All the rights, duties, responsibilities and powers which the law gives a parent in relation to their child. Mothers automatically have parental responsibility as do fathers if married to the mother when or after the child was born or by other legal agreements. Parental responsibility can also be given by the courts to others under orders such as special guardianship or adoption.

**Pathway plan** The pathway plan is completed as part of the leaving care process for each young person and includes any actions that have to be carried out by the responsible authority, Foster Carer, the young person themselves and any others involved.

**Personal Education Plan (PEP)** The PEP is part of the child's care plan and gives information about the arrangements that have been made for their educational and/or training needs by the responsible authority.

**Placement Plan** The placement plan forms part of the child's overall care plan and lays out how the placement will meet the particular child's needs.

**Private fostering** An arrangement whereby a parent arranges for their child under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled) to live with someone who is not a relative for more than 28 days. Private fostering arrangements must be notified to the Local Authority, who will visit periodically to ensure the welfare of the child. This is not the same as being a foster carer for a CLA, as the LA has not assessed the child as needing to be looked after.

**Child Arrangement Order** An order granted by the court which gives the holder parental responsibility for a child, although they share this with anyone else who has parental responsibility.

**Short breaks** These are a series of placements made for a limited amount of time where the child then returns to their parents. These children are not necessarily CLA, but might be.

**Special Guardianship** When the court makes a Special Guardianship order it gives parental responsibility to the special guardian, which they share with anyone else who has this. The order lasts until the child is 18, unless the court discharges it earlier.

**Usual fostering limit** Under the Children Act 1989 Schedule 7, the number of children fostered by a Foster Carer is limited (the usual fostering limit). The current usual fostering limit is three children unless the children are all siblings although exemptions can be granted. More information about the usual fostering limit and its exemptions can be found in section 5 of The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services. "Supporting Looked After Learners" (DFES, Jan,2006)