



Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School

Children Looked After Policy
(covering children in care, children adopted from care
and children under special guardianship)

January 2018

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, different family situation, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. All schools should have a policy for Children Looked After that is subject to review and approval by the Governing Body. The policy should set out not only the ethos of the school in its approach to meeting the needs of children looked after by a local authority but also the procedures that will ensure participation in high quality learning and 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

We also recognise that when a child is adopted from care their needs do not stop.

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 'Children Looked After' under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, the Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher - Statutory Guidance for School Governors (2009) and the Hertfordshire Policy Statement on Children Looked After 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.

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.

Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and emotional welfare of children looked after (including children who have been adopted) on the roll of Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School. To recognise and meet their additional individual needs.

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After at Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School:

- Mrs. Wendy Griffin

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After

Within School Systems:

- To ensure that the educational achievement of each child looked after on roll is monitored, tracked and promoted and where relevant, accelerated, and in the case of children adopted from care, to continue with the ASP post adoption.
- To advise on most effective use of the Pupil Premium during the Personal Education Planning meeting (ePEP).
- To ensure that the Pupil Premium funding and additional budget share funding where relevant is used to support the learning objectives for the student and to be accountable for how it is spent with outcome evidenced and shared with those with "parental responsibility" for the child.
- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by children and young people 'in care' or adopted and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.
- To ensure that the relevant class teacher(s) have appropriate background information in liaison with the child's carer and appropriate authorities. To ensure that trust and strong attachments are established in the classroom and recognise that this may be necessary before educational progress can be made.
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of children who are in care or who have been adopted, and their emotional needs and sensitivities, and to promote the involvement of these children in school clubs, extra curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc, whilst also acknowledging that different strategies and approaches may sometimes be necessary;

- To act as an advocate for children and young people in care (and adopted);
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers and colleagues in Children's Services, (CS) and birth parents where appropriate
- To hold a supervisory brief for all children in care and who have been adopted, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff where relevant and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date, used on a need to know basis to help the student overcome obstacles to learning and progress;
- To track and support the educational progress of all children who are looked after and who have been adopted in order to inform the school's development plan;
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement by use of the Pupil Premium funding to accelerate progress,
- To intervene if there is evidence of absence from school or internal truancy;
- To inform the planning and transition for children looked after.
- To provide support for new adopters, who may have no prior experience of the current educational system, especially if a child is joining mid-year.
- To ensure that the educational targets within the Personal Education Plan (ePEP) are implemented fully, reviewed regularly and that all relevant school staff are aware of them.
- To report to the Governing Body at least on an annual basis (preferably each term) on the outcomes for children looked after.
- To have completed the iLearn on-line learning module/s specifically for Designated Teachers, liaise with the Virtual Schools and to attend other training as appropriate.
- To support children looked after, and those recently adopted from care, as they make the transition to the Junior School.
- To support the Quality Assurance Process for ePEPs and for schools on the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with children looked after.

Work with Individual Children Looked After:

- To discuss with individual children, where appropriate alongside a carer, to arrive at a statement about their care arrangements and circumstances (life story) that they would be happy to share with staff and/or pupils. Continue this dialogue with children and parents / carers as developments occur. Adoptive parents to share 'life story' of child/ren if appropriate.
- To enable the child to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan;
- To ensure that the Pupil Voice section of the Hertfordshire Personal Education Plan is completed for each child and is the result of a one to one meeting so that the views of the student are faithfully represented in the ePEP.
- To ensure that a Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer and signed by the Social Worker;
- To supervise the smooth induction of a new child looked after into the school.
- To develop in-school strategies to track, promote and accelerate the achievement of looked after children and close the gap between them and their peers. Find, use and develop tools and strategies to help children to help themselves.
- To fully support additional learning opportunities that may be available from the Virtual School and partner agencies.

Liaison:

- To liaise with the member of school staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Plan.
- To develop good communication with Children's Services, (CS) staff so that the Personal Education Plan (ePEP) is supported by the child's Care Plan;
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings and statutory reviews.
- To be named contact for colleagues in Children's Services, (CS)
- To ensure the speedy transfer of information between schools, agencies and individuals, and report on the progress and attendance of all children in care on the school role to the Virtual School as requested - attainment termly and attendance each month.

