



Children in Care Policy 2019

Where Every Door is Opened and Every Gift is Unlocked

At Witton Church Walk, our varied, Christian based curriculum inspires pupils' thirst for knowledge and promotes a love of life-long learning in a creative, challenging and safe environment. Dynamic and enthusiastic teaching styles which are built on Christian values ensure that the children are engaged and confident to develop transferable skills for life. Our enrichment activities provided through the creative curriculum are fully inclusive and allow children to reflect on their place within the wider community.

Witton Church Walk Primary School aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of all Children in Care

Designated Teacher for Children in Care: Mrs Tracy Parr

Governor with responsibility for Children in Care: Mrs Jackie Jeffries

The governing body is committed to providing quality education for all pupils at Witton Church Walk Primary School based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in "Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children in care under section 52 of the Children Act 2004" (Nov 2005). It also includes recommendations from the Children and Social Work Act 2017, The Designated teacher for looked after and previously looked after children February 2017 and Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after Children Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018. The School's approach to supporting the educational achievement of Children in care is based on the following principles:

- Prioritising education.
- Promoting attendance.
- Targeting support.
- Having high expectations.
- Promoting inclusion through challenging and changing attitudes.
- Achieving stability and continuity.
- Early intervention and priority action.

- Listening to children.
- Promoting health and wellbeing.
- Reducing exclusions and promoting stability.
- Working in partnership with carers, social workers and other professionals.

The aims of the school are to:

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for children in care as for all children
- ensure that all children in care have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual's needs and ability
- ensure that children in care take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of children in care pupils are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- ensure that children in care are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision
- ensure that children in care in our school are fully supported to achieve to their full potential

In striving to achieve the school's aims for children in care, as detailed above, the school will actively promote and support the Governing Body, Designated Teacher, and all school staff to undertake the roles and responsibilities set out in **Appendix 1** in relation to children in care.

Who are Children in Care?

A child 'looked-after by a local authority' is one who is looked after within the meaning of section 22 of Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; Under the Children Act 2004, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)

- children who are compulsorily accommodated - this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21)

The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to **care orders** and those who are **accommodated**. The term '**children in care**' was introduced and used to refer to this group of children, in response to children and young people's dislike of the term Looked After Children or LAC. In this document therefore, the term 'children in care' will largely be used, although the two terms mean the same thing and can be used and are used interchangeably.

Admissions

The Governing Body endorses council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against Children in Care. Due to care placement changes, children in care may enter school mid-term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupil settle.

Inclusion

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad based curriculum. Our Children in Care policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all children in care.

Allocation of resources

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for Children in care, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

Monitoring the progress of Children in care

The social worker for a child in care should initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of the child joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the young person is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each child in care's attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The role of the Designated Teacher in developing the Personal Education Plan is set out in **Appendix 2**.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. Children in care will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing officer or social worker, and the young person's views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

Record Keeping

The Designated Teacher will know who all the children in care are in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and the social worker. The Designated Teacher will also know about any children in care from other authorities. It is important that the school flags children in care status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

Staff Development

We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to support children in care. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to develop awareness of issues associated with children in care.

Partnership with parents/carers and care workers

At school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable children in care to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

Links with external agencies/organisations

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting children in care. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual children in care:

- Children's Social Care Fieldwork Teams
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority Special Educational Needs services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social care worker/Community care worker/Residential child care worker

- Youth Offending Service

Children in care policy review and evaluation

We consider the Children in Care policy to be important and we will undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

APPENDIX 1

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rationale for roles and responsibilities:

Children in care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- a high level of disruption and change in school placements
- lack of involvement in extra curricular activities
- inconsistent or no attention paid to homework

This may result in:

- poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- underachievement in further and higher education

These issues may also affect young people who are adopted.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date the outcomes achieved by Children in care have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- giving priority to education
- listening to children
- providing stability and continuity
- taking corporate responsibility
- promoting inclusion
- raising standards
- intervening early
- promoting early years experiences
- celebrating success

The Role of the Governing Body is to:

- Nominate a Designated Governor for children in care, to take the lead role in matters relating to children in care.
- Appoint a designated member of staff in accordance with Designated Teacher Regulations 2009 is a core function of the governing body.

