

## Willowbrook School – Children in Care Policy

### Rationale

At Willowbrook School we believe that all Children in Care should have equitable access to excellent educational provision and achieve at a similar level to all Devon children. We as a community aim to be champions for Children in Care and take a proactive approach to support their success, recognising that, as Corporate Parents, we have a vital role to play in promoting children and young people's social and emotional development. To do this we commit to:

- Raising their aspirations.
- Giving them a sense of the control they have over their own lives.
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours.
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption.

### Definition

Who are our Children in Care?

Most Children in Care will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even be placed back at home with their parent(s) sharing parental responsibility with the Local Authority.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is in the care of the Local Authority if he or she is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the Authority. This includes the following:

- (a) Children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
- (b) Children who are the subject of a care order or interim care order;
- (c) Children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child.

### Legal Framework

Legislation and guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of children in Care. Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education for all children in Care.
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of children in Care.
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all children in Care.
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of all children in Care who are on the school roll.
- Develop effective systems of communications and protocols.
- Promote the attendance of children in Care.

## Objectives

At Willowbrook School we aim to ensure that those key qualities found by the DCSF (2009 i. & iii.) and Ofsted (2008 iii.) to be features of best practice in supporting children in Care are embedded in our practice.

In Supporting Children in Care we will:

- Create a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their role and accept their responsibility as a Corporate Parent.
- Provide a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Bring the educational attainments of our Children in Care in line with those of their peers.
- Make sure that they have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Balance high levels of support with challenge and high expectations.
- Plan for future transitions effectively.
- Have a Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and coordinate support for them, liaising with carers, parents (as appropriate) and social workers on a wide variety of educational and care issues.
- To support Every Child Matters five outcomes.

All staff and Governors are committed to ensuring improved educational life chances for Children in Care by ensuring that the relevant personnel have reasonable support and time to complete tasks and responsibilities. Also, to establishing and maintaining appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures both within the school and with other agencies.

In addition we will:

- Closely monitor the academic, social and personal progress of all children in Care.
- Work alongside social workers and other professionals to ensure that each child in Care has a current good quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place which includes challenging, curriculum-based targets and is an effective tool which supports the young person's educational progress.
- Ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used to provide additional, personalised support to improve outcomes for children in Care.
- Challenge negative stereotypes amongst students and staff.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and the background and family history of children who are in care, especially surrounding teaching and learning relating to the family.
- Ensure a clear protocol is followed in the sharing of information, both within school and with outside agencies.

In pursuit of this Policy we will:

- Nominate a Designated Teacher for Children in Care who will act as their advocate and co-ordinate support for them.
- Nominate a school governor to ensure that the needs of Children in Care in the school are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Teacher.
- Support the Designated teacher in carrying out their role by making time available and ensuring that they attend training on Children in Care.

## New Roles & Responsibilities

**Designated Teacher for Children in Care** (see Statutory Regulations from September 2009).

The name of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care is Kerry Yelland.

The role of the Designated Teacher is to:

- Promote the educational achievement of every Child in Care on the school's roll;
- Monitor the standards and achievement of Children in Care and evaluate these in line with the school's evaluation policy.
- Promote a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every Child in Care matters and their social, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.
- Facilitate the training of school staff in developing their understanding of the factors which can affect how Children in Care learn and develop.
- Contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put Children in Care at a disadvantage.
- Promote a culture in which Children in Care believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education.
- Promote a culture in which Children in Care are able to discuss their progress, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Be a source of advice for teachers about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are in Care.
- Make sure that Children in Care are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition or any other initiatives/interventions promoted by the Department for Education.
- Promote good home-school links through contact with Carers and effective communication.
- Set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all Children in Care.
- Work with curriculum-base leaders to monitor the educational progress of Children in Care and intervene, drawing upon external agency support if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy or other similar concern.
- Maintain records regarding all Children in Care, 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.
- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding Children in Care.
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of all Children in Care and ensure that information is shared on a strictly need to know basis.
- Play 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 statutory reviews of Children in Care as required.
- Serve as a named contact for colleagues in Social Care and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties.
- Ensure that strategies are in place for effective transfers and transitions between Key Stages and Year groups and schools where appropriate.
- Ensure that each child who is in Care has a carefully selected Key Worker.

