

LOOKED AFTER LEARNERS

CONTEXTUAL 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 looked after children 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 in e.g. professional circles (research educationalists and psychologists) that **the emotional and social well being 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. 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.

Additionally children frequently come into care at later stages after having started schooling. Being taken into care during these ages or stages 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 Looked After Children in a high proportion of instances.

Looked after children 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 are required to make provisions for looked after children.

Dependent upon the type, age, stage and severity of the traumatic experience the child has suffered, looked after children 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 were 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.

From April 2010 all local authorities were required to have appointed a Virtual School Headteacher or equivalent to take a countywide strategic monitoring role for children in care. 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.

We are aware that the OFSTED inspection framework considers the provisions that we, as a whole school, have put in place to support looked after children. A judgement will be made within the OFSTED framework in terms of how far this school is able to support looked after young people. The formal report will include comments about the progress and support provided to these vulnerable young people.

POLICY FOR LOOKED AFTER LEARNERS

We aim to:

- make a real difference in helping to provide the best possible education for looked after children as much as any other.
- seek to give our young people in care professional help, encouragement and support, so they find our school a welcoming and friendly place.
- be fully inclusive and we will challenge negative views and stereotypes.
- offer support to and work with their foster carers on how to assist the young persons learning and enhance educational opportunities.

We will support the Government's agenda for giving all looked after children the same life chances as any other child.

The Children Act 2004 places duty on us all as corporate parents to work together to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. We recognise that schools and teachers are at the very heart of this process so that we can provide a good education in order to unlock a bright future and so increase life chances of this vulnerable group.

We recognise our responsibilities as governors and teachers and we actively want to support the local authority in undertaking its statutory responsibility, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004. This is to help this vulnerable group to succeed in education, champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative assumptions at all levels.

As school Governors we are aware we can make a significant difference. We recognise that we have a key role and major influence to ensure that the needs of looked after children are considered at the improvement planning and policy level through to monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes.

As a governing body we will introduce a monitoring procedure where we will look closely at the progress that looked after children are making in our school and identify if there are barriers to their next steps of learning and progress.

We will introduce an annual reporting cycle on the progress and performance of looked after children, to be presented to the full governing body by our appointed Designated Teacher during the autumn term of each academic year as a standing agenda item.

As a governing body we will require our Designated Teacher to carry out the specific duties below in relation to the looked after children attending this school.

We 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 (electronic for Lincolnshire children). The PEP should be established within a 20-school working day period 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 update training and cascade information for staff development and updating 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 we will require our school **Teaching and Support Staff** to assist in the implementation and support of this policy for looked after children by requiring all 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 a 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.

As a **Governing Body** we will endeavour to raise expectations for achievement of looked after children and encourage them to do well by combining high expectation and standards with inclusion.

We will consider and set appropriately challenging targets and in so doing facilitate the appropriate resources in order to support the child to reach those targets.

We will monitor and evaluate the impact of our school provision, teaching and learning and support for looked after children. The annual reporting cycle will be introduced which informs on the following key aspects of provision:

- The number of looked after children on roll
- Attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence
- The frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded exclusion
- How they are performing in core subjects, their progress and any value added measure when compared against initial baseline assessment

- The frequency of them taking part in extra curricular activities
- The attainment relative to the targets set in core and foundation subject
- The provision arrangements for additional support identified to include 1:1 tuition at school and any externally added booster work provided in the care home
- The quality and updating of the educational targets recorded in the PEP.

This policy was established, and approved for implementation by the full Governing Body

Signed _____ Chair of Governors:

Dated

The name of our appointed Designated Governor is: Mr David Clements

The name of our school's Designated Teacher is: Mrs Alison Flack

Date of review	Reviewed by	Changes made