In discharging this core function it is for the governing body of each school to determine, in partnership with the head teacher, the key responsibilities of the designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children in care who are registered pupils at the school.

The way in which the role of the designated teacher will be carried out will vary from school to school. It will depend on the number of child in care on roll and their particular needs as well as, for example, whether the school caters for primary or secondary age children. It will be particularly important for governing bodies, in partnership with the school's leaders, to ensure that the focus of the designated teacher's role is on assessing and meeting the teaching and learning needs of the child and that administrative tasks which support that work are undertaken by support staff.

The designated teacher should be given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role. Some schools may never have had a child in care on roll and the designated teacher may not therefore be familiar with some of the issues and processes they need to know about. The governing body should, in partnership with the head teacher, needs to ensure that the designated teacher has or will, through their training and development, have the opportunity to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of child in care. This means in particular that they make sure the designated teacher understands and helps others to understand: the emotional, psychological and social implications of separation from birth families and the reasons for that separation;

- that children in care are not a homogenous group, but are individuals with many of the same needs as any other child;
- the broad framework of the care system and the way it impacts on the child's education;
- the reasons why many children in care under-achieve such as the possible impact of loss and attachment and how the role of the designated teacher, in promoting high expectations of educational progress, can make a difference to a child in care's achievement; and
- their own role in contributing to the statutory review of the child in care's personal education plan which forms an integral part of the child's overall care plan.

The governing body should ensure that the designated teacher is a member of the teaching staff with appropriate seniority, professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of child in care. Where the designated teacher is not a member of the senior leadership team, a member of the team should be designated as a champion of child in care issues to work closely with the designated teacher.

The governing body should monitor the effectiveness of the designated teacher in undertaking these responsibilities. The governing body should consider a brief yearly report from the designated teacher on the progress and educational needs of child in care on the school's roll, this can be done through meeting the designated governor and reporting back to the full governing body. It will be important to ensure that reports do not result in unnecessary bureaucracy and workload but contain sufficient information to aid school planning. To protect a child's need for confidentiality it is also important to ensure that the reports do not mention individual children by name. The reports should enable the governing body to make judgements about the designated teacher role in relation to:

- any workload issues arising as a result of the number of children in care on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved;
- how child in care are making progress in relation to other vulnerable groups and all children at the school (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress); the pattern of attendance and exclusions;

- any process or planning issues arising from personal education plans (PEPs);
- whether any are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met;
- whether any have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are being met through statements;
- how the teaching and learning needs of children in care are reflected in school development plans and are being met in relation to interventions and resources;
- training undertaken by the designated teacher in order to impart knowledge and understanding about the education and wellbeing of children in care to colleagues;
- work with virtual school heads or their equivalents in local authorities;
- the impact of any of the school's policies, for example on charging for educational visits and extended schools activities, on children in care.

The governing body and school leadership team should then consider what actions are required to address the issues raised by the reports in relation to:

- whether the designated teacher has sufficient time and resources to carry out their role effectively;
- any training, support and development needs required to ensure the role can be carried out effectively;
- the extent to which school policies take account of the particular needs of children in care.

Those undertaking the role of the designated teacher are accountable for the part of their job relating to children in care both through the school's performance management system and to the governing body via the governing body's termly monitoring process described in 2.7 and 2.8 above.

The role of the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children

The most effective designated teachers have a leadership role in promoting the educational achievement of every looked-after and previously looked-after child on the school's roll. This involves, working with VSHs to promote the education

of looked-after and previously looked-after children and promoting a whole school culture where the personalised learning needs of every looked-after and previously looked-after child matters and their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised.

