

Children In Care Policy

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DESIGNATED TEACHER FOR CHILDREN IN CARE	Luka Atkinson LAt@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk
HEADTEACHER	David Wright DWt@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk
DESIGNATED GOVERNOR FOR CHILDREN IN CARE	Karen Lay Kla@woodlandsschool.essex.sch.uk

Contents

1	Introduction
2	Roles and responsibilities
3	Staff Development
4	Personal Education Plans
5	Pupil Premium Plus
6	References
7	Useful Contact Details

1. Introduction

Children in care are some of the most vulnerable learners in Woodlands school. Most children enter care as a result of abuse or neglect and can often experience issues of attachment, loss and trauma. These outcomes often impact on learning and wellbeing. Nationally it is recognised that children in care do considerably less well than their peers, resulting in poor exam success and often leading to limited further education, employment and training opportunities.

Woodlands School is committed to achieving improved educational outcomes for children in care and post LAC children, through providing access to a high quality and accessible curriculum, taking account of their additional needs.

Our school recognises that this is a whole school approach and all governors, staff and volunteers contribute to achieving the very best for children in care and post LAC children.

Woodlands School subscribes to the five priorities of the Essex Virtual School. These are;

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for children in care across all key stages
- Improve school attendance and reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans
- Support school leadership to enhance a shared objective of improving life opportunities through education.
- Provide access to advice, support and intervention for children adopted, Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order to schools and families

1.1 Under the Children Act 1989 a child is looked after by a Local Authority if he or she is in their care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This can happen under a number of arrangements.

a) Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20).

b) Children who are the subject of a Care Order (section 31) or interim Care Order (section 38)

c) Children who are subject to emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)

d) Children who are compulsorily accommodated- this includes children remanded to the Local Authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).

1.2 Post LAC children refers to those children that are no longer in care through:

a) adoption

b) Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

c) Child Arrangement orders (CAO)

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Trustees

The Trustees of Woodlands School will:

Ensure they are all fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for children in care;
Ensure that staff has the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep children in care safe;

Ensure there is a designated teacher for children in care and post LAC children, who is trained and has sufficient time to fulfil the role;

Ensure the admission criteria and practice prioritises children in care and post LAC children in accordance with the Admissions Code of Practice 2014

Nominate a Trustee with responsibility for children in care and Post LAC children who links with the Designated Teacher.

Receive regular reports from the Designated Teacher which should include:

- The number of children in care and post LAC children on roll
- Confirmation that each has an up to date high quality Personal Education Plan
- Information about their school attendance and exclusion rates in comparison to other pupils
- Their progress and attainment data
- Destinations for children in care and Post LAC children that leave the school
- The use and impact of Pupil Premium Plus in accelerating progress

* All information collected and reported will be done anonymously for safeguarding reasons and to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of the children and young people concerned.

Ensure that the schools policies and practice gives equal access to:

- Admission to school
- The curriculum and access to take examinations both academic and vocational
- Support and participation in out of school learning and extra-curricular activities
- Work experience and careers guidance

Annually review the effective implementation of the school policy for Children in Care and Post LAC children.

2.2 Head Teacher

As the school leader the head Teacher will:

- Identify a designated Teacher for children in care and post LAC children, where possible ensuring that there is a deputy designated teacher in case of staff absence.
- Be knowledgeable about the Schools Admission Code in relation to school admissions
- Carefully consider any proposed exclusion, taking account of the vulnerability of a child in care and the potential impact on their care arrangements and give due consideration to alternatives to exclusion wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of the designated Teacher to enable them to fulfil their role;
- Provide sufficient time to allow them to undertake the requirements of the role effectively.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to monitor and take effective action regarding the admission, attendance and progress of children in care and post LAC children.
- Ensure all staff receive relevant training opportunities and are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and related guidance.