Training:

- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.
- To attend the annual Designated Teachers conference and participate in area cluster groups for additional training and to share good practice.
- To develop knowledge of procedures by attending training events organised by the Children's Services, (CS), the Virtual School or local Designated Teachers cluster groups.
- To complete the iLearn on-line learning module and regular updates.
- To keep informed of any updated guidance from DfE or other research or policy.

Governors

The name of two Governors with special responsibility for Children Looked After in Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School:

- Mrs Penny Carr and Mrs Amanda Young

The role of the Governors:

The named governors will report to the Governing Body on an annual basis using the report from the Designated Teacher as source information:

- The number of looked after pupils in the school.
- A comparison of test scores as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils (differentiating between authorised and unauthorised absence where appropriate).
- The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions
- Pupil destinations after leaving the school

The named governors should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedures ensure that looked-after pupils (and adopted) have equal access to:

- The National Curriculum;
- Public examinations;
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. One to One tuition
- Careers and Youth Connexions guidance;
- Additional education support;

- Extra-curricular activities
- The most effective use of the Pupil Premium to raise attainment

The named *Governors* are encouraged to support the Quality Assurance Process for schools on the implementation of the role and responsibility of the Designated Teacher working with children looked after if offered to ensure and confirm the schools' best practice.

The named *Governor* will be expected to have completed the iLearn on-line learning module on the Education of Children Looked After (*Governors edition*). This training may be accessed via the Virtual School page on the GRID, or www.learningpool.com/hertfordshire.

School Responsibility

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority (or has been adopted) and that this may mean particular sensitivities towards some topics at school, or at certain times of the year. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

It is appropriate for a classroom support assistant to have knowledge that the young person is in care (or has been adopted) only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person. In conjunction with a child's carers, it may be decided that this information can be shared further, if it is in the best interests of the child.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. If possible, the child and their carer should be informed of this change in a timely manner, especially if it is thought necessary to help the child prepare for the change. The extent of this sharing, should be determined by the Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/Social Worker as appropriate - but always involving someone with parental responsibility*1. This will provide information to inform the Personal Education Plan (ePEP). An appropriate school induction will take place.

Involvement of the Young Person

In consultation with parents / carers, it is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding, especially bearing in mind that we are an Infant and Nursery School. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

It is important that the young person is supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the Personal Education Plan (ePEP) by the Designated Teacher to inform the ePEP and Care Plan review meetings.

It is important to establish the child's view of their changed circumstances and what they want others to know. It is also important to ensure that a Social Worker/teacher/carer prepares the child for situations when they may be asked about home, e.g. by other pupils in the playground.

Communication with Other Agencies

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. End of year reports) should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the foster carer or Residential Social Worker and if appropriate parent/s and the Virtual School.

Schools and education and social work colleagues within Children's Services should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings, e.g. to have an Annual or a Statement Review and a Personal Education Plan meeting or review.

It is important to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if school is considering a change of course, there is a change of care placement or there are significant issues that will affect educational provision eg; behaviour or attendance. This can be done through the ePEP so all parties are aware.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each pupil in care will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (ePEP) that is developed by the Young person, carer, Social Worker and Designated Teacher. This will identify specific areas of focus and include targets and associated action to improve the student's performance or educational achievement. Areas for consideration will include:

- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise)
- Development needs (short and long term development of skills, knowledge or subject areas and experiences)
- Long term plans and aspirations (targets including progress, career plans and aspirations).
- Educational Data so that progress may be easily tracked between Key Stages
- Extended learning opportunities.
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities
- Special needs (if any)
- Attendance
- Behaviour

The ePEP will be updated and reviewed at least annually or at the point of any major change and contribute to the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Designated Teacher is accountable for the implementation and review of the educational action to meet the targets within the Plan.

The named governors will report annually to the Governing Body on the progress of all children looked after against the key indicators outlined above.

*1 Education Law defines who is a parent very widely. It includes anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care for them. This means it is possible for someone who does

not have parental responsibility to be a 'parent' because they have care of the child in question for example the foster carer.

Ref
Section 576 Education Act 1996
Children Act 1989 (amended)
'If this were my child' (Local Government Information Unit 2003)
The Pupil, Premium: How schools are using the pupil premium to raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils (DfE 2012)

For more information please go to:

www.thegrid.org.uk/virtualschool