Designated teachers should take lead responsibility for ensuring school staff understand the things which can affect how looked-after and previously looked after children learn and achieve and how the whole school supports the educational achievement of these pupils. This means making sure that all staff:

- have high expectations of looked-after and previously looked-after children's learning and set targets to accelerate educational progress;
- are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation (attachment awareness) from birth families and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences, and how this might affect the child's behaviour;
- understand how important it is to see looked-after and previously looked-after children as individuals rather than as a homogeneous group, not publicly treat them differently from their peers, and show sensitivity about who else knows about their looked-after or previously looked-after status;
- appreciate the central importance of the looked-after child's PEP in helping to create a shared understanding between teachers, carers, social workers and, most importantly, the child's own understanding of how they are being supported;
- have the level of understanding they need of the role of social workers, VSHs and carers, and how the function of the PEP fits into the wider care planning duties of the authority which looks after the child; and
- for previously looked-after children, understand the importance of involving the child's parents or guardians in decisions affecting their child's education, and be a contact for parents or guardians who want advice or have concerns about their child's progress at school.

Designated teachers are also likely to have a more direct and day-to-day role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, either directly or through appropriate delegation. This can be achieved by:

- Contributing to the development and review of whole school policies and procedures to ensure that:
 - they do not unintentionally put looked-after and previously looked-after children at a disadvantage;
 - there is effective induction for looked-after and previously looked-after children starting school, new to the school and new to care;
 - there are effective procedures in place to support a looked-after child's learning;

- particular account is taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what s/he can achieve;
 - transitions to the next phase of a child's education are supported effectively to avoid children losing ground - e.g. moving schools from primary to secondary school or because of a change in placement or exclusion;
 - thought is given to the future, careers advice and guidance, and financial information about where appropriate further and higher education, training and employment;
 - when enrolling at the school, parents and guardians of previously looked-after children are reminded that they need to inform the school if their child is eligible to attract PP+; and
 - there are no barriers to looked-after children accessing the general activities and experiences the school offers to all its pupils (e.g. taking into account possible transport difficulties and the arrangements for looked-after children to attend meetings).
- Promoting a culture in which looked-after and previously 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;
 - are prioritised in any selection of pupils who would benefit from one-to-one tuition, and that they have access to academic focused study support;
 - are encouraged to participate in school activities and in decision making within the school and the care system;
 - believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education or highly skilled jobs; and
 - can discuss difficult issues (such as SEN, bullying, attendance) in a frank manner with a sympathetic and empathetic adult.
- Being a source of advice for teachers about:
 - differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual pupils who are looked-after or previously looked-after children; and
 - the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches to improve the short and medium term progress of looked-after and previously looked after children, and help them and their teachers understand where they are in their learning (including any knowledge gaps), where they need to go, and how to get there.

• Working directly with looked-after and previously looked-after children and their carers, parents or guardians to:

- promote good home-school links;
- support progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers, parents or guardians;
- ensure carers, parents or guardians understand the potential value of one-to-one tuition and are equipped to engage with it at home;
- ensure carers, parents or guardians are aware of how the school teaches key skills such as reading and numeracy; and
- encourage high aspirations and working with the child to plan for their future success and fulfilment.

• having lead responsibility for the development and implementation of looked after

children's PEP within school in partnership with others as necessary; and

• working closely with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to.

Secure relevant services for the pupil where necessary.

Liaise with the social worker as necessary about the child's educational progress and needs, especially through contributing to the statutory review of the care plan.

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.

Promote the pupil's inclusion in the school community and access to the school's curriculum, facilities and extra curricular activities.

Work with learning support assistants, class teachers and other school staff to support their understanding of issues which impact on the teaching and learning of child in care, including in relation to how information is shared.

Advise teachers at school about differentiated teaching methods appropriate for individual pupils who are in care.

Assist children in care when they transfer to their next school or college and ensure the speedy transfer of school records to a new school and ensuring that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most up-to-date version of the PEP.

It is for the school governing body to determine the key responsibilities of the designated teacher. However, the designated teacher should not delegate tasks to support staff which require professional judgements to be made about the teaching and learning needs of child in care.

All school staff will:

- follow school procedures
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a child in care's progress
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of children in care
- positively promote the raising of a child in care's self esteem
- ensure any children in care are supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on Children in care and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a child in care is experiencing difficulties

- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required

Appendix 2

Developing the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

The PEP and its importance

- All looked-after children must have a care plan. This is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority responsible for the child. It should identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to their emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self-care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP.
- The PEP is a record of the child's education and training. It should describe what needs to happen for a looked-after child to help them fulfil their potential and reflect, but not duplicate, any existing plans such as EHC plans⁷.
- The PEP is a vital document because it provides a 'collective memory' about the child's education. It is an integral part of a looked-after child's wider care plan.
- The care plan and PEP may have been drawn up before the child becomes looked-after and is placed. However, if a child becomes looked-after in an emergency, the PEP must be initiated within 10 working days of the start of the first placement. An initial version must be available for the 20 working-day review of the care plan.

- The PEP should be initiated by the social worker as part of the care plan but developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. Where the child is on the roll of a school, this will include the designated teacher, although class and subject teachers would have considerable input. If the child has SEN, the SENCO or head teacher would also contribute.
- The PEP, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a looked-after child's official school record. If a child moves school, the PEP should be forwarded as a matter of urgency, along with other school records, to the new school when known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.
- The PEP should help everyone gain the clear and shared understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to ensure academic progress and meet the child's educational needs, describing how that will be provided. For this reason, both schools and local authorities, through strong links between the designated teacher and the VSH in the authority that looks after the child, have a shared responsibility for making the PEP a living and useful document. The most effective PEPs reflect the individual planning that all schools undertake for all of their pupils.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking or refugee children are entitled to the same local authority support to promote their educational outcomes as any other looked-after child. Education for unaccompanied children may

include a period of time in a setting where their full educational needs can be assessed and integrated into the PEP.

Receiving the PEP in school

1. When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after or a looked-after child transfers to the school, the local authority which looks after them must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the up-to-date PEP as a matter of urgency. This should be pre-populated with basic information and should include details about the child, such as:

- their age, care status, where the child lives, school history, whether the child has special educational needs (including whether they have an Education, Health and Care - EHC - Plan or statement of SEN), and how this is being addressed;
- the child's carers and their level of delegated authority;
- the child's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to their contact with the child; and
- whom to contact within the local authority that looks after the child (social worker and VSH).

2. The designated teacher will then develop the PEP

3. Children who are already looked-after when they join the school should have an existing PEP. It should contain all the information about educational progress and how s/he learns best, and arrangements should have been made to have it transferred to the child's new school. If the local authority has not provided the most recent PEP, the designated teacher should follow this up with the authority that looks after the child, either through the VSH or the child's social worker.

What the designated teacher should do with the PEP

1. To make sure the child's PEP meets looked-after children's needs, designated teachers will need to work closely with other teachers to assess their specific educational needs without delay. This assessment of learning needs will help to identify strengths, weaknesses and any barriers to learning and should form the basis for the development or the review and refinement of the PEP.

2. Although the designated teacher will lead on the plan within the school, other staff in the school may need to contribute to it, for instance the SENCO. The PEP is also likely to contain information about what the local authority and other agencies will do to support the child.

3. The designated teacher has a key role in making sure the PEP is effective in supporting everyone to help the looked-after pupil to make good educational progress. PEPs 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, and at Key Stage 4 in achieving success in public examinations;
- 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 SENCO, 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, especially in consideration of longer-term goals towards further and higher education, work experience and career plans. Discussions about longer-term goals should start early and ideally well before Year 9 (age 13-14) at school. 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.

4. The designated teacher would normally have overall responsibility for leading the process of target setting for looked-after children in school, should monitor

and track how their attainment progresses, and ensure that identified actions are put in place. The designated teacher will help the school and the local authority that looks after the child to decide what arrangements work best in the development and review of the PEP.