2.3 Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher of Woodlands School whom is responsible for LAC and Post LAC pupils will:

- Know all the details about each child in care in relation to which Local Authority has care responsibilities, their legal status, care and contact arrangements, parental responsibility and the level of delegated authority given to carers.
- Provide a welcome and smooth introduction to the school for the child and their carer(s)
- Ensure the school safeguarding lead has details of the child's social worker and name of the Virtual School Head in the Local Authority that looks after the child or young person.
- Have a lead responsibility in promoting and raising the educational achievement of every child in care on the school roll;
- Ensure their educational, personal social and emotional needs are prioritised;
- Take the lead responsibility for helping all school staff to understand the factors that can affect how children in care learn and achieve along with the impact of attachment and trauma.
- Have high expectations for the progress of children in care;
- Ensure every child has a high quality up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) and regularly monitor the progress of learning objectives.
- Maintain the overview of progress, attendance and provision including the effective use of Pupil Premium Plus, linking with the Virtual School as necessary.
- Ensure any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are addressed in accordance with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- Be an advocate for children in care and Post LAC children
- Attend any relevant training and ensure training and CPD opportunities are regularly reviewed and records updated;
- Act as the key liaison professional for other agencies and individuals in relation to children in care and post LAC children
- Ensure all children in care have a positive and considered integration or transition to or from school.
- Keep PEPs and other records up to date and reviewed regularly.
- Where a child or young person in care or post LAC is experiencing difficulties in school, will communicate effectively with parents, carers and other professionals to plan targeted, effective intervention and support.
- Ensure the confidentiality of children in care and post LAC children sharing confidential/personal information on a need to know basis only.
- Act as the key adviser for staff and governors on issues relevant to children in care and post LAC children;
- Ensure that care and school liaison is effective including invitations to meetings and in particular school events i.e. school plays, open evenings and celebration events.
- Actively encourage and promote home learning and extra-curricular activities
- Ensure speedy transfer of information when a child in care or post LAC child transfers to another educational placement
- Contribute to children in care statutory reviews when required
- Provide regular reports (as set out above) to the Trustees regarding children in care and post LAC children
- Ensure information about mental health is made available and support that can be provided

2.4 Woodlands School staff

Ensuring children in care and Post LAC children do well and are supported requires a whole school approach. As a school we will:

- Have high expectations and aspirations for the educational achievements of children in care and post LAC children;

- Have an understanding of the key issues that affect the learning of children in care and post LAC.
- Ensure that any child in care is supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained within safeguarding requirements;
- Be familiar with the guidance on children in care and respond appropriately to requests for information to support Personal Education Plans and review meetings.
- Ensure the designated Teacher is informed where a child in care or post LAC child is experiencing difficulties in class or within the school.
- Only use exclusion as a last resort in line with the exclusion guidance, being mindful that exclusion may place the care placement under duress and causing further disruption to care and education.
- Ensure provision of careers advice and guidance, promoting high aspirations and looking at long term goals.

3. Staff Development

The Designated Teacher should be trained for the role and should ensure access to ongoing professional development opportunities for the role through various opportunities. As a school we encourage staff to participate in training opportunities that will enable them to meet the needs of children in care and post LAC children more effectively. Part of the Designated Teachers' role is to raise awareness of the issues and barriers to learning for these children within the whole school environment.

4. Personal Education Plans

Every child in care must have an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP) that contributes to the overall care plan. Each Local Authority has its own approach to PEPs

5. Pupil Premium Plus

Each child in care and post LAC child attracts the Pupil Premium Plus grant (PPG+). The purpose of the grant is to reduce the difference in educational outcomes between these children and their peers. As a school we will carefully plan and regularly review the use and effectiveness of the PPG+ to ensure it is accelerating progress and meeting the needs of the child in care as identified in their PEP. For post LAC children we will target resources linked directly to the child's needs and communicate regularly with their parents and carers.

6. Essex Virtual School Contact Details

Email: Virtual.School@essex.gov.uk

Website: www.essex.gov.uk/virtualschool

Signed: _____
Head Teacher

Dated: 5th February 2024

Signed: _____
Chair of Governors

Dated: 5th February 2024

