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LN6 7UE

Looked After Children (LAC) /Children in Care (CiC) Policy

September 2023

This policy aims to give all members of the school community clear guidance with regard the support in place for Looked After Children/Children in Care at Sir Francis Hill Primary School

Policy Owner	Headteacher
Governing Body Committee	Development
Date Approved by Governors	04.10.2023
Next Review Date	July 2025 (or sooner if required)

Policy written by Caroline Bibby

Contextual Background to Looked After Children (LAC)/Children in Care (CiC) in Lincolnshire

Although Lincolnshire has below the National average number of Looked After Children/Children in Care however, Lincolnshire has seen an increase, like other authorities, since the pandemic. Like any other children, LAC/CiC pupils will access the school system at some point. This means that, at some stage, any school is likely to need to provide the appropriate support and provision for a child who is in care.

Over recent years commencing 2006, Children's Services of Lincolnshire County Council have introduced a focus of support toward raising the educational attainment of children in care. This has proven successful in that the academic performance indicators of children in care at KS4, are increasing. This has led to more young people who have come through the care system going on to further and higher education.

At Sir Francis Hill, it is important for us to place the correct emphasis on Looked After children/Children in Care as unquestionably there are poorer outcomes for some Looked After Children/Children in Care and Care Leavers, this is often due to their experiences before coming into care. There are concerns over those young people experiencing poor mental health well-being, and others whose education is weaker as a result of poor attendance and exclusion, resulting in further disengagement. However, Looked After Children/Children in Care tend to make slightly better educational progress than children in need which indicates, as highlighted in the Rees Centre Study of 2015, that being in care can have some positive benefits. The research reinforces that when care is good, Looked After Children make better than expected educational progress whilst in care.

'With the right support and influence, effectively coordinated between local partnerships, (schools and children's services, health etc) children in care are capable of achieving as well as their peers.'

Children are taken into care or can become 'Looked After' for a number of different reasons. This can often be a traumatic experience in itself and is usually a result of the emotional stress, abuse or trauma arising from family upheaval and domestic turbulence involved.

There are 4 main groups or definitions of looked after children/children in care as identified under the Children Act 1989. These are:

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

Section 21 Children who are compulsorily accommodated; this includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to criminal justice supervision order with a residence order

Section 31 Children who are the subject of a care order or an interim care order known as Section 38

Sections 44 & 46 Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection

The effects of being taken into care via any of the above group definitions can impact very severely on the child's social and emotional stability, due to the trauma that this causes (Adverse Childhood Experiences). This in turn can limit their educational development and the impact of this varies depending upon the age at which the turbulence is experienced. It is an increasingly known fact in e.g. professional circles (research educationalists and psychologists) that the emotional and social well-being of children and young adults is inextricably linked to their ability to learn.

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance on the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children. It also takes into account section 20 and section 20A of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

Definitions

Looked-after children (LAC)/Children in Care (CiC) are registered pupils that are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services functions, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours

Previously looked-after children (PLAC) are registered pupils that fall into either of these categories: They were looked after by a local authority but ceased to be as a result of any of the following:

- A Child Arrangements Order (CAO), which includes arrangements relating to who the child lives with and when they are to live with them
- A Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- An adoption order

They appear to the governing board to have:

- Been in state care in a place outside of England and Wales because they would not have otherwise been cared for adequately, and
- Ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted

Personal education plan (PEP)/Electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) is part of the child's care plan that is developed with the school. It forms a record of what needs to happen and who will make it happen to ensure the child reaches their full potential.

Virtual school head (VSH) is a local authority officer responsible for promoting the educational achievement of their authority's looked-after children, working across schools to monitor and support these pupils as if they were in a single school.

Aims

At Sir Francis Hill Primary school, we aim to:

- make a real difference in helping to provide the best possible education for looked after children/children in care as much as any other child who attends our school
- seek to give our young people in care, professional help, encouragement and support, so they find Sir Francis Hill school a welcoming and friendly place
- be fully inclusive and challenge negative views and stereotypes
- offer support to and work with their foster carers/carers/guardians on how to assist the young person's learning and enhance educational opportunities

The Children Act 2004 places duty on us all as corporate parents to work together to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. We recognise that schools and teachers are at the very heart of this process so that we can provide a good education in order to unlock a bright future and so increase life chances of this vulnerable group. We recognise our responsibilities as governors and teachers and we actively want to support the local authority in undertaking its statutory responsibility, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004. This is to help this vulnerable group to succeed in education, strengthen their mental health, champion their needs, raise awareness and challenge negative assumptions at all levels.

The Provision for Looked After Children/Children in Care at Sir Francis Hill Primary School

All schools are required to have a suitably experienced Designated Teacher who is tasked to ensure that provisions and support are given to the child in a fully coordinated and planned way across the school. This needs to be carried out sensitively and appropriately by raising the awareness of staff to key aspects and circumstance affecting learning, and where necessary liaise appropriately for support with the services of the responsible Local Authority. Sir Francis Hill's named Designated Teacher is Miss Caroline Bibby.

Our school will always aim to ensure that:

- A suitable member of staff is appointed as the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- The designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and supports other staff members to do this too
- Staff, parents, carers and guardians are aware of the identity of the designated teacher, how to contact them and what they are responsible for

The Role of Teaching and Support Staff at Sir Francis Hill in regard to Looked After Children/Children in Care:

- All will ensure the appropriate sensitivities and confidentiality are maintained
- All will be familiar with and respond appropriately to requests for progress and/or attainment information in order to compile the ePEP/PEP and other documentation necessary for reviews
- All will respond positively to any request by a child to be the person they want to talk with
- All will ensure that no child in care becomes a victim of stigmatisation at any time and that any such attitudes are swiftly reported and eradicated.
- All will positively promote the self-esteem of looked after children
- All will convey high aspirations for their educational and personal achievement.

The Role of the Designated Teacher at Sir Francis Hill Primary School

The Designated Teacher at Sir Francis Hill Primary School, will annually report to the School's Governing Body on the progress and performance of looked after children/children in care. This report will include:

- The number of Looked After Children/Children in Care on roll
- Attendance statistics for any authorised and unauthorised absence
- The frequency, circumstance and reasons for any recorded exclusion
- How they are performing in core subjects, their progress and any value added measure when compared against initial baseline assessment
- The frequency of them taking part in extra-curricular activities
- The provision arrangements for additional support identified

Our Governing Body requires our Designated Teacher to carry out the specific duties below in relation to the Looked After Children attending this school, as recommended in the statutory guidance entitled: The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children Statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities, February 2018.

This guidance can be found at:

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

In this context the Designated Teacher will:

- Become the central point of contact at this school for all professionals and agencies working with and supporting the individual looked after children we have on roll, including, but not exclusive to Social Workers, Virtual School, Foster Carers and schools which children may move to.
- Discuss with social workers how the school should engage with birth parents, and ensure the school is clear about who has parental responsibility and what information can be shared with whom
- Take the lead role in the professional assessment and preparation of the educational targets and subsequent reviews to be recorded into the relevant sections of the child's Electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) or PEP (depending on authority)
- Attend relevant update training and cascade information for staff development and updating regarding Looked After Children/Children in Care
- Ensure that personal information is handled carefully and sensitively and that the child's wishes and preferences are taken into account and that confidentiality is maintained at all times
- Establish good working relationships and communications with Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents, ensuring information is received and early notification is provided for them to attend meetings and reviews
- Provide support and sanctuary to help settle a looked after child into the school, and at other times; ensure that the looked after child feels safe, knows who to trust and who to go to if they feel the need for support
- Ensure the transfer of records if a Looked After Child/Child in Care moves school
- Seek and prioritise meetings with and referrals to appropriate external agencies in situations that require external support
- Ensure the appropriate and educationally impactful use of the Looked After Children/Children in Care Pupil Premium, providing quantifiable results.
- Find ways of making sure the latest information about educational progress is available to contribute to the statutory review of care plans
- Ensure mechanisms are in place to inform VSHs when looked-after children/children in care are absent without authorisation and work with the responsible authority to take appropriate safeguarding action
- Talk to the child's social worker and/or other relevant parties in the local authority regarding any decisions about changes in care placements which will disrupt the child's education, providing advice about the likely impact and what the local authority should do to minimise disruption
- Make sure that, if a looked-after child/child in care moves school, their new designated teacher receives any information needed to help the transition process
- Seek advice from VSHs about meeting the needs of individual previously looked-after children, but only with the agreement of their parents or guardians

The ePEP/PEP

Each child will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) or Electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) in Lincolnshire, 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 ePEP/PEP should be established within a 20-school working day period for any looked after child starting on roll. The Designated Teacher will take care of the day-to-day monitoring of the ePEP/PEP. The ePEP/PEP will consider:

- The child's strengths, weaknesses and interests, both in and out of school
- Developmental and educational and pastoral needs (including the use of a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)
- 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 ePEP/PEP meeting
- The child's emotional wellbeing and intervention and therapeutic care to develop resilience and emotional wellbeing.

Monitoring and review

This policy was implemented in September 2023. It will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if necessary.