



Children who are Looked After Policy

Designated Teacher for Looked After & Previously Looked After Children: Mrs Sonya Elliott &
Miss Natalie Rock

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Policy review frequency: Every 2 years

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Introduction

“An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter. Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties. This does not mean treating all pupils in the same way. Rather it involves taking account of pupils' varied life experiences and needs.”

The above quote is taken from ‘Evaluating Educational Inclusion – Guidance for Inspectors and Schools’ (DfES 2012) and forms the rationale for this policy.

Stoke Park School believes that as Corporate Parents we have a special duty to safeguard and promote the education of Children Who are Looked After, or have been previously Looked After.

Definition

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after if s/he is in the care of, or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by, a local authority. The term 'Child who is Looked After' (CLA) refers to:

- (i) Children accommodated by the Local Authority under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- (ii) Children subject to a care order (section 31.1) or interim care order (section 38)
- (iii) Children who are subject to emergency orders for the protection of the child (section 44)

In the statutory guidance “The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children” (Feb, 2018), children who have been ‘previously looked-after’ are defined as those who are no longer looked after because they became subject to:-

- i) an adoption order, ii) a child arrangement
- iii) a special guardianship order.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to promote educational inclusion for CLA, to enable them to access the full range of educational opportunities available to them and to reach their potential, both academically and personally.

Objectives

CLA in this school will

- receive an appropriate level of monitoring and support

- have access to the full range of educational and extra-curricular opportunities

The Governors:

- will ensure that there is a qualified and experienced member of staff named as the **Designated Teacher (DT)** for CLA, and that s/he is enabled to carry out his/her responsibilities.
- ensure that the DT has access to appropriate training, and has sufficient time to carry out duties and to receive support
- support the Head, DT and other members of staff in ensuring the needs of CLA are met, and in particular to have a named governor for CLA.
- receive as a minimum an annual report from the DT (see Appendix 3)
- will support the local authority in its statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of CLA

The Head:

- will ensure that the DT carries out their role to the highest possible standard, as outlined in Appendix 1
- will ensure that all staff, led by the DT, fulfil their roles and responsibilities so that CLA at Stoke Park become the best they possibly can be

The Designated Teacher (DT):

- will ensure that all staff are fully aware and up to date with information about their roles and responsibilities regarding CLA as outlined in appendix 2
- ensure CPD to keep staff, including new staff, fully informed about CLA

All Staff:

- will ensure they know and fulfil their roles and responsibilities relating to CLA
- be fully aware of the information relating to CLA (Appendix 4)
- know who CLA are, and do all they professionally can to support CLA

APPENDIX 1

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER (DT) FOR CLA IN THE SCHOOL

The Role of the Designated Teacher is:

- To promote a culture in which CLA believe they can succeed, and aspire to further training, education and higher education, and/or employment.
- To maintain an up to date register of CLA and inform colleagues on a need to know basis. Sensitivity and confidentiality are critical.
- To attend relevant training so that they are aware of statutory responsibilities and procedures for CLA.
- Ensure that they keep the school up to date with current legislation and its implications for the school in respect of CLA.
- To understand the impact of trauma, loss and separation and how this can affect behaviour. Including how attachment styles can affect their learning.
- To co-ordinate/deliver training to staff, (teaching and non-teaching), and governors so they are aware of the complex issues and educational disadvantage affecting many CLA and young people. To understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome any disadvantages, and the need to promote the involvement of CLA in, for example: school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, student voice.
- Report to the Governing Body annually on the performance of the CLA who are on the roll of the school.
- To ensure all teachers know when there is a CLA in their class, and what that child's specific needs are. This does not mean that all staff are informed about the child's Looked After status, or that they are given all details.
- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, social care colleagues and other Children's Services professionals who support the child.
- To oversee the most effective use of the designated Pupil Premium Funding for each CLA, to support the learning objectives for that student and to be accountable for how the funding is spent with outcomes evidenced.
- To be the first point of contact for other professionals working with CLA, and ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies. To ensure in conjunction with the social worker, that all relevant education and care information is available at the point of admission into the school so that appropriate placement can occur. Where a child leaves the school, to pass the child's records to the social worker if possible, so as to avoid admission delays with the new school. Where difficulties arise in obtaining information from a previous school, the Virtual School (formerly Looked After Children Educational Services) can help to obtain this information.

- To monitor the educational progress of all CLA in order to inform the school's development plan. To ensure that all CLA have targets which although realistic are also challenging. The targets should reflect the high expectations we hold about CLA.
- Ensure the child, carer(s), social worker and other relevant parties receive early notification of school-based meetings, parents evenings and other events and that communication, both written and verbal, remains regular and positive.
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, repeated or sustained absence, internal truancy or risk of exclusion.
- To identify with teachers the student's strengths and gaps in learning, and any barriers to learning. This should form the basis of the PEP, or the refinement of it.
- To ensure the young person has an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP). If not, then to arrange the meeting in partnership with the child's social worker. The DT will ensure that the school has updated information on the child's attainment, progress and educational needs, regardless of whether a PEP meeting has been arranged.
- To ensure that the actions identified in the plan are implemented and reviewed at least annually, but preferably termly.
- To facilitate the completion of the student section of the PEP.
- Ensure that someone is available to attend CLA Reviews on each child/young person and/or always prepares a written report which promotes the continuity and stability of their education.
- To supervise admission of new CLA and ensure appropriate induction and transition support into school. It is important that each CLA starts school with the correct uniform and a school planner where appropriate. Most CLA do not want to be identified as different, and it is important that all staff respect this.
- To consider, wherever possible:
 - o that the child starts school on the same day that another child is admitted
 - o that they have a 'buddy' allocated from the first day
 - o that they know where to go to report to, in the event of any difficulties that may arise.
- Ensure that each CLA has an identified member of staff they can talk to. This need not be the Designated Teacher, but should be based on the child's own wishes. *Members of staff who take on this role should link closely therefore with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and DT.*
- Ensure that CLA play a full and active part in the life of the school and have access to extended school provision where required.

- Ensure that if/when the child transfers to another school, all relevant information is forwarded to the receiving school with minimal delay.
- If a CLA on roll moves educational setting, the DT will advise the social worker about the likely impact of a move on the child's education and what should be done to minimise this.
- To liaise with the appropriate Virtual School team member for the termly monitoring of the CLA in the school.
- To contact/liaise with the Virtual School if a CLA in the school needs extra support
- If a CLA returns home, their educational needs are unlikely to have changed. The DT will liaise with/hand-over monitoring and support to the relevant year team in order to ensure that the child's needs continue to be met.

APPENDIX 2

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER STAFF

The school staff will:

- Ensure any child in care is sensitively supported and that confidentiality is maintained.
- Have high aspirations for the educational and personal achievements of CLA.
- Respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of Personal Education Plans and other documentation needed as part of review meetings.
- Contribute to the Designated Teacher's requests for information on educational attainment and needs, as appropriate.
- Attend CLA Reviews as a professional with direct understanding of the child/young person's educational needs, where appropriate, and as indicated by the DT.
- Be aware of challenging behaviours that can result from trauma. Adapt behaviour management strategies in response to any challenging behaviour resulting from re-triggering of trauma. And seek advice from the DT, as needed.
- Provide a supportive climate in school, enabling children in care to achieve stability.
- As a corporate parent, make additional efforts to communicate to CLA students your belief in their ability to achieve.

Appendix 3

DESIGNATED TEACHER ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNORS

Governors must receive as a minimum an annual report from the DT. The report should typically include:

- The number of CLA in the school
- A clear overview of the educational needs and levels of progress of CLA in the school ☐
Attendance and fixed term exclusion compared to the whole school population
- Any SEN
- Whether any CLA are gifted or talented
- Destinations of CLA who leave the school
- Ensure that school policies and procedures give CLA equal access and/or positively discriminate CLA by prioritising their needs eg:

- Transition support
 - Public examinations
 - Additional support
 - Curriculum planning
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Work experience and career guidance
- How the teaching and learning needs of CLA are reflected in school development plans.
 - Whether the school is making full use of all available resources, in order to maximise opportunity for CLA to make the progress equal to other students of the same age.
 - As part of arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the role, the report should enable the Governing body to make overall judgments about the DT role in the context of wider school planning.

Appendix 4

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLA

Confidentiality

The DT will decide, in conjunction with relevant local authority staff, their approach to sharing sensitive information about an individual child. This is not just about keeping records but also about a child's identity in school. Many CLA are reluctant for information to be known, as they may feel stigmatised or different because they do not live with their families. For other children there will be official requirements that their status is not identified. All staff must be sensitive to the degree of information disclosure needed, according to the case and situation. All effort is taken to fully include the CLA in the school and local community, and steps are taken to avoid stigmatising. For example, the DT will address any parental or community concerns with individuals, on an 'as and when basis'. Teaching staff will address any issues or prejudice amongst students through the curriculum, (preferably when the CLA is not present).

Where information is shared by selected staff, the young person is made aware of this, although how this is shared with them will depend on their age and understanding. (The explanation should emphasise that the school, social worker and carers are working together to promote the young person's education). For a child who is newly looked after, it is likely to be important to establish his/her view of their changed circumstances, and to monitor how this impacts on their behaviour, attendance and performance.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are likely to have English as an Additional Language and associated learning needs. They have often experienced trauma both in their home country and/or on route to the UK. This group of young people are often at risk of exploitation prior to being taken into care. School will seek support from the Local Authority Ethnic Minority Achievement Service where appropriate and consider EAL support. All UASC will need access to enriched language environments. This needs to be carefully planned for, and a tailored timetable will be provided to meet each individual learner's needs. School staff will work closely with the care placement to help meet the student's cultural, social, emotional and personal development needs.

Private Fostering

A child is in private fostering if they live with friends/neighbours or relatives who are one step removed, (e.g. second cousin). The arrangement must exist for longer than 28 days. Placements under this time do not count as private fostering. In accordance with an amendment to the Children Act 2004 schools should alert carers that they need to inform children's services of these arrangements and ensure that this has taken place.

Young people who are privately fostered are likely to be experiencing significant upheavals and instability in their home lives. They are likely to need additional pastoral and learning support and may need closer monitoring and tracking of progress. We will implement student progress meetings to tackle barriers to learning on a half termly basis.

Including CLA

Admission

Fewer children are moving care placement, however, there still remains a high degree of mobility within the looked after population, often resulting in a change of school and subsequent gaps in education. Therefore, it is all the more critical that CLA are admitted to school with minimal delays. Prolonged periods at home can put the foster placement under great pressure and young people more likely to become disaffected.

Where schools are contacted directly by professionals regarding a place for a CLA, enquiries should be redirected to Coventry School Admissions on 02476 834851. The Schools' Admission Officer will lead on identifying a school place and liaising with the Head and the child's social worker. The application for a school place is made by the social worker unless they have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). In this instance, the statement casework officer will liaise with schools and the social worker to agree an appropriate educational placement that meets the student's SEN.

Punctuality

Some CLA may have long journeys to school, particularly if they live long distances from the school, as a result of changes in care placement. It is important that consideration is given to how late arrivals are managed and recorded, given that this may be out of the child/young person's control. Staff should be sensitive to how they address this.

Attendance

It is vital that CLA have good attendance, as a means to improve their educational outcomes. School closely monitors the attendance of all CLA on roll. CLA are automatically added to 'Red Alert' and monitored by the year teams.

Where attendance of a CLA is a cause for concern: the year team will inform the DT. Typically the year team will problem-solve barriers to attendance with the carer and student in a face to face meeting at the earliest opportunity. If concerns continue, these will be raised with the DT and a multi-agency approach to improving attendance and engagement in learning will be planned and recorded as part of the PEP. Holistic needs and barriers to learning should be addressed by identified professionals within a specified time frame on a case by case basis.

Exclusions

CLA are a group particularly at risk of exclusion. The School will try every practicable means to maintain the child in school and will involve the child's social worker and seek advice and support from Virtual School as soon as possible.

We will proactively support and cooperate with foster carers and the local authority as a corporate parent in doing everything possible to avoid excluding a looked-after child. Exclusion from school, and permanent exclusion in particular, can place great strain on care placements and lead to even more disruption in a child's life if the care placement breaks down as a result. If a child is at risk of exclusion, supported by the local authority and Virtual School, we will put in place strategies to reduce the need for exclusion. The exclusion of CLA should be an absolute last resort.

Where a school move is sought for a CLA, steps will need to be taken to minimise the impact of previous multiple rejections that CLA have typically received, and also to ensure that transitions are managed and planned supportively. The aim of such move is usually to encourage behavioural change, provide a fresh start, whilst understanding that a move is likely to have a deeper emotional impact on a CLA than other students.

Part Time and Alternative Provision

Where a part time time-table is sought to support the CLA to access a curriculum and/or to address a behavioural need, we recognise that the child continues to have an entitlement to a full time education.

Any changes to this must be agreed with the child's social worker and carer through a pastoral support plan or Personal Education Plan. Part-time schooling can place the care placement under enormous pressure, if school is considering this, it must be discussed with the designated member of staff.

The DT for CLA will have oversight of all the education provided, where it is delivered elsewhere. No students are placed on part time timetables indefinitely. A part time timetable is always part of a plan to return the student to full time education (eg a pastoral support plan, or a personal learning plan, for alternative provision) and within a specified time frame (eg within four weeks).

The Personal Education Plan (PEPs)

Personal Education Plans for CLA are statutory planning meetings which should occur within 20 school days of a child becoming looked after and reviewed at least annually. Our practice is to update PEPs termly and these are submitted to Virtual School electronically. A current PEP is in evidence at every statutory review of the child's care plan, and updated if significant changes occur (eg change in school place, care placement, school programme disruption). PEPs are significant vehicles for celebrating the achievements of young people and effecting change. Education targets and strategies set through the PEP should be known by teaching staff. This is especially important if issues have arisen regarding classroom, homework or behaviour in certain lessons.

The young person should be involved in the PEP. Where a young person does not wish to attend, the meeting should nevertheless take place, and they should be encouraged to comment on their education and progress through the relevant section of the PEP. Issues around confidentiality for the CLA should be respected, and information shared on a need to know basis. Teaching staff who are in contact with the child should be aware that he/she is looked after, in order to promote an understanding of the child's / young person's needs, and to ensure positive systems of support are in place.

The PEP would encompass all the additional educational plans, such as those described under part time and alternative provision.

Extra-Curricular Engagement

We aim to support all CLA to feel secure and confident in their membership and inclusion of the school community. This is very important for their social and emotional development and can help to raise self-esteem through the acquisition of skills which are often transferable to school. All CLA are encouraged to take a full and active part in positive out of school activities. These may be identified as part of a Personal Education Plan.

Additional Funding

Coventry CLA who are aged 5 – 16 years and not meeting expected levels of progress or who have additional needs may be able to receive additional funding from Virtual School. This 'Highly Vulnerable Fund' is a grant which can be used to support individual students at key points in time, for example at transition or during examination periods. Grants can also be considered for use for any CLA at risk of exclusion or to assist in the delivery and development of PEPs.

Further and Higher Education

CLA are under-represented in higher education and there is a high drop-out rate in further education. They need additional encouragement to consider educational and training opportunities post 16, as there may not be any other adult in their lives able to communicate this. The PEP and Pathway Plan (in the case of a young person aged 16), provide practical tools for focusing on educational development, including the opportunity for young people to explore their potential for higher education. The focus for a looked after young person going to further or higher education should begin early in order to build a

good record of achievement. Where there are opportunities to attend taster days offered by colleges and universities, young people should be encouraged to attend.

Key Stage 4

All children need help in choosing options/learning pathways for study at Key Stage 4. CLA, who have changed care placements or moved school placements frequently, may have missed out on such opportunities, and may have received little or no advice when choosing options. We recognise that it is important that CLA do not miss out on these opportunities. Choices for Key Stage 4 should be recorded in the PEP and the young person should be supported to choose appropriate subjects that will interest and challenge them. Wherever possible we aim to ensure that children arriving part way through key stage 4 can continue with existing subject specification, or adapt work to fit new course specifications. The DT encourages staff to be mindful that the student is likely to have personal and social development needs, regardless of academic ability (eg independent living preparation). It should not be assumed that because a CLA/young person is achieving at national expectations that they do not need additional support with Personal and Social Development.

Mentors

School will consider allocating a mentor to CLA, to act as a regular point of contact through the duration of the child's time at school. School will be mindful that other CLA may need mentoring, and this should not exclude CLA who are high achievers. Mentor support may be needed to provide emotional support and guidance at times of pressure and stress, where language ability and emotional development enable this to occur. Evidence from other schools and LAs indicates very positive outcomes, including increased attainment when barriers to learning are addressed. Many CLA value the time spent with their mentors and the opportunity to share issues concerning their education.