

English Martyrs Catholic Voluntary Academy
Looked After Children Policy



Adopted: 2019

Review: 2021

“We learn and grow as a family in the footsteps of children.”

Approved by: Head
Teacher and FGB.

Date: 2019

Last reviewed on:

Next review due by:
March 2021

Links to other policies : Admissions, Safeguarding, Behaviour, SEND

Introduction

Our school is key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children and those who have been previously looked after, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. At English Martyrs we 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 looked after and previously looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this. At English Martyrs Catholic Voluntary Academy each child is valued as a unique individual and in partnership with parents and parish the school tries to help the child develop fully as a person. Guided by Gospel values the school aims to provide a community in which the child will grow and experience the love of God, self and neighbour. This policy is carried out within the context and spirit of the school’s Mission Statement valuing all children equally and as individuals.

NB. This policy is designed to be read in conjunction with the school ‘Guidance for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After’ which provides the detail of school provision for CLA.

Definitions

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”.

A previously looked after child is one who is no longer looked after in England and Wales because he / she is the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person, or has been adopted from state care outside England and Wales.

A child is in state care outside England and Wales if he / she is in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

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 looked after children. (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018.)

Schools must:

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

Objectives

We will:

- Work alongside the Virtual School and social workers to ensure that each looked after child 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 National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra curricular 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 Local Authority'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.
- Endeavor to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic and spiritual potential.
- Provide a safe and secure environment where education is always central to the planning and all adults understand the specific needs of CLA and PLA
- Narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLA and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress
- Ensure that they benefit from school-based interventions, including 'Making Good Progress 121 Tuition', even if they do not meet the criteria for that intervention (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018) 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 (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018)
- 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 (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained

schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018.)

- 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 (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018).

Roles and Responsibilities

Many looked after and previously looked after children 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 Head Teacher and Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all looked after children and previously looked after have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher and Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with looked after children and previously looked after.

The Head Teacher and Governing Body are committed to promoting improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA. 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 fulfill this statutory role. They will monitor the role of the Designated Teacher to ensure that all CLA and PLA make accelerated and rapid progress and that the whole school staff receives appropriate training.

The named Governor should be satisfied that :

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

The Head teacher will :

- appoint the designated teacher
- ensure that the designated teacher has received appropriate training
- oversee the development of the policy on looked after and previously looked after children
- be responsible for all systems to support looked after and previously looked after children.

- report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
- the number of looked after and previously 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 will :

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 looked after and previously looked after children within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all looked after and previously looked after children in the school.

The Designated Teacher is a qualified teacher, and will promote improved educational life chances for CLA and PLA by:

- ensure that the CLA or PLA has access to quality first teaching
- track the progress of CLA and PLA across the curriculum using data, teacher reports and book looks
- ensure that the PP+ is used effectively and efficiently
- perform a coordinating role with school staff and outside agencies
- ensure effective communication with the school's assigned Education Adviser from the Virtual School
- develop expertise in the field of CLA
- provide and attend training and offering advice to the whole school staff
- promote a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for CLA and PLA
- regularly reporting to the Head and Governing Body on the attainment of CLA and PLA and school resource and staff training needs for working with this group
- prioritise CLA for school-based additional support, even when the young person does not meet the criteria (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018).

- ensure that CLA and PLA are not overlooked for positions of student responsibility within the school because of their care status
- complete the annual Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) of each CLA as requested, to inform their annual CLA health review.

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

- reading the 'school policy' and 'school policy guidance document' 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 an attachment and trauma-informed 'CLA-friendly' culture and securing rapid progress for CLA by ensuring that they benefit from any additional school-based support available

The Designated Teacher at English Martyrs CVA is Mrs Alison Chambers.

Attendance

School attendance procedures reflect the specific needs of CLA and PLA 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.

Exclusion

We have reviewed the school behaviour policy in line with the statutory guidance published in February 2018 (DfE Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance for local-authority-maintained schools carrying out duties for looked-after and previously looked-after children. 28th February 2018). 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 PLA. CLA and PLA with special educational needs should have exclusion as a behaviour management action as a last possible resort (Regulation 4(1)(c) of the Equalities Act 2010 which means that a head teacher could only lawfully exclude a child for a reason relating to their disability, even a

disability that results in the child having a tendency to physical abuse, if reasonable adjustments have been made).

Safeguarding

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

Personal Education Plans

Each Looked After child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which the virtual school 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 academic progress and attainment
- attendance
- 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 SMART targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

Admission / Induction Arrangements.

Looked after and previously looked after children are a priority for admission as stated through our 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 a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

School Trips and Special Activities

Given the delays that looked after children experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that looked after children enjoy the same extra curricular opportunities as other children by supporting with arrangements in any way we can. We also aim to ensure that the same extra curricular opportunities are also extended to previously looked after children.

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 working 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remains 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.

Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed by the designated teacher for LAC annually and every three years by the governing body.

The Rutland Virtual School for Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After

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