

THAKEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Small School, Big Opportunities, Great Achievements'



Children Looked After Policy

Thakeham Primary School

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Signed

Headteacher: *S. Norton*

Chair of Standards, Teaching & Learning Committee:

Judith James

Rationale

Nationally, Children Looked After significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers. Schools have a major part to play in ensuring that Children Looked After are enabled to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy, achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being, in line with Every Child Matters. Schools can also provide a source of continuity and “normality” for children who may have been subject to emotional distress, abuse, and disruption. School can be the place where children maintain friendships and a place where they feel safe and can be themselves.

Raising levels of achievement, helping Children Looked After succeed, and providing a better future for them are key priorities for us at Thakeham Primary School.

Definition

The term “looked after” was introduced by the Children Act 1989. This refers to a child who is either accommodated (whereby the local authority provides for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) or is subject to a care order (whereby a court order grants shared parental responsibility to the local authority in order to protect and promote a child’s welfare). Children in both instances could be living with foster carers, in a residential unit, in a residential school, with relatives, or even with parents on a part or full time basis.

Legal Framework

This policy takes account of:

- the Council’s duty under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004 to promote the educational achievement of Children looked after
- the Education (Admission of Children looked after) (England) Regulations 2006
- Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE 2018)
- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities (DfE 2018)
- relevant DfE guidance to Governing Bodies (Supporting Looked After Learners: A Practical Guide for School Governors).

Schools must:

- Ensure access to a balanced and broadly based education to all Children Looked After
- Prioritise recording and improving the academic achievement of all Children Looked After
- Prioritise a reduction in the number of exclusions and trancies for all Children Looked After
- Ensure there is a designated teacher to advocate for the rights of Children Looked After
- Develop systems of communications and protocols
- Promote the attendance of Children Looked After

Objectives

We will:

- Endeavour to support all Children Looked After educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all Children Looked After have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, careers guidance, extra-curricular activities, work experience, and enjoy the school experience fully in line with corporate parenting principles.
- Ensure discretion when addressing a child's care status and ensure there is sensitivity to the background of children who are looked after, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each Child Looked After has a current Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place.
- Be proactive in seeking funding to support our aims within this policy and to support the child in achieving their objectives as set out in their PEP.
- Seek to review all school policies in light of relevant legislation.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Designated Teacher

At Thakeham Primary School our Designated Teacher for CLA is Sam Norton, Headteacher.

The support teacher for CLA is Alison Mullineux, Inclusion Leader.

The Designated Teacher has a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every Child Looked After on the school's roll. The role should make a positive difference by promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every Child Looked After matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

The Designated Teacher should have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which can affect how Children Looked After learn and achieve.

This work will ensure that everyone involved in helping Children Looked After understand that in order to do this they need to:

- have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress;
- undertake relevant training;
- be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences;
- understand the reasons which may be behind a Child Looked After's behaviour, and why they may need more support than other children but the teacher should not allow this to be an excuse for lowering expectations of what a child is capable of achieving;
- understand how important it is to see looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group and to not publicly treat them differently from their peers;

- appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a Child's Looked After status;
- appreciate the central importance of the child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and most importantly, depending on age and understanding, the child him or herself of what everyone needs to do to help them to achieve their potential;
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, the Virtual School Headteacher and how education – and the function of the PEP – fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child.

In promoting the educational achievement of Children Looked After the designated teacher should:

- contribute to the development and review of whole school policies to ensure that they do not unintentionally put looked after children at a disadvantage;
- make sure, in partnership with other staff, that there are effective and well understood school procedures are in place to support a looked after child's learning. Particular account should be taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what he or she can achieve;
- promote a culture in which looked after children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education;
- promote a culture in which looked after children are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning;
- be a source of advice for teachers at school about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are looked after;
- make sure the school makes use of a wide range of approaches to assessment to improve the short and medium term progress of looked after children and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there;
- make sure that looked after children benefits from funding sought from the Virtual School to meet their PEP targets and ensure the targets are SMART and well-resourced.
- promote good home-school links through contact with the child's carer about how they can support his or her progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers
- make sure that carers understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within school in partnership with others as necessary.
- Prepare and write an annual report to the Governing Body using the agreed template

Most importantly, the Designated Teacher is the child's champion in school and the first point of contact for school colleagues, carers and social workers regarding anything to do with the child's education.

The Role of the Governing Body

Our named Children Looked After Governor is Gina Webb who will work in co-operation with the Designated Teacher for ensuring that all Children Looked After have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers.

