



Dunmow St. Mary's School

Looked After Children Policy

Who are our Children Looked After?

Children and young people become "Looked After" either if they have been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most Children Looked After will be living with foster parents but a smaller number may be in children's residential units, living with a relative or even be placed at home with their birth parents. Since the White Paper 'Care Matters' of July 2007 the term "Children in Care" is also in use.

The governing body of Dunmow St. Mary's Primary School is committed to providing quality education for all its pupils, based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. We fully subscribed to the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters and, therefore, the Government's aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need in order to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

For Looked After Children it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared with their peers as and this governing body is committed to implementing the principles and practice as outlined in:

- Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (January 2021)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954314/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2020_-_Update_-_January_2021.pdf
- The designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (February 2018)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683561/The_designated_teacher_for_looked-after_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf
- Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children (February 2018)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf

Looked After Children may (or may not) have some or all the following issues:

- low self esteem
- poor education standards due to time out of school
- delayed social/emotional/cognitive development
- be bullied or bully others
- be prone to mental health issues
- be isolated with few friends
- have behaviour issues
- poor attachments to others
- have a need to be very private.

This makes them an extremely vulnerable group in terms of education and future life-chances.

From 1 September 2009 the governing bodies of all maintained schools have been required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) to appoint a designated teacher (DT) to promote the educational achievement of children in care who are on the school roll.

"The duty to safeguard looked after children, to promote their educational achievements and to ensure they are able to achieve and reach their full potential"

Section 52 Children Act 2004

The 2000 Guidance introduced key measures, in order to improve multi-agency coordination and improve educational life chances for Children Looked After including Designated Teachers for Children Looked After and the introduction of a Personal Education Plan for each pupil (PEP). The designated children in our school are Lisa Scarfe and Louise Anniss.

Care Matters has broadened and strengthened the support considered appropriate for Children in Care from birth to leaving care.

The governing body is committed to ensuring that the following roles and responsibilities are carried out effectively in order to fulfil the school's duty regarding these pupils

Roles and Responsibilities:

I. Of the Governing Body:

- ❑ Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises Children Looked After according to the DfES Admissions Code of Practice
- ❑ Ensure all governors are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Children Looked After
- ❑ Ensure there is a designated teacher for Children Looked After
- ❑ Liaise with the headteacher, designated teacher, and all other staff to ensure the needs of Children Looked After are met
- ❑ Nominate a governor with responsibility for CLA who links with the designated teacher

- Receive regular reports from the designated teacher which should include
 - the number of Children Looked After on roll and the confirmation that they have a Personal Education Plan
 - their attendance, compared to other pupils
 - their attainment (SATs) compared to other pupils
 - the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions (if any)
 - the destinations of pupils who leave the school
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures give Children Looked After equal access in respect of
 - Admission to school
 - National Curriculum and examinations both academic and vocational
 - Out of school learning and extracurricular activities
 - Work experience and careers guidance
- Annually, review the effective implementation of the school policy for Children Looked After

II. *Of the designated teachers:*

- Be an advocate for Children Looked After
- Attend relevant training for Children Looked After
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals in relation to Children Looked After seeking advice
- Ensure that all Children Looked After receive a positive reintegration on entering the school
- Ensure that all Children Looked After have an appropriate Personal Education Plan and that it is completed within 14 days of joining the school or of entering care (see the Essex Guidance on Personal Education Plans)
- Keep Personal Education Plans and other records up to date and reviewed appropriately
- Convene an urgent multi professional meeting if a Child Looked After is experiencing difficulties or at risk of exclusion.
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential/personal information on a need to know basis.
- Act as the key advisor for staff and governors on issues relevant to Children Looked After.
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and other school events
- Actively encourage and promote out of hours learning and extra curricular activities for Children Looked After
- Ensure speedy transfer of information when a Child Looked After transfers into another educational placement.
- Contribute information to CLA reviews when required.
Provide regular reports to the Governing Body regarding CLA in the school and relevant policy and practice development.

III. *Of **ALL** staff:*

- Have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of Children Looked After
- Positively promote the raising of a Child Looked After's self esteem

- ❑ Ensure any Child Looked After is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- ❑ Be familiar with the Guidance on Children Looked After and respond appropriately to requests for information to support Personal Education Plans, and review meetings
- ❑ Respond positively to the request to be a Child Looked After's named person
- ❑ Liaise with the designated teachers where a Child Looked After is experiencing difficulties
- ❑ Give only official exclusions and only use exclusions as a last resort, in line with Essex' exclusion advice
- ❑ Contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals
- ❑ Keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals as appropriate.

Confidentiality:

- Information on Children Looked After will be shared with school staff on a "need to know basis"
- The Designated Teacher will discuss what information is shared with which school staff at the PEP meeting. Once this has been agreed with the social worker, carer, young person, and other parties, complete confidentiality is to be maintained.

Training:

- The Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher will be responsible for ensuring all staff are briefed on the regulations and practice outlined in this policy.

Admission/Induction Arrangements for Looked After Children:

- Children Looked After are a priority for admission and we follow the Local Authority's published admission criteria.
- On admission to the school or to care the child and carer will meet with the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After. The Designated Teacher will identify any relevant issues, academic or pastoral, and ensure the child feels supported in the school. Consideration will be given to giving the child a mentor.
- On admission, 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 parents/carers, a social worker, other relevant professionals and the child, as appropriate, to put together a new PEP. This early meeting will ensure that communication systems are established from the outset. If records are not received promptly, we will undertake our own assessment to make sure that the teaching and support received are appropriate. We will endeavour to meet the statutory time scales for PEPs as outlined in guidance.
- When children already on school roll enter care, the school will ensure that they meet the Designated Teacher as soon as possible, and that the child and his/her parents/carers are made aware of the school's procedures and additional support arrangements. A meeting with other parties will be arranged and a PEP will be prepared as soon as possible; we will follow the procedure adopted for those children at the school who are already in care.

- At 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 and other such activities. At this meeting all means of communication to aid the exchange of information between statutory meetings will be discussed and agreed; this might include a home/school book to detail any sudden significant changes in the child's circumstances.
- Many Children Looked After do not want school staff to be aware of their care status because it makes them feel 'different'. We will discuss this with the child, and agree who should be aware of his/her care status; however, we recognise that in some cases – for example, if the child has a severe learning difficulty – this may not be possible.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) Completion:

- Social worker informs school of a child becoming looked after (or a looked after children entering the school)
- Date is set for the completion of a Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- PEPs are completed using Welfare Call
- PEP meeting takes place within 20 days, involving the social worker, designated teacher (or other appropriate staff), carer and young person if appropriate
- A date is set for the next PEP meeting.
- The PEP is taken to the child's statutory review and discussed within the wider context of the child's life
- The PEP is sent by the social worker to the Children Looked After team
- PEPs are updated termly.

This policy was agreed on:

It will be reviewed on:
