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THE DEANES

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY



 **i matter**

Background

Historical underachievement of Looked After Children:

- 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, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. All schools should have a policy for Looked After Children which is subject to review and approval by the Governing Board. 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)

Definitions of care

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.

Different living arrangements

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
- With parents – under supervision of Children's Services.

Similarly, an 'accommodated' child can be living:

- In foster care
- In a children's home
- 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 looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, and the guidance for governors as detailed in the Governance Handbook.

Signed by:

_____ **Headteacher** **Date:** _____

_____ **Chair of governors** **Date:** _____

The Deanes Policy for Looked After Children

1. The Objective:

To promote the educational achievement and welfare of pupils in care.

2. The Name of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children for the school:

K. Hampstead

2.1. The Role of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children

The Deanes will require our appointed Designated Teacher to undertake the recommendations set down in the statutory guidance entitled: **The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children 2009.**

In this context the **Designated Teacher** will:

- become the central point of contact at this school for all professionals and agencies working with and supporting the individual looked after children we have on roll;
- take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP should be established within twenty school working days for any looked after child starting on roll. This to include the gradual addition and updating of further information over time e.g. attendance, attainment and progress results;
- attend relevant training and cascade information for staff development and regarding looked after children;
- ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account;
- establish good working relationships and communications with Foster Carers, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend meetings and reviews;
- provide support and sanctuary to help settle a looked after child into the school, and at other times; ensure the looked after child feels safe, knows who to trust and who to go to if they feel the need for support;
- ensure the transfer of records if a looked after child moves school;
- provide written information to assist planning, reviews and reporting as required;
- seek and prioritise meetings with, and referrals to, appropriate external agencies in situations that require external support.

In addition The Deanes requires our school Teaching and Support Staff to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after children by requiring all staff to:

- ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained;
- be familiar with, and respond appropriately to, requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews;
- respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with;
- ensure that no child in care becomes the victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and eradicated;
- positively promote the self esteem of looked after children;
- convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

3. Governance

The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Looked After Children in the school:

Andrew Oxley

3.1 The role of that governor

The named governor will report to the Governing Board on an annual basis using the report from the Designated Teacher as a source of information:

- The number of looked-after pupils in the school;
- A comparison of progress as a discrete group, compared with those of other pupils;
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared to other pupils;
- The level of fixed term/permanent exclusions;
- Pupil destinations

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

- The Curriculum;
- Public examinations;
- Additional interventions to support educational progress e.g. 1 to 1;
- Careers and Youth Service guidance;
- Additional education support;
- Extra-curricular activities.

4. 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. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children.

It is appropriate for a classroom support assistant(s) to have knowledge that the young person is in care only when directly involved in the teaching of the young person.

4.1 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 PEP. An appropriate school induction will take place.

4.2 Involve 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.

¹It is important that the young person is supported to complete the Pupil Voice section of the PEP by the Designated Teacher or a designated member of staff, to inform the PEP 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.

4.3 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 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 an exclusion, there is a change of care placement or there are significant attendance issues.

4.4 Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures

Each looked after pupil will have a Care Plan that will include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is developed jointly by the Social worker and Designated Teacher. This will identify specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. Areas for consideration will include:

- Attendance.
- Achievement Record (academic or otherwise).
- Behaviour.
- Extended learning opportunities.
- Involvement in Out of School Hours Activities.
- Special needs (if any);
- 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).

The PEP will be updated and reviewed termly 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 of the educational targets within the Plan.

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

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Governing Board

¹ *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. References: Section 576 Education Act 1996; Children Act 1989 (amended); 'If this were my child' (Local Government Information Unit 2003)