The named Governor/Governing Body should be satisfied that:

- the school has a coherent policy for Children Looked After
- the school's other policies and procedures support these children's needs and the school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of any new legislation
- there is a Designated Teacher in place who has received appropriate training
- Children Looked After have equal access to all areas of the curriculum
- resources are allocated to meet the needs of children looked after
- the school has an overview of the needs and progress of Children Looked After
- all governors and the Designated Teacher are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance on the education of Children Looked After
- the academic progress of Children Looked After is monitored through an annual report
- work is undertaken to prevent exclusions and reduce time out of school, by ensuring the school implements policies and procedures to ensure Children Looked After achieve and enjoy their time at the school.

Personal Education Plans

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker along with the Designated Teacher will take the lead in developing. Both should be clear on their roles before, during and following their meeting. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate. These are completed electronically (ePEP).

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strength's and weaknesses
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental and educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child
- It will also identify targets that will be reviewed during the next PEP meeting.

A PEP should:

- identify developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences;
- set short and long-term educational attainment targets agreed in partnership with the child and the carer where appropriate;
- include a record of planned actions, including milestones on homework, extra tuition and study support, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child, based on an assessment of their educational needs;
- include information on how the child's progress is to be rigorously monitored;
- record details of specific interventions and targeted support that will be used to make sure personal education targets are met, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 in relation to English and mathematics;
- say what will happen, or is already happening, to put in place any additional support which may be required - e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the InCo, educational psychologist, or local authority education services (information contained within a EHC plan does not have to be duplicated in the PEP, a reference is sufficient as long as the plans work together to meet overall needs);
- set out information on what will happen or is already happening to identify and support any mental health needs relevant to the child's education;

- set out how a child's aspiration and self-confidence is being nurtured. High aspirations are crucial to successful planning for the future. They should focus on young person's strengths and capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve;
- include the child's views on how they see they have progressed and what support they consider to be most effective;
- be a record of the child's academic achievements and participation in the wider activities of the school and other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development);
- provide information which helps all who are supporting the child's educational achievement to understand what works for them, helping to substitute for the role that parents might otherwise provide; and
- have clear accountability in terms of who within the school is responsible for making the actions identified in the plan happen.

Monitoring and reviewing the PEP in school

Designated teachers should work closely with other staff in school to make sure the child's progress is rigorously monitored and evaluated. They should be able to:

- judge whether the teaching and learning and intervention strategies being used are working to support achievement and wellbeing; and
- know whether the young person is likely to meet the attainment targets in their PEP.

If the young person is not on track to meet targets, the designated teacher should be instrumental in agreeing the best way forward with them in order to make progress and ensure that this is reflected in the PEP.

A child's care plan is reviewed regularly by the authority that looks after them. These reviews are statutory and must be done at the following intervals:

- the first review must happen within 20 working days of the date the child became looked after;
- the second at not more than three months after the first review;
- the third and subsequent reviews at not more than six monthly intervals.

The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO will ask about the child's educational progress as part of the overall care plan review and should have access to the most up-to-date PEP.

Regulation 36 of the Care, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 requires the IRO to attend the review meeting "as far as reasonably practicable". When in attendance the IRO must chair the review meeting.

So that there can be an informed discussion at the statutory review of the care plan about the child's progress in school, the designated teacher is responsible for ensuring that:

- they review the PEP before the statutory review of the care plan, it is up-to-date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being delivered;
- the PEP is clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where these may be sourced; and
- they pass the updated PEP to the child's social worker and Virtual School ahead of the statutory review of the care plan.

Admission/Induction Arrangements

Children Looked After are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the WSCC published admission criteria.

On admission, the child will meet with the Designated Teacher and their named member of staff. They will discuss any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child is made to feel comfortable in our school. Records will be requested from the child's previous school and as soon as practicable after they are received a meeting will be held with the carer / parent, social worker, and other relevant professionals, and child as appropriate. This will provide information to inform the child's new Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

In the first PEP meeting, we will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips or other such activities. At this meeting any means of communication to aid the fluid exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed (such as a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in a child's circumstances.)

School Visits and Special Activities

Given the delays that children looked after experience in getting parental consent for school visits and activities, we will aim to ensure that children looked after enjoy the same extra-curricular opportunities as other children by reserving placements for them on visits or on activities.

Complaints

If a young person, parent or social worker wishes to complain about the provision or policy, they should in the first instance raise it with the designated teacher, who will try to resolve the situation. The School Complaints Policy should be followed.