

# Highwood Primary School



*Promoting Resilience – Achieving Potential*

## **Policy for Children Looked After**

Written: November 2019

Review: November 2021

Ratified by Governors: November 2019



## HIGHWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

This policy has been impact assessed against protected characteristics (race, gender and disability) and no adverse impact has been identified.

### 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 extra-curricular 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. This policy sets 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.

The outcomes for CLA is an Ofsted priority in the Eastern Region of the Country with Hertfordshire having the widest gap.

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 Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher (DT) – Statutory

Guidance for School Governors (2009) and the Hertfordshire Policy Statement on Children Looked After and should be read in conjunction with it. The school has been issued with a copy of each document and may also refer to the Virtual School page on the Hertfordshire GRID for Learning.

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.

It is a statutory requirement that any young person identified as CLA should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). This must be completed within 14 days after going into care. It is the responsibility of the social worker, although the DT should be proactive. The plan should be drawn up in a PEP meeting with the DT, Social Worker, Carer and Young Person. Within Hertfordshire it is completed on a secure web based system and known as an ePEP.

## **The Policy**

### **The Objective:**

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

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

Nic Muncie

### **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 where relevant, accelerated;
- 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 is used to support the learning objectives for the student and measure the impact of how it is spent, with outcome 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 achievement and learning needs of CLA in their school.
- To act as an advocate for the children and young people in care;
- To ensure CLA are prioritised in school for any appropriate interventions and opportunities, eg. school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities.
- To track and support the educational progress of all CLA in order to inform the school's development plan;
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium funding to accelerate progress,
- To intervene if there is evidence of absence from school or internal truancy;
- To ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan are implemented fully, reviewed at termly and update the data. The social worker must sign off the reviewed document.
- PEP meetings to be held in the Autumn and Summer terms and that all relevant school staff are aware of the targets and next steps. At the meeting the next review/meeting date must be agreed.

- To complete the school section on the ePEP.
- To report to the Governing Body at least on an annual basis (preferably each term) on the outcomes for children looked after, using the CLA SEF.

#### *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 ensure that the Pupil Voice section of the Hertfordshire Personal Education Plan (or whichever Local Authority is responsible for the CLA) is completed for each child and is the result of a one to one meeting so that the views of the student are faithfully represented in the ePEP, both academic and behavioural.
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new CLA into the school.
- To develop in-school strategies to monitor, 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 Child Protection Plans
- To be the key point of contact for outside agencies, including the social worker.
- To attend or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings and statutory reviews.
- Before the PEP meeting contact Social Worker to arrange a date.
- Hertfordshire (or whichever Local Authority is responsible for the CLA) Virtual School will send a password for the ePEP and a linked adviser will be on the system.
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between schools, agencies and individuals, and report on the progress and attendance of all CLA on the school role to Hertfordshire Virtual School on a termly basis.

#### *Training:*

- To have completed the Training for Designated Teachers provided by Hertfordshire Virtual School.
- 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,
- To keep informed of any updated guidance from Hertfordshire Virtual School, DfE or other research or policy.

## **Governor**

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

Danni Harte

### **The role of that governor**

- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Challenge the SLT to monitor outcomes for CLA.

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 test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils.
- The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions.
- Pupil destinations after leaving the school.

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

- The National Curriculum.
- Public examinations.
- Additional interventions to support educational progress.
- Extra curricular activities.
- The most effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus 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

The named Governor will be expected to have completed training on the Education of Children Looked After (Governors edition). This training may be accessed via the Virtual School page on the GRID, or through governor training.

## **School Responsibility**

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

It is appropriate for a classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is in care 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 Children Looked After.

### **Admission Arrangements**

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/Social Worker as appropriate – but always involving someone with parental responsibility\*1. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan. An appropriate school induction will take place.

### **Involve 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.

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.

### **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 and if appropriate parent/s and the Virtual School.

Schools and education and social work colleagues within Children's Services should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual or a Statement Review and a Personal Education Plan meeting or review.

It is important to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if school is considering an change of course, there is a change of care placement or there are significant issues that will affect educational provision e.g.; behaviour or attendance.

## **Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures**

Each pupil in care will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is developed jointly by the Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This will identify specific areas of focus and include targets and associated action to improve the student performance or educational achievement. 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
- Extended learning opportunities;
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities;
- Special needs (if any);
- Attendance;
- Behaviour;

\*1

Education Law defines who is a parent very widely. It includes anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care for them. This means it is possible for someone who does not have parental responsibility to be a 'parent' because they have care of the child in question for example the foster carer.

Ref

Section 576 Education Act 1996

Children Act 1989 (amended)

'If this were my child' (Local Government Information Unit 2003)

The Pupil, Premium: How schools are using the pupil premium to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils (DfE 2012)

For more information please go to:

[www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool)