



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

Introduction

'Looked after children' is the legislative term for children and young people in public care. It refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are 'accommodated' (temporarily in public care). Under Section 22(3) (a) of the Children Act 1989, as amended by Section 52 of the Children Act 2004, the duty of a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them includes, in particular, a duty to promote the child's educational achievement. This duty, which in practice is the responsibility of all schools with looked after children on roll, came into force on 1st July 2005.

Rationale

Although some do well, looked after children as a group have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment. Five key reasons why looked after children underachieve in education have been identified:

Their lives are characterised by instability

They spend too much time out of school

They do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind

Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development

They have unmet emotional, mental and physical needs that impact on their education

Aims

This policy is designed to ensure that

- The education and care of looked after children is a priority
- The progress and attainment of looked after children is similar to that of other groups of pupils in the school
- Governors have an understanding of, and can make judgements about, the admissions, exclusions and achievements of looked after children in the school
- The designated teacher for looked after children receives appropriate training and support for the role, and that other members of staff have an awareness of the needs of looked after children
- Looked after children have the same opportunities to succeed as other groups of pupils

Implementation

Administration

General information on the names and carers of looked after children in the school should be available to the designated teacher, class teachers, teaching assistants who work with the children and the SENCO. This information should also contain the name of the individual looked after child's social worker, and the name of the school's contact on the RALAC (Raising Achievement of Looked After Children) team.

Designated teacher

The school has a designated teacher for looked after children (currently the Headteacher), whose specific responsibilities are to

- Maintain records on the looked after children within the school
- Ensure that Personal Education Plans are devised and maintained for each looked after child and are cross-referenced with any other planning and assessment strategies, eg. statements of SEN, pastoral support programmes, etc.
- Monitor the progress and achievements of looked after children at the school and work with staff to provide targeted support if necessary
- Liaise with the other agencies involved in supporting Looked After Children, eg. Social Care & Health, RALAC, Educational Welfare Service, etc.
- Ensure that the school complies with statutory guidance for looked after children.

Confidentiality

Information about looked after children and the circumstances leading to them becoming looked after children is strictly confidential, and will be shared on a 'need to know' basis. Class teachers who require information on looked after pupils may ask for individual records from the designated teacher. Records must be kept securely and returned as soon as possible. *They must not be taken off the school premises.*

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

When a child becomes looked after his/her social worker must ensure that the child's needs and the services to meet these are documented in a Care Plan, of which the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an integral part. The PEP is a record of what needs to happen for looked after children to enable them to fulfil their potential, and should reflect any existing education plans, such as a statement of SEN or an IEP. An effective PEP should

- Be an achievement record (academic and otherwise)
- Be linked to information in other education plans
- Identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, and experiences
- Set short term targets for progress against the developmental and educational needs identified

- Set long term plans and educational targets
- Include the views of the child

The PEP should be reviewed every six months and amended as necessary. The views of the child (according to age and understanding) must be taken into consideration when formulating and reviewing the PEP.

Working with parents and carers

As with all other children in the school, developing and maintaining good relationships with parents and carers of looked after children is essential. It is recognised that children subject to care orders may still reside with their parents; alternatively, they may be placed in foster care, or in the care of relatives, on a short or long term basis. Whatever the arrangements, it is important that good lines of communication are established, and that parents and carers have up-to-date information on children's progress. For children who have been placed in foster care some distance from the school, this may involve a little extra effort on the school's part, such as maintaining a home/school report book or regular telephone calls, as the foster carer may not be able to come to school on a daily basis.

Working with other agencies

The school will endeavour to work in a joined-up way with other agencies who may be involved with looked after children, specifically Social Care & Health, RALAC, and other appropriate education professionals, eg. the LA's Behaviour Support Team, the Educational Psychology Service, etc. The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure that appropriate and specific arrangements are in place for sharing information to enable schools and other agencies to meet the needs of looked after children. Individual arrangements for the day-to-day care of looked after children (eg. transport arrangements, dates of contact visits, etc.) should be clearly communicated to everyone working with the children. Any difficulties arising from the implementation of these arrangements should be reported to the designated teacher as soon as possible.

Monitoring and evaluation

The use of this policy will be monitored and evaluated in the following ways:

- Outcomes of PEP reviews
- External monitoring, eg. OFSTED, RALAC
- Interviews with looked after children
- Feedback from parents, carers and other agencies

Links with other policies

This policy has particular links with the Child Protection; Equal Opportunities; Special Educational Needs; Behaviour & Attendance policies.

Review

This policy will be reviewed if there are changes to the statutory guidance.

Reference

- *Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004* (DfES, 2005)
- *Close the gap for children in care* (NCH, 2005)
- *A Better Education for Children in Care* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)
- *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (DfES, 2004)