

Document produced by: L.Tether/S.Amstutz

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Child Looked After Policy

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 in Care that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. This policy sets out the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of looked after children and the procedures that will ensure participation in high quality teaching and learning and in making good or accelerated 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, and the Hertfordshire Policy Statement on Children in Care and should be read in conjunction with it. All schools have been issued with a copy of each document and may also refer to the Virtual School page on the Hertfordshire GRID for Learning, www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool. Marriotts School complies with this arrangement.

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 Hertfordshire, Felicity Evans 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 OBJECTIVE

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After (Post CLA) on the roll of the school.

The Designated Teacher for Child Looked After : Lesley Tether who is SENCo/DSL and Mental Health Lead

The Designated School Governor for CLA and Post CLA is Anne Lloyd

At Marriotts School we will create an environment where children looked after (CLA) and children previously looked after (Post-CLA) have access to excellent educational provision and are prioritised for additional support through school-based interventions, in accordance with the DfE Guidance Document for Designated Teachers - February 2018. We recognise that our school plays a vital role in providing a stable base for CLA and in promoting their academic, social and emotional development. We promote staff training in their specific needs, so that all adults are sensitive to the barriers to learning that CLA experience and feel able to support the children discretely and confidentially, as needs arise. Our school community aims to champion the needs of CLA to ensure they make rapid progress during their period in care.

Our Aims for CLA:

- to provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and Post CLA
- to narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and Post-CLA and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- that they benefit from school-based interventions, including 'Making Good Progress 121 Tuition', even if they do not meet the criteria for that and to use the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) to ensure effective impact
- for all CLA to have a minimum of three Personal Education Planning (ePEP) meetings in an academic year and for the joint planning to actively impact on each child's learning on a daily basis, to ensure accelerated and rapid progress
- for all adults to provide discreet, sensitive, child-led support, with one key adult identified who will form a strong relationship and take a special interest in daily life at school that school systems facilitate discrete support, as appropriate
- CLA will be advantaged within school policies and procedures, with their needs explicitly considered and provided for
- CLA and their foster families will feel part of the school community; they will be actively welcomed into the community in recognition of the particular needs of this group

Educational Planning for Children Looked After

Personal Education Plans (ePEP) and CLA Self Evaluation Forms (CLASEF):

The school will ensure that every CLA on roll has a Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting that is reviewed termly, within the statutory care planning framework, and in collaboration with the social worker, carer and other relevant professionals. The school will complete the CLASEF to inform the Hertfordshire Virtual School of the school's policy and practice, to account for the efficient and effective spend of the PP+ funding and to inform the school Governing Body as the annual report.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The **Headteacher** and **Governing Body** are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and Post-CLA. They will ensure that the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After has qualified teacher status, appropriate seniority in the leadership team and time and experience to fulfil this statutory role. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and Post-CLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receives appropriate training.

The Designated Teacher for Children Looked After is Lesley Tether.

She is a qualified assistant headteacher. She is supported by A CLA mentor who meets with the CLA students on a weekly basis and has admin support for collating and completing the PEP who is also a trained DT, As a team they will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and Post-CLA by:

- ensuring that the CLA or Post-CLA has access to quality first teaching
- tracking the progress of CLA and Post-CLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book scrutinies
- ensuring that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- performing a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensuring effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- developing expertise in the field of CLA
- providing and attending training and offering advice to all school staff
- promoting a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for CLA and Post CLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and Post-CLA and school resource and staff training needs for working with this group
- prioritising CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria
- ensuring that CLA and Post CLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their care status
- completing the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform the annual health review.
- ensuring that carers and care staff are engaged with the targets outlined in the PEP.

All staff will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and Post-CLA by:

- reading the school policy for CLA
- attending training, as appropriate
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher
- referring to the Designated Teacher for advice
- playing their part in creating a 'CLA-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for CLA by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available

Attendance:

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of CLA and Post-CLA to ensure good school attendance. Where there is a concern about attendance or punctuality the school contacts the carer, social worker and other professionals including the Virtual School, as an early intervention, as outlined in the attendance policy.

Admissions/ Transitions:

School procedures to support CLA during admission and transition include:

- prioritising CLA and Post-CLA at the point of admission

- the swift transfer of information between schools that may include school visits and at times of transition, teaching at the previous school
- early identification of staff mentor and peer buddy
- additional support and planning for CLA and Post-CLA at times of transition
- structured activities to 'say goodbye', in recognition of the impact of broken attachments and loss

Additional Educational Needs: The Graduated Approach:

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and Post-CLA with additional educational needs by:

- having high expectations
- ensuring that they are prioritised for additional school-based support, even if they do not meet the criteria
- ensuring that planning is coordinated, appropriate interventions identified and teaching to the plan is systematic; ensuring that any work undertaken by non-teaching staff has teacher over-sight
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, against the expectation of progress each academic year, as agreed in the termly Virtual School visit, ePEP and CLASEF

Special Educational Needs:

All Staff endeavour to secure accelerated and rapid progress for CLA and post CLA who have special educational needs by:

- adhering to graduated approach as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice
- having high expectation of minimum levels of progress each academic year (in line with the expectation set out in the ePEP and CLASEF)
- ensuring that all plans are coordinated, appropriate interventions identified, and teaching to the plan is systematic
- ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and reviewed, in line with the SEN Code of Practice
- Designated Teacher and SENCo monitor delivery of interventions and review outcomes with class teacher
- where an EHCP is in place, PEPs and EHCP should be aligned to avoid duplication

Safeguarding:

School staff will be vigilant for any safeguarding issues which can impact particularly on CLA and post CLA by: familiarising themselves with the school's child protection policy and the 'DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education' document (September 2018), if there are any safeguarding concerns.

Alternative Provision:

We will make every effort to ensure that any arrangements for provision, alternative to daily attendance at school, will be:

- a plan that will retain the CLA on the roll of the school or clarify in writing which educational establishment will be responsible for reporting and accountable for the PP+
- an agreed part of the overall ePEP for the student • full time (25 hours) or contribute to full time attendance and be of high quality
- meet the educational needs of the CLA or Post-CLA.

will be monitored regularly and that ePEPs will include the school and the alternative provider

Exclusion:

We will make every effort to avoid excluding a CLA, in recognition of the increased risk this poses in terms of them quickly disengaging from the school, due to their early experience of broken attachments and loss. Before acting, we will discuss the rationale for exclusion with the assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School. If there is no option other than exclusion, then we will make every attempt to reduce the number of days of the exclusion. School procedures are in place to reduce the risk of exclusion of CLA and Post-CLA. (Ref: DfE Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England: Statutory Guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion. September 2017)

Multi-Agency Working:

School staff will engage with colleagues from other agencies and facilitate their work. This should include: Virtual Schools, Social Care, health, carers. This will enable colleagues to successfully perform their roles and positively impact on the education and wider needs of CLA and Post-CLA.