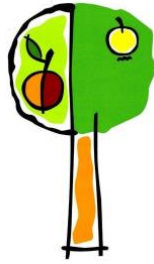


Sefton Park Infant and Junior Schools



Policy for Supporting Children in Care and Children Previously Looked After

Introduction

At Sefton Park Infant and Junior Schools we believe that all Children in Care (CiC), and those previously looked after (PLAC), should have equitable access to excellent educational provision. As a community we aim to be champions for these children and take a proactive approach to supporting their success, recognising that we have a vital role to play in promoting their educational achievement and social and emotional development. These children may have very specific needs and may be coping with trauma, abuse or rejection, and are likely to experience personal distress and uncertainty. We believe multi-agency working is key to effective safeguarding and child protection. Children and their families will access a range of services throughout a child's life. It's vital that as a school we work together with other agencies to gain a full overview of a child's situation and have a coordinated approach to support.

We aim to overcome their barriers to learning and enable them to leave us happy and secure in themselves, understanding that they do have control over their destiny and that education does matter. We will listen to what they tell us about what they want from their education and try to address any concerns or issues raised through various means including the Children in Care Council and surveys from The HOPE, Bristol's Virtual School.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/business/schools-learning-and-early-years-for-professionals/the-hope-virtual-school>

School Commitment

Nationally, 'Children in Care' (CIC) and 'Previously Looked After Children' (PLAC) significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by their experiences, and compounded by instability in their personal circumstances. 75% of CIC and PLAC leave education with no formal qualifications. Only 12% go on to further education compared with 68% of the general population. Helping disadvantaged children succeed and providing a better future for them is a key priority in our school.

To do this we commit to:

- Being trauma-informed;
- Ensuring that a Personal Education Plan is up-to-date and of a high standard;
- Supporting Children in Care to raise their aspirations and ambition;
 - Giving children and young people a sense of the control they have over their own lives;
- Having 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;
- Ensuring that the Designated Teacher contributes to the deeper understanding of everyone in the school who may be to be involved in supporting Children in Care to achieve, so that each staff member keeps Children in Care in mind;
- Fostering positive attitudes and behaviours;
- Providing continuity and 'normality' for those who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse and disruption;
- Ensuring that they have a trusted adult who they feel they can go to for support during the school day;
- Ensuring they have the best provision the school can offer to help them make good progress in all areas;
- Working closely with the Virtual School, Carers and Social Workers;
- Ensuring a whole school ethos in which all staff understand their responsibility in supporting the role of Corporate Parent;
- Providing a safe and secure environment, which values education and believes in the abilities and potential of all children;
- Bringing the educational attainments of our Children in Care in line with those of their peers;
- Making sure that Children in Care have access to education appropriate to their age and ability. This includes access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- Balancing high levels of support with challenge and high expectation to ensure rapid progress;
- Ensuring that their Pupil Premium Plus funding is used to provide additional, personalised support as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP);
- Closely monitoring each child's attendance and academic progress, working and sharing information in a timely manner with the Virtual School to help ensure each child achieves the best possible educational outcomes;
 - Intervening promptly if a problem emerges such as with behaviour or attendance;
- Engaging with interventions provided by the Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service to avoid exclusion;
- Giving integrated but low profile support in school for each child in care so that they are not made to feel different from other children;
- Planning for future transitions e.g. to secondary school.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All CiC must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the Local Authority (Social Worker) which looks after them. The care plan must include a Personal Education Plan, which forms part of the child's official school record. The school and the Local Authority have a shared responsibility for making sure that the PEP is a useful document and for helping children in care to achieve and enjoy. Discussion about how together they can make that happen through the content, implementation and review of the PEP

should be done through a meeting involving the young person, carers, the social worker, a teacher and others such as, where appropriate, staff from The HOPE Virtual School. If the young person has an Education Health and Care Plan this should be reviewed annually and should, where possible, tie in with the PEP. Full guidance on PEP meetings and how to use the PEP is provided on the [CiC education web pages](#).

Previously looked after pupils will either have a PEP involving carers; or the class teacher will have termly meetings with the Designated Teacher or Pupil Premium Lead depending upon needs. The DT and PP Lead will discuss children on roll identified as PLAC.

1:1 Tuition

Research has shown that children in care benefit from one to one tuition in English and/or maths, even if they appear to be progressing in line with age related expectations. This school is committed to prioritising all children in care for one to one tuition where age-appropriate. This is in discussion with our Pupil Premium and Assessment lead, Alex Powell, to ensure the best and most appropriate options can be considered.

Additional funding (Pupil Premium Plus)

Children in care are entitled to additional funding to help improve their outcomes and narrow the gap between their outcomes and those of their peers. Which young people are eligible and the amount of such funding available will be determined as a result of government policy.

The school is committed to ensuring effective use of this dedicated funding where available for all eligible children in care on roll to provide additional, personalised support to ensure accelerated progress in order to improve outcomes. This is in discussion with our Pupil Premium lead Alex Powell to ensure the best and most appropriate options can be considered.

The appropriate use of allocated funding is to be assessed through the Personal Education Plan. The HOPE Virtual School for Children in Care expects 80% of CiC Pupil Premium money to be spent on improving outcomes in English and/or maths.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children in care are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the statutory guidance on school admissions. The designated teacher will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel supported in our school. On admission, records will be requested from the child's previous school. Careful understanding and care is given to the adults that are legally able to be in contact with the child. Any court orders or prohibited steps orders are implemented and all relevant adults informed to ensure all safeguarding risks are assessed. As soon as practicable after the records are received, a meeting will be held with the carer/parent, social worker, other relevant professionals and the child, as appropriate, to put together a new Personal Education Plan. This early meeting will ensure that communication systems are established early. If records are not received promptly we will undertake our own

assessment to make sure that the teaching and support received are appropriate. We will endeavour to meet the statutory time scales for PEPs as outlined in guidance.