The role of the Head-teacher:

- Ensure that, in partnership with the Governing body, the Designated Teacher has the opportunity to acquire and keep up to date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of Children in Care.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher role contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who is likely to be involved in supporting Children in Care to achieve.
- In partnership with the Governing body, monitor the effectiveness of the role of the Designated Teacher.
- Oversee the development of the policy on Children in Care.
- Wherever possible allocate Children in Care a Key Worker.
- Evaluate the standards and achievement of Children in Care and report these termly to the Governing Body and discuss them at Senior Leadership meetings.

## Governors

The name of the Designated Governor for Children in Care is: Jan Pearkes.

What every Designated Governor for CIC needs to know:

- Number of CIC on school roll.
- Number of CIC with up to date PEPs.
- Overall attainment of CIC in the school / performance compared to peers.
- Number of CIC with SEN and statements.
- Authorised and unauthorised absence levels of CIC.
- Number of CIC who have been excluded in previous 12 months.
- How LA supports educational achievement of CIC.

The Governing Body will:

- Appoint a Designated Teacher in accordance with the regulations published in September 2009.
- Ensure the Designated Teacher has opportunity to attend training and that school staff and Governors are aware of the DCSF Statutory Guidance.
- Have knowledge of the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Children in Care, under Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004.
- Appoint a Governor with specific responsibility for Children in Care.
- Take a proactive approach in cooperating with, and supporting, the relevant Local Authority with regard to the education of Children in Care attending the school.
- Ensure that Designated Teachers and staff are aware of and enabled to carry out their responsibilities effectively with the full support of the Head-teacher.
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place to keep themselves informed about provision for, and attainment of, Children in Care.

## The role of all those involved in supporting Children in Care

- Ensure that all Children in Care are treated inclusively.
- Have high expectations of Children in Care's involvement in learning and educational progress.
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families.
- Understand the reasons which may affect the behaviour of Children in Care and why they may need more support than other children/be positively discriminated for.

- Understand how important it is to see Children in Care as individuals and not to publicly treat them differently from their peers.
- Appreciate the central importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Child's in Care status.
- Understand what a PEP is and its importance in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, Social Workers and, depending on age and understanding, the child him/herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

## **Special Educational Needs/Gifted and talented (see our SEN and Gifted & Talented Policies)**

- Any special educational needs/gifted and talented abilities will be quickly identified and appropriate provision will be made.
- We will have systems in place so that we can identify and prioritise when Children in Care are underachieving and have early interventions to improve this.
- If the child has a statement of special educational need, we will ensure the annual review coincides with one of the six monthly care planning reviews; dates can be obtained from the social worker.

## **Admissions and Transitions**

We will:

- Prioritise Children in Care within our own admissions procedures and admit students as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Children in Care.
- Ensure that all Children in Care meet the Designated Teacher who will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral and seek agreement of the child as to who in school should be notified of the child's status.
- Ensure a warm welcome to our school by providing appropriate induction for all Children in Care so that there is a smooth and successful transition which includes carers and parents where appropriate.
- Make sure that on admission or transfer all relevant information records are obtained at the outset.
- Forward appropriate documents, in a timely fashion, to any receiving school at the point of transition where the receiving school is made known.
- Make every effort to provide continuity of schooling and educational experience.

## **Attendance** (see our Attendance Policy)

We will:

- Establish a first day of absence procedure where attendance is identified as a problem.
- Inform the Carer / Education Welfare service / Social Worker / Parents (if appropriate) if there are any concerns about attendance.
- We will acknowledge attendance in any education meetings, celebrating success and setting realistic targets if it is a concern.

