

Rhodes Avenue Primary School

Looked After Children Policy

Summer 2016

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**A Definition**

'Looked After' is a term that refers to children for whom the Local Authority is sharing parental responsibility. This can happen with parental agreement or when a Court makes a *Care Order*. The child may be living:

- with foster parents;
- in a residential unit;
- with family members;
- with their parents.

These children are therefore subject to corporate parenting.

The *Children's Act (1989)* states that the term '*in care*' now refers solely to children who are subject to *Care Orders*. Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are 'accommodated' (provision for the child on an agreed basis with the person who has parental responsibility) by the local authority. Both these groups are said to be 'looked after children' (LAC) or children in care or 'children looked after' (CLA) by the local authority.

This policy incorporates requirements set out in section 52 of the *Children's Act (2004)* which places a duty on schools to safeguard looked after children, to promote their educational achievements and to ensure that they are able to achieve and reach their full potential. This policy recognises the collective responsibility of local authorities and schools to achieve good parenting and follows six key principles:

- prioritising education;
- having high expectations;
- challenging and changing attitudes to LAC;
- achieving continuity and stability;
- early intervention;
- listening to pupils.

**Context**

Many children who are in care have suffered abuse or neglect and looked after children are particularly vulnerable to underachievement. Nationally, looked after children significantly underachieve and are at greater risk of exclusion compared with their peers and their academic and social progress is likely to be affected by previous experiences and compounded by any instability in their personal circumstances. For example, looked after children may have difficulties with attendance, transport to school, obtaining parental consent for activities, securing funding for extra-curricular activities, completing homework activities or owning basic school equipment.

Many looked after children leave education with no formal qualifications and fail to go on to further education compared with the general population. Supporting, inspiring and helping looked after children to achieve academic success and provide a better future is a key priority of the school. Rhodes Avenue School (hereafter referred to as the school) aspires for looked after children to stay safe, achieve be healthy and enjoy school in a supportive environment.

## **Aims**

The school aims to:

- provide a secure environment where they feel safe and can be themselves;
- provide a source of continuity and 'normality';
- be a place where they form, maintain and develop friendships;
- give them every opportunity to achieve their potential and enjoy learning;
- to have high expectations for their development;

## **Practice**

In implementing this policy the school will nominate a Designated Leader (Ms Emel Ali) who will advocate and co-ordinate support for looked after children. The school will also nominate a school governor (Ms Helen Walsh) to ensure that the needs of looked after children are taken into account at a school management level and to support the Designated Leader. The school will also make time available and ensure that a training programme is available for leaders and teaching staff involved with looked after children.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Head teacher will:

- appoint a Designated Leader;
- monitor and report on the admission, progress, attendance and exclusions and take action where progress, conduct or attendance is below expectations;
- report to the governors on the following:
  - number of looked after children in school;
  - their assessments as a discreet group compared with other pupils;
  - their attendance as a discreet group compared to other pupils;
  - number of fixed term/permanent exclusions;
  - any additional interventions that support progress;
  - the impact of Pupil Premium funding;
  - pupil destinations after leaving school.
- ensure that staff receive training and are aware of their responsibilities;

The Designated Leader will:

- welcome and induct child and their carer into school;
- ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) will contain the child's:
  - strengths and areas for improvement;
  - interests (in and out of school);
  - developmental/educational/pastoral needs;
  - future plans and how they can be supported.

- and is completed with the child, social worker, carer and other outside professionals and supports their Care Plan;
- serve as the named contact for colleagues and professionals in social services and education;
  - ensure that carer(s) receive notification of school meetings, consultation evenings and other school events and that communication remains regular and positive;
  - ensure the school's contribution to the development of the PEP includes realistic targets and be compatible with the child's Care Plan or EHC;
  - maintain records that will include:
    - status (care or accommodated);
    - type of placement (foster/respice/residential)
    - name of social worker, area, office, telephone and email address;
    - daily contact numbers of parent/carer/key worker in children's home;
    - safeguarding information if relevant;
    - assessment data;
    - attendance record;
    - behaviour/exclusion profile.
- ensure all necessary information is passed to other staff and professionals as required;
  - establish and maintain regular contact with home, statutory and voluntary agencies;
  - ensure confidentiality for individual pupils, sharing personal information on a 'need to know' basis;
  - promote inclusion in all areas of school life and encourage looked after children to join in extra-curricular activities and out of school learning;
  - act as advisor to staff and governors, raising awareness of their needs
  - set up meetings with relevant professionals and agencies particularly if the pupil is experiencing difficulties in school or is at risk of exclusion;
  - ensure the rapid transfer of information between individuals, agencies if pupils leaves school;
  - ensure that each looked after child has an identified member of staff that they can talk to;
  - ensure that looked after children and their peers are listened to and have equal opportunity to pastoral support in school;
  - support the transition to secondary school;
  - attend training and keep informed of the latest developments.

The Governing body of this school will:

- ensure that admission criteria prioritise looked after children, according to the *Code of Practice on Admissions*;
- ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for looked after children;
- ensure that there is a named Designated Leader for looked after children;
- nominate a governor who links with the Designated Leader, receives regular progress reports and provides feedback to the governing body for child protection and confidentiality reasons, ensure that information will be collected and reported in ways that preserve the anonymity, and respect the confidentiality of the pupils concerned;
- review the effective implementation of this policy;

- ensure that the school's other policies and procedures give looked after children equal access in respect of:
  - admission to school;
  - the National Curriculum and public examinations
  - additional educational support where this is needed

Staff will:

- as with all children, have high aspirations and celebrate the educational and personal achievement of looked after children;
- maintain looked after children's confidentiality and ensure they are supported sensitively;
- be familiar with the guidance on looked after children and respond appropriately to requests for information to support the completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings;
- liaise with the Designated Leader where a looked after child is experiencing difficulty.

### **Admissions**

On admission, records will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/social worker as appropriate, but always involving someone with parental responsibility. All relevant issues – academic, pastoral, social – will be discussed and this will provide information for the PEP and ensure that communication systems are established early.

At the first PEP meeting, the school will seek clarification from the social worker as to who requires school reports and who may give permission for school trips and extra-curricular activities and be the first point of contact.

### **Links with other policies and documents**

- Behaviour for Learning
- Home School Agreement
- Exclusion of Pupils
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Safeguarding
- Pupil Premium

### **Equalities**

Rhodes Avenue will ensure that it complies with its duties under the *Equality Act 2010* and have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the abovementioned Act.

### **Procedures for policy monitoring and dissemination**

This policy will be reviewed according to the Governing Body's schedule of policies. All members of staff and Governors will receive a copy of this policy. A copy will be available to download from the school's website and a hard copy will be available from the school office.

**Persons Responsible**

Head teacher  
Deputy Head  
Health and Safety Committee  
Designated Safeguarding Leader