When children already on school roll enter care the school will ensure that the student meets with the Designated Teacher as soon as possible and is fully informed of the school procedures. Consideration of supportive learning materials which the school can provide are discussed alongside the donation of school uniform to ensure the child feels a sense of belonging.

A meeting with other parties will be arranged and a PEP prepared as soon as possible, in the same way as for those children already in care admitted to school.

At 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 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).

Many children in care 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 recognise that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

Carers of previously looked after children will be offered a meeting to discuss their child's story and needs.

School Trips and Special Activities

We aim to ensure that children in care enjoy as many extra curricular opportunities as possible by reserving placements for them on trips or enrichment activities which they are eligible for and allowing sufficient time to gain the necessary consent. The responsibility for giving permission for school trips and enrichment opportunities is that of the social worker, although they often delegate this to foster carers. The person who may give permission will be clarified at the first PEP meeting. If in doubt we will always send consent forms to the social worker.

Given the delays that children in care experience in getting parental consent for school trips and activities, we will aim to ensure that children in care enjoy the same extra curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on trips or on activities.

Leaving Arrangements

When a child in care leaves the school we will find ways to say goodbye, even if we have to do this after they have gone. We will also ensure the swift transfer of information to the next school.

Legal Framework

From 1 September 2009 all Governing Bodies were required under the Childrens and Young Persons Act of 2008, to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care.

Emily Shuker is the Designated Teacher at Sefton Park Schools.

The Families Act of 2014 also required all Local Authorities to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the educational achievement of Children in Care was seen as a priority and to ensure arrangements were in place to improve their educational outcomes;

James Gregory is the Head teacher at the Hope School, Bristol's Virtual School

Previous 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;

The 2018 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities extended some responsibilities to Children Previously in Care. These responsibilities are not as extensive as those for Children in Care but the expectation is that there is a Designated Teacher and the likelihood is that it would be the same person as for Children in Care. Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children DfE February 2018.

Complaints

If a young person, parent/carer 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 the social worker.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days, unless the formal complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, in which case the complaint will go straight to the chair of governors.

Any issues that remain 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 Headteacher's response.

Pupils who wish to make a formal complaint against the school or about their care will be advised of the support available for children in care through Reconstruct (contact yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk).

Roles and responsibilities

The Role of the Governing Body

The Governor with special responsibility for children in care in this school is Amy Campbell

- The governing body will ensure that the Designated Teacher and the named governor undertake appropriate training. The named governor's details will be on the school website.
- Ensure that the Designated Teacher is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Governors will consider an annual report from the Designated Teacher covering attainment, attendance, progress, Personal Education Plans, CiC with Special Educational Needs and Disability and how the school supports the work of The HOPE (Bristol's virtual school).

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/the-hope/schools-education-settings/how-to-support-children-in-care>

- The governing body, Headteacher and senior leadership team will act on any issues raised in the report and will ensure that:
- the school has a clear overview of the educational needs and progress of CiC on roll;
- the school's policies are effective in reflecting the needs of CiC;
- resources are allocated to support the Designated Teacher to carry out this role effectively for the benefit of CiC.

The role of the Headteacher

- To 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.
- To make sure 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.
- Evaluate the standards and achievement of CiC and report these termly to the governing body and discuss them at Core SIO/HOPE meetings.
- Ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to attend training courses etc. that help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to support children in care.

The role of the Designated Teacher within the school

The Designated Teacher (DT) has lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the things which affect how CiC learn and achieve.

- The DT will: promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how CiC learn
- promote the educational achievement of every child in care on the school's roll
- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put children in care at a disadvantage

Emily Shuker Designated Safeguarding Lead June 2024

- make sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures in place to support children in care's learning make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets
- be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Quality First Teaching
- make sure that CiC are prioritised in one to one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the school
- set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children in care and establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer
- act as the named contact for colleagues in social care and health and ensure effective communication between all relevant parties
- have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how children in care learn and achieve
- ensure that the school file for CiC holds all the essential information; a template for which can be found on this web page:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/the-hope/about-the-hope/guidance-and-policies>

- arrange for a mentor or peer mentor for each child in care on the roll of the school
- have due regard for the [Expectations HOPE Virtual School 2021.pdf](#) produced by The HOPE Virtual School.

- ***The role of all those involved in supporting children in care***
- Ensure that all children in care are made to feel welcome and included.
- 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 be behind a child in care's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children.
- 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 in care's 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 or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential.

Annex 1 – Definitions and complaints procedure Children in care

The terms Looked After Child (LAC) and child in care (CiC) are interchangeable. For the purposes of this policy we are using the term CiC. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority.

They include the following:

- (i) children who are accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents;
- (ii) children who are the subject of a care order or interim care order;
- (iii) children who are the subject of emergency orders for the protection of the child;
- (iv) children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement.

A looked after child may be in residential care, a foster placement or could be living with their parents. If living with their parents, this could be on a part time basis or possibly before returning home permanently after a care placement.

Sources of guidance and support:

Bristol City Council:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/the-hope/schools-education-settings>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/the-hope/about-the-hope/guidance-and-policies>

Written by Emily Shuker

Approved by Standards & Curriculum Committee

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