## **Exclusion** (see our Behaviour Policy)

We will:

- Actively follow the DCC Eliminating the Exclusion of Children in Care Protocol.

## Multi-agency liaison

- We will support the child to engage fully in planning and decision making.
- The DT will liaise closely with carers, parents ( if appropriate) and the pupil's social worker on a variety of issues, including homework, kit and equipment required It is important that positive messages about behaviour and achievement are shared.
- There will be a well planned and co-ordinated approach to meeting the child's educational and social needs, for example, whether potentially disruptive changes in school can be prevented.
- There will be a clear understanding about the role and responsibility of staff in relation to the child and the roles and responsibilities of the other professionals involved.
- Our staff will share positive perceptions and high expectations of the child with other professionals but especially with the child.
- We will be aware of and sensitive to the appropriate role of the parents.
- Our DT will ensure that requests from the LA for statistical or other information held by the school are completed and returned on time to comply with statutory obligations.
- We will encourage each of our Children in Care to access out of hours learning activities realising the positive impact this could have on their self – esteem and learning.

## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

We will:

- Hold a PEP meeting in time for every statutory care review that involves the social worker, foster carers, child and parent if appropriate. Additional attendees may include e.g. Connexions, Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare officer etc. We will seek the views of the child as to appropriate attendees in line with the statutory guidance.
- Have a PEP for each child which includes appropriate targets. This will be compatible with the timing of the child's Care Plan. Other school plans e.g. Statement, Transition Plan, Pastoral Support Programme will feed into and form a part of the PEP.
- Contribute to the process whereby all Children in Care have a high quality Personal Educational Plan (PEP) in place within 20 days of starting the school. This will include SMART educational targets and will be linked to the child's Care Plan and any other plan resulting from the assessment of the child (IEP, PSP, Statement of Educational Need).
- Seek to nominate our Children in Care to DCC for the Children in Care Celebration of Achievement Event.
- Make certain that following the writing of a PEP, any educational recommendations in that PEP will be adhered to by our staff in order that all our Children in Care have the opportunity to fulfil and achieve the targets set.
- Ensure that Pupil Premium funding is carefully targeted at the Children in Care and identify clearly how the money is being spent and its impact in raising achievement.
- Make or support applications for a Personal Education Allowance (PEA) e.g. those who are at risk of underachieving academically or for extra curricular activities through discussions at PEP meetings.

## School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that Children in Care enjoy as many extra curricular opportunities as possible by reserving places for them on trips or enrichment activities for which they are eligible. The responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities is that of the Social Worker, sometimes delegated to Foster Carers. The person who may give permission will be clarified at the first PEP meeting.

## 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 alongside the carer and Social Worker.

## Related Documentation

- DfES, *Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care* (DH/DfES, 2000).
- *A Guide to the Law for School Governors* (2004).
- Children Act 1989; Children Act 2004.
- DfES, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (2004).
- DfES, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Social Care* (2004).
- DfES, *Statutory Guidance on the Duty of Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004* (2005).
- DfES, *Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors* (2006).
- Ofsted, *Raising Achievement of Children in Public Care* (2005).
- Social Exclusion Report, *A Better Education for Children in Care: Full Report* (2003).
- DfES, *Care Matters: Time For Change* (2007).
- DCSF, *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (2007).
- Looked after children – good practice in schools (2008)iii.
- DCSF, *The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for School Governing Bodies* (2009).
- DCC Eliminating Exclusions Protocol
- Ofsted, *Children's Messages to the Minister* (2009).
- DCSF, *Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report* (2009).
- Ofsted, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2008/09: Improving Outcomes for Looked after Children* (2009).
- DCSF, *Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children in Primary Schools: Guidance for Schools* (2009)i.
- DCSF, *Improving the Attainment of Looked After Children in Secondary Schools: Guidance for Schools* (2009)ii.

The head teacher and/or DT will be responsible for briefing all staff on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Date: January 2017 – Learning Committee

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