



LYDGATE INFANT SCHOOL

POLICY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

(April 2022)

INTRODUCTION

Who is in Public Care?

“Looked After Children” are pupils who are Looked After by the Local Authority (in Public Care). This means the children are subject to a **care order** or are **accommodated**. The carers of the children are responsible for day to day needs but the Local Authority has responsibilities towards each child as corporate parent and (under the Children Act 1989 sec. 22(4)) must work in partnership with parents in order to maintain links with their family which are as strong as possible. Many children in Public Care return home after long or short periods in care.

At the time of preparing the policy, the school has one child in this category.

Education of Children in Public Care

The DfE Document in Children in Public Care (April 2000) has stated that:

“Children in Public Care have an entitlement to full time education in mainstream schools, wherever possible. Pupils in Public Care should have equal access to the National Curriculum and associated tests, and to public examinations and career guidance.”

Research has identified that those involved in corporate parenting have lower expectations of those in Public Care. We believe that challenging negative attitudes about Young People in Public Care is critical to changing their experiences of education and improving outcomes.

Lydgate Infant School will strive to be a source of continuity and stability in a potentially otherwise turbulent life. There is a clear relationship between schooling difficulties and placement breakdown: either may precipitate the other. Repeated changes of school and care placement are damaging, not only because of the disruption they cause, but because each change represents another ending.

With the above in mind we have developed a school policy on Children in Public Care.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In accordance with Government legislation regarding children in Public Care we aim to:

- Identify all children on our school roll who are in Public Care, and regularly monitor and update data as is required to maintain a register of Children in Public Care.
- Raise pupil attainment and achievement, developing positive outcomes for pupils who are in Public Care in Sheffield.
- Promote high aspirations for all LAC in school to attain and achieve.
- Use a checklist (see checklist in section 4, below) to monitor that our school is addressing the needs of the whole child, specifically those needs which arise because the child is in Public Care.
- Improve attendance, and reduce exclusions of Children in Public Care, and to work together with other agencies to support school placement.
- Ensure appropriate working practices and systems are in place to work in partnership with all appropriate agencies and individuals.

DESIGNATED TEACHERS

Mr D Bromage, Mrs Z Singh and Miss N Leyshon have been assigned the role of designated teachers with responsibility for Looked After Children, as specified in the DfE document on the Education of Children in Public Care (see Section 6 below for Roles and Responsibilities).

PROCEDURES

Working practices and systems supportive to Children in Public Care:

- Information on Children in Public Care will be incorporated into the Annual Report to Governors.
- The school has prepared a home-school commitment document to support the education of Children in Public Care upon entry to the school. This will be part of our initial provision for new pupils who are in Public Care (see checklist).
- We will ensure that staff understand the relevant legislation regarding Children in Public Care. For example that changes of care status should not take place without consultation between education and social services personnel. However, if circumstances arise in which social services take pre-emptive action, education personnel will be informed of any change in care status and the school will ensure an updated Personal Education Plan is put into place (see checklist).

School staff will be proactive in communicating information to relevant personnel. If the designated teacher is not already aware of changes in:

- Circumstances of a child or changes in care status, information should be passed on and a review meeting will be convened in consultation with all those involved with the child.
- As part of our corporate parenting responsibility, issues of confidentiality will be sensitively raised. Confidentiality will be balanced with appropriate information sharing. The designated teacher will collate all relevant background information.
- When a child moves from this school copies of all information will, immediately, be forwarded to the receiving school.
- In the case of the absence of a Looked After Child, the school will contact the carer immediately. This is over and above any first day contact as detailed with the school's Absence Policy.
- If a pupil is discharged from Public Care, information will be added to the pupil's file and copies will be forwarded to social services personnel.

STAFF TRAINING

- All staff will receive regular information regarding the difficulties encountered by Looked After Children. On a regular basis an opportunity will be taken by the designated teacher to describe the operation and function of their role, and its implications to the teaching group. At this meeting, s/he will update staff on the pupils in Public Care and the teachers' responsibility for collecting and communicating information. Confidentiality issues will be addressed. The designated teacher will ensure that school staff are trained as appropriate and will take responsibility for organizing any INSET in this subject which may include input by LA personnel.
- School is conversant with the local and national targets for the achievement for Looked After Children.

