



**Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy**

# **CHILDREN IN CARE POLICY**

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Rationale**
- 2. Definition**
- 3. Legal Framework**
- 4. Objectives**
- 5. Roles and Responsibilities**
  - 5.1 Named Governor**
  - 5.2 Headteacher**
- 6. Admission Arrangements**
- 7. School Trips**
- 8. Complaints**

## **1. RATIONALE**

Schools are key in helping to raise the educational standards and improving the life chances of children in care, 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 children in care and schools play a pivotal role in this.

## **2. DEFINITION**

‘Children in Care’ 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.

Furthermore, the term ‘children in care’, which is widely used in social services is synonymous with the term ‘in public care’, which has been adopted by the DfES in their publication, ‘The Education of Young People in Public Care’.

## **3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Recent legislation and guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH) requires schools to have effective policies for supporting and promoting the education of children in care.

Schools must:

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

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

The school will:

- Work alongside social workers to ensure that each child in care has a current Personal Education Plan in place.
- Provide a climate of acceptance and challenge negative stereotypes.
- Ensure all children who are in care have the same opportunities to participate fully in the National Curriculum, extracurricular activities 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 in care, especially surrounding work on family.
- Ensure the designated teacher is provided with regular training, and that they cascade this training to school staff as appropriate.
- Seek to review all school policies regularly in the light of the LEA's Social Inclusion guidance, Special Educational Needs Legislation, and joint Department for Education and Skills/ Department of Health guidance on The Education of Children in Public Care.
- Ensure that a clear protocol for sharing of information will be followed both within school and with outside agencies.
- Endeavor to support all children in care educated in this school to achieve to their fullest possible academic potential.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Many children in care do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel "different". Therefore, we will negotiate with the child to identify who should be aware of their care status. However we do acknowledge that in some cases, such as if the child has a severe learning difficulty, this may not be possible.

A named Governor will work in co-operation with the Head Teacher/Designated Teacher as the named staff responsible for ensuring that all children in care have equal access to all learning opportunities in line with their peers. The Head Teacher/Designated Teacher also have specific responsibilities for supporting the rest of the staff in their training and work with children in care.

### **5.1 Named Governor**

**The named governor at Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy is Louise Nelson**

A named Governor should be satisfied that:

- The school has a coherent policy for children in care.
- The school's policies and procedures are reviewed in the light of social inclusion guidance and joint DH/DfES guidelines.
- The designated teacher has received appropriate training.
- Children in care have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
- The Governing body receives an annual report

### **5.2 Headteacher**

The Headteacher will:

- Delegate the role of designated teacher. The designated teacher at Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy is John Hollick.
- Ensure the designated teacher has received appropriate training.
- Oversee the development of the policy on children in care.
- Be responsible for all systems to support children in care.

- Report to the governing body on an annual basis on the following:
  - the number of looked after pupils in the school
  - an analysis of test scores as a discrete group, compared to other pupils
  - the attendance of pupils, compared to other pupils
  - the level of fixed term and permanent exclusions, compared to other pupils
  - the number of complaints

The designated teacher/Headteacher will serve as the contact for social services and the education department and will maintain responsibility for several key areas to support children in care within the school. This includes serving as an advocate for all children in care in the school.

The designated teacher/Headteacher will help establish and maintain the ethos regarding children in care of the school by:

- Maintaining and respecting confidentiality of all children in care and ensuring information is shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- Ensuring that all staff, through appropriate training, are aware of the difficulties and educational disadvantages faced by children in care and understand the need for positive systems to support them, whilst maintaining appropriately high expectations for their educational achievements.
- Acting as an advocate for children in care in order to allow them equal access to educational opportunities and support with important decisions affecting future life chances

The designated teacher/Headteacher will set up systems to monitor and record the progress of all children in care. They will:

- Have an overview and coordinating role for gathering and holding all information regarding children in care.
- Maintain records regarding all children in care, including legal status and information regarding who should be contacted regarding matters concerning the child.
- Establish a system for contacting and forwarding educational records to new schools to facilitate a smooth and speedy transfer.
- Monitor the educational progress of all children in care and intervene, in co-operation with other agencies if required, if there is evidence of underachievement, absence from school or internal truancy, or other similar concern

The designated teacher/Headteacher will facilitate effective communication by:

- Building positive home-school relationships between parents/carers with regular opportunities for dialogue.
- Being proactive and participating in setting goals for the pupils.
- Playing an active role in care planning by ensuring that the attendance of the most appropriate member of staff and/or written reports are provided to all statutory reviews of children in care.
- Helping co-ordinate education meetings.
- Serving as the named contact for colleagues in social services and education.
- Ensuring effective communication between all relevant parties.

- Inviting the responsible social worker to all meetings, and liaising with this social worker regarding the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The designated teacher/Headteacher will monitor each child's achievement and ensure that they have the support they require within school:

- By meeting with children in care to discuss who needs to know they are looked after and to ensure that the young person is informed of their role.
- By ensuring each child has a named member of staff who can provide advice and/or practical help on academic or pastoral issues (this maybe the class teacher).
- By ensuring each child has a Personal Education Plan.
- By requesting support from the SENCO and/or outside agencies, including the Education of children in care Service, if a child in care requires additional academic or behavioural support.
- By working closely with the SENCO to ensure all children in care with special educational needs are being assessed and are getting appropriate resources to support their learning.
- By having a strategy for key stage or new school transitions.
- By ensuring all children in care are made to feel a part of the school environment.

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which their social worker will take the lead in developing. However, the school's role in this plan is crucial and at least one member of staff who knows the child well will attend the meeting to establish and subsequently review this. Other staff will contribute in writing as appropriate.

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.

## **6. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS**

Children are a priority for admission.

On admission, the child will meet with the Headteacher 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).

## **7. SCHOOL TRIPS**

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

## **8. 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 Headteacher, who will try to resolve the situation.

If the issue cannot be resolved within 10 days, the young person, carer or social worker can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head teacher. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days.

Any issue that remain unresolved at this stage should be addressed through a meeting in order to assess the impact of any such complaint upon the young person's education. This meeting may include the named Governor and any other outside agency that both parties deem necessary to attend. This meeting should normally be held within 10 working days of the Headteacher's response.