



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

January 2020

Policy Originator: Headteacher

Status: Non Statutory

Review Period: Three years

Date: January 2020

Next review date: January 2023

Rationale

We believe that schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of looked after children, and in tackling the causes of social exclusion through careful planning, monitoring and evaluation. 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 has been strongly and clearly highlighted as a major part of improving the life chances of looked after children and schools play a pivotal role in this.

The Children Act (2004) places a duty to safeguard children in care, to promote their educational achievement and to ensure they are able to ‘achieve and reach their full potential’. The collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve this are set out under six principles:

- prioritising education
- having high expectations and aspirations
- inclusion- changing and challenging attitudes
- achieving continuity and stability
- early intervention- priority action
- listening to children

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. At Shalford Infant & Nursery School we use the term ‘Looked After Child’ (or LAC) to refer to these children as well as those who have been legally adopted or placed under Special Guardianship.

Objectives

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School we will:

- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure that all children who are looked after have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, extra-curricular activities and school life as all other children
- 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.
- Have high expectations and endeavour to support all looked after children educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.
- Consider the pastoral needs of looked after children and provide additional support when required

Role of the Governing Body

- To ensure the designated teacher is given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role
- To monitor the school’s policies and ensure they are effective in reflecting the needs of children in care

- To ensure all governors are fully aware of legal requirements and guidance on the education of children in care
- To examine whether the school is making the most of all available resources, such as additional funding, in order to provide the maximum opportunity for Looked After Children to achieve their potential and make expected progress.
- To examine the school's admission procedures to ensure students are admitted into the school as quickly as possible recognising the importance of re-establishing school stability for Looked After Children.

Role of the Headteacher

- To promote a culture in which Looked After Children believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education
- To appoint a Designated Teacher for LAC and empower them to fulfil their role and responsibilities through provision of time to undertake the role and supporting training needs.
- To ensure all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by Looked After Children and understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them
- To ensure the day-to-day management of information provides sufficient access to promote an understanding of, and provide safeguards for individual children
- To be responsible for all systems to support Looked after children

Role of the Designated Teacher

- To have high expectations of looked after children's involvement in learning and educational progress
- To monitor the educational progress and pastoral care of all Looked After Children in order to ensure they are reaching their potential and feel a part of the school community
- To intervene if there is evidence of individual underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, taking action to communicate any difficulties as soon as possible
- To act as an advocate for Looked After Children in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances
- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of Looked After Children
- To monitor and promote the involvement of these children in out of school hours learning
- To be the named contact for and develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, local authority children's services and the Virtual School of the caring authority, to ensure the speedy transfer of information between key partners
- To ensure every child in care has a current Personal Education Plan that includes appropriate educational targets and encourages the 'voice of the child' to be heard
- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways to care planning meetings
- To provide a programme of transition support, as appropriate
- To undertake appropriate training and disseminate information to staff as required
- To facilitate effective communication by building positive home-school relationships between parents / carers with regular opportunities for dialogue

Admissions

Looked after children are a priority for admission and, as such, we will follow the LEA's 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.

Personal Education Plans

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is required for every Child in Care, whose parental responsibility is shared with the local authority, and forms part of their overall Care Plan. The Care Plan should be in place within six weeks of entering care and thereafter reviewed at least every six months. The designated teacher will coordinate the Personal Education Plan, and ensure that communication systems are established early.

The PEP will consider:

- the child's strengths and areas for development
- interests, both in and out of school
- developmental, educational and pastoral needs
- future plans, and how these can be supported
- issues arising for the child