PROCEDURES REGARDING INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND CARERS

- All parties with parental responsibility have entitlement to details relating to the education of Looked After Children. The school will ensure that those who have contact with the child (as stated in the PEP) are given details regarding:
 - School trips
 - Parent Meetings
 - Information from school
 - School reports
- The school will ensure that effective communication takes place with other agencies that are involved with the pupil. These may include health agencies, social services departments, Local Authority, Youth Justice teams and voluntary agencies. This will also include, as appropriate, natural parents, foster or residential carers, responsible officers of the LA and those known to have parental responsibility for the child.

ATTENDANCE

The legal responsibility for the Looked After Child lies with the local authority but practical responsibility for ensuring school attendance rests with the individual carer.

Continuity of education is a priority and the aim should be to minimize disruption to education by promoting full attendance.

The carer should inform school on the first morning of absence and successive mornings if appropriate that the young person is ill. If sickness continues, depending on the nature of the illness, other professionals may need to be informed.

Holidays must be arranged to fit with school holiday dates. There may be exceptional circumstances where a young person may be absent in term time. This would need to be agreed by all parties concerned and seen to be in the best interests of the young person. Permission must be requested from the school in all cases.

In the event of school absence other than sickness, carers on the first day need to contact:

- The Designated Teacher for the school
- The Social Worker

If there is unauthorized absence and concern, an educational planning meeting must take place, attended by the child, the Designated Teacher or the class teacher, the carer, the Social Worker in order to review the Personal Education Plan. The Attendance and Inclusion Service and LACES may also need to be involved.

School will monitor attendance of Looked After Children and refer concerns about absence to the Attendance and Inclusion Service for appropriate intervention.

The Attendance and Inclusion Service will identify, in conjunction with the Designated teacher in each school, a list of all children who are looked after.

Each half term, the attendance of all Looked After Children will be reviewed, reporting specific concerns to the Carer/Social Worker as appropriate.

CHECKLIST FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1. Are they happy in school?
2. Are they integrated socially?
3. Are they achieving well educationally?
4. Are they being bullied?
5. Do they wish their own LAC status known and by whom?
6. Do they have facilities for homework and quiet study?

7. Is transfer to another school or setting necessary?
8. Are they incorporated into decision-making where appropriate?
9. Is sensitivity shown to agreed names for pupils?
10. Does the school promote the child's knowledge of their rights?
11. Are school staff aware of the possibility of the pupil feeling:
 - A sense of loss
 - A lack of trust in adults
 - A sense of rejection or isolation
 - A lack of personal advocacy
 - Confused about the reasons for going in Public Care
 - Fear of children at their residence

HOME-SCHOOL COMMITMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE

Carers' expectations of School:

- To feedback positive achievements as well as concerns
- To develop an increased awareness of the needs of young people in Public Care
- To understand and support young people with temporary difficulties
- To establish a clear communications structure between school and home
- To provide the carers with written information and school policies
- To supply work for young people excluded from school
- Identify appropriate Out of School hours learning activities
- To attend key meetings held by the Local Authority

CARERS' COMMITMENTS TO SCHOOLS

- To ensure that education is given the highest priority
- To provide clear lines of communication
- To maintain daytime routines that support education, such as ensuring the pupil has had enough sleep, is able to get to school on time and has the necessary equipment
- To recognize and reward educational achievement
- Support attendance at Out of School Hours Learning activities
- To ensure that young people in public care who are not attending school receive an education
- To support and encourage young people in completing course work and homework
- To develop resources that support young people's education
- To attend meetings and events at school

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

It will be the duty and responsibility of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children to:

- Ensure all Looked After Children in this school are aware of who the designated teacher is, and what their role is.

- Attend courses and update personal knowledge on issues relevant to children in public care.
- Be available for consultation as required by the pupil, staff, parents, social workers, school governors and school staff.
- Act as an advocate for children in public care within the school providing for an opportunity for their views to be heard and their feelings made known.
- Be the primary contact within the school for all social care personnel regarding children in public care
- Make known to carers and pupil the responsibility held by the designated teacher for children in public care.
- Be responsible for the collection and collation of all relevant information on children in public care and to make available and transfer the information in an efficient manner as required.
- Monitor, evaluate and ensure the maintenance of the PEP for all pupils who are on roll and are in public care.
- Ensure that the pupil has access to, and attends, Out of Hours Learning opportunities and for raising achievement.
- Ensure that a relevant home/school agreement is drawn up with the pupil's primary carer even when the period of residence is likely to be temporary.
- Participate in the network of Designated Teachers to aid good practice and continuity for children in public care.
- Be responsible for amendment and updating of this policy as required.