



English Martyrs Catholic Voluntary Academy
Policy for Looked After Children and
Previously Looked After Children.



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

Approved by: Head
Teacher.

Date: March 2021

Last reviewed on:
March 2021

Next review due by:
March 2024

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

Designated teachers :Alison Chambers (HT) and Catherine Scott(SENDCO)

Designated governor : Sue Hooley

Rationale

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.

This policy is designed to be read in conjunction with the statutory 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. A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into 4 main groups :

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- Children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated – this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a children's home, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis under supervision. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are accommodated by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act, they may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school. All these groups are said to be looked after children. They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care. 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".

LAC reviews involving the school will take place up until an adoption order has been granted. However, pupil premium plus funding will continue t LAC until they are 16 years old.

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.

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.)

Every local authority is required to appoint an officer to make sure that their duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC and PLAC is properly discharged; this officer is called the Virtual School Head. The duties of the VSH are defined in the DfE statutory guidance “ Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children” 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 trancies 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

Aims

We will:

- Provide a safe and secure environment where education is valued and there is a belief in the abilities and potential of all children.
- Support our looked after children and give them access to every opportunity to achieve to their potential, enjoy learning and take as full a part as possible in all school activities.
- 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 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.
- Narrow the gap between the attainment of CLA and PLA and their peers, ensuring accelerated and rapid progress.
 - Ensure that all CLA benefit from school-based interventions and the allocated Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) has maximum impact directly linked to SMART targets within the statutory termly PEP process
- 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
- 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

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
- lead on developing and implementing the PEP within the school. Monitor the school based targets on the PEP and extend these targets if they have been achieved.
 - 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, offering advice to the whole school staff around understanding the issues that can affect the learning of LAC.
- promote a school culture which is supportive and has high expectations for CLA and PLA
- regularly report 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).
- Promote good home school links and the importance of education as a way of improving life chances for LAC.

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. Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievement of LAC and PLAC as for all children and work to ensure they have stability and success at school.
- providing accurate information and data when asked by the Designated Teacher. Use effective classroom strategies to meet the needs of LAC and PLAC and be aware that some curriculum content may trigger difficult emotions such as discussion on family.
- referring to the Designated Teacher for advice appreciating the importance of the LAC child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly the child's own understanding of how they are being supported.
- 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

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 2020, 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. A PEP will be initiated within 20 days of the LAC starting at the school or being taken into care and will be reviewed regularly and as necessary (at least termly and within 6 months of the previous PEP).

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.

Pupil Premium Plus (PPP)

PPP for LAC will be delegated to schools by the relevant virtual school. We will allocate the PPP to support appropriate provision for individual LAC, meeting the objectives set out in this policy and the child's PEP. We will work in partnership with the child's virtual school to ensure that LAC receive the full range of support to which they are entitled to enable them to make progress and achieve in all aspects of school life.

For PLAC the PPP funding will go directly to the school's budget if the child is listed as PLAC on the January census. The use of this funding will be identified in consultation with the young person and their parents.

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.)

Confidentiality

Many LAC do not want school staff or other children to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel different. We will maintain and respect the children's confidentiality in consultation with the social worker, carer, young person and other parties. Once this has been agreed, complete confidentiality is to be maintained and information on LAC will be shared with school staff on a need to know basis. All staff will do their utmost to maintain the child's confidentiality eg avoiding reference to their care status / PEP meetings in front of their peers.

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 HT and the designated teacher for LAC every three years.

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