



Child Looked After (CLA) Policy

Review frequency: Annually

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Approved by: H Crawford (Designated Teacher) /
Governor with named responsibility (Adaeze Bradshaw)
N Bridges (Headteacher)

Aim:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Children Looked After (PCLA)

In this policy the term Children Looked After also refers to Previously Children Looked After.

Legal Framework / Background Information

With the right support and influence, effectively coordinated between local partnerships, (schools and children's services, health etc.) children in care are capable of achieving as well as their peers. Children are taken into care or can become 'Looked After' for a number of different reasons. This can often be a traumatic experience in itself and is usually a result of the emotional stress, abuse or trauma arising from family upheaval and domestic turbulence involved.

There are 4 main groups or definitions of children looked after as identified under the Children Act 1989. These are:

Section 20: Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents.

Section 21: Children who are compulsorily accommodated; this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to criminal justice supervision order with a residence order

Section 31: Children who are the subject of a care order or an interim care order known as Section 38

Sections 44 & 46: Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection

The effects of being taken into care via any of the above group definitions can impact very severely on the child's social and emotional stability. This in turn limits their educational development and the impact of this varies depending upon the age at which the turbulence is experienced. It is an increasingly known fact that in professional circles (ie. research educationalists and psychologists) the emotional and social wellbeing of children and young adults is inextricably linked to their ability to learn. If a child is taken into care during early years, this can mean that language and literacy skills are underdeveloped. Such children are more likely to have missed out on opportunities for regular reading development at home with e.g. a parent. As education professionals we know that in a majority of cases 'good parenting' is synonymous with getting off to a good start with developing the essential core skills needed for accessing education and schooling.

Being taken into care at any age is equally disrupting to educational development. The turbulence and insecurity involved serves to detract from and limit educational progress. It causes major distraction and is highly unsettling for the child involved. Such emotional upset causes a child to behave differently or to lose control of their emotions. These behaviours are classified as 'attachment disorder' and are usually associated with Children Looked After in a high proportion of instances.

Children Looked After are a highly vulnerable group of young people whom we must work to understand better and provide a special kind of tolerance and support for them. Through no fault of their own they have a disadvantaged start in life. They deserve better; the local

authority, schools and professionals are required in law to make provisions for children in care to have their learning and development needs appropriately met. The Care Matters White Paper 2007, Time for Change, sets out the expectation to which all schools, staff and Governors should adhere in order to bring about a step change in providing for this group of underachieving young people. From September 2009 all schools were required to make provisions for Children Looked After.

Dependent upon the type, age, stage and severity of the traumatic experience the child has suffered, Children Looked After are recognisable as they can display varying degrees of some or all of the following characteristics:

- low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- a negative response to praise
- poor educational standards in core skills due to missed schooling
- reluctance to ask for help
- delayed social, emotional and cognitive development
- the victim of bullying or bullying others
- prone to mental health issues
- isolated, with few friends
- behavioural challenges in class or group situations
- in conflict with rules, organisational arrangements and expected standards.

From September 2009 all schools are required to have a suitably experienced Designated Teacher who is tasked to ensure that provisions and support are given to the looked after child in a fully coordinated and planned way across the school. This needs to be carried out sensitively and appropriately by raising the awareness of staff to key aspects and circumstance affecting learning, and where necessary liaise appropriately for support with the services of the responsible Local Authority. By April 2010 all local authorities are required to have appointed a Virtual School Headteacher or equivalent to take a countywide strategic monitoring role for children in care. This has been done in Nottingham. The central aim of this is to drive up the standards of support for their education, aiming to close the gap in achievement between them and their peers. New statutory guidance for the designated teacher was released in February 2018 which meant that Previously Children Looked After were also covered by the expectations and monitoring of Children Looked After.

The Name of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After: Miss Helen Crawford

The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After Within School:

- to ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Children Looked After and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- to inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Children Looked After and to promote the involvement of these children in extra curricular activities, school councils etc
- to act as an advocate for Children Looked After
- to develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, Social Workers and the Virtual School for Children Looked After
- to hold a supervisory brief for all Children Looked After e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date
- to monitor the educational progress of all Children Looked After in order to inform the school's development and provision/intervention planning, thereby ensuring that the attainment 'gap' is closing
- to intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy
- to ensure the involvement of local secondary schools to manage the transition for Children Looked After
- to report annually to the Governing Body of the school on Children Looked After's progress (see model proforma available from the Virtual School)

Work with Individual Children Looked After:

- to enable the pupil to make a contribution to the educational aspects of their Care Plan
- helping to ensure that each pupil has a Personal Education Plan - ePEP (initiated by the pupil's Social Worker) or Early Years PEP (aged 3 to end of Reception Year)

Liaison:

- to liaise with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register
- to help co-ordinate education and e-PEP reviews so that they can inform the pupil's Care Plan
- to attend, when appropriate, or arrange for someone else to attend, Children Looked After Care Plan meetings
- to be the named contact for colleagues at the Virtual School

- to forward information on Nottingham's Looked After Children's current and target NC levels to the Virtual School (see e-PEP document)
- to ensure the speedy transfer of information between agencies and individuals

Training:

- to develop knowledge of legislation and good practice by attending training events organised by the Virtual School and cascade to school staff as appropriate

The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Children Looked After: Adazee Bradshaw

The role of that Governor

The named governor will ensure reporting to the Governing Body on an annual basis:

- a comparison of NC levels/results as a discrete group
- the attendance of pupils as a discrete group
- the level of fixed term/permanent exclusions
- pupil destinations (see model proforma available from the Virtual school) The named governor will ensure a school's self audit of provision for Children Looked After is undertaken (see example self audit available from the Virtual School)

The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that Children Looked After have equal access to:

- the full curriculum and extra-curricular activities
- public examinations
- additional educational support

The named governor will monitor the role of the designated teacher and ensure that they are meeting their role requirements and the school are supporting them in doing so.

Responsibility for Children Looked After in School

It is important that all teaching staff that are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being Looked After by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Headteacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

It is appropriate for a Learning Support/Teaching Assistant to have knowledge that the young person is Looked After when directly involved in the teaching of the young person. In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class in regards to collection.

The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Headteacher or the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After.

Admission Arrangements

On admission, records (including the e-PEP) will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/Social Worker. A date will be agreed for a PEP meeting, taking reference to statutory timescales. An appropriate school induction will take place.

Involving the Young Person

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. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the Social Worker, and their carer(s) are working together to promote their education.

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. Schools, Families First, including the Virtual School and education services should endeavour to co-ordinate their review meetings e.g. to have an Annual Review of a Statement combined with a Statutory Care Review. Schools, Families First, including the Virtual School, and education services will need to exchange information between formal reviews if there are significant changes in the young person's circumstances, e.g. if school is considering an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each Child Looked After will have a Care Plan that will include an e- PEP which the Social Worker takes a lead in developing. School will play an active role in contributing to those areas of the e-PEP that are education related e.g.

- SMART target setting
- identification of current and target NC levels
- how additional resources are being utilised to meet educational targets (e.g. the Pupil Premium, Personal Education Allowance)
- attendance
- involvement in Extra Curricular Activities
- Special Educational Needs (if any)
- long term plans and aspirations

The e-PEP will be updated termly, alongside the virtual school and as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the social worker.

The named governor will ensure annually reporting to the Governing Body on the progress of all Children Looked After against the key indicators outlined above.