



# Chiltern Way Academy Trust

Turning Futures Around

## **Children Looked After Policy**

**Responsibility for this policy: Safeguarding, Welfare & Attendance Manager, DSL**

**Responsibility for its review: CEO**

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## Introduction:

Local Authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, which historically is a clear issue for this vulnerable group.

The definition of a Child Looked After (CLA) is a child/young person in public care or looked after due to:

- a CARE ORDER made by Court under S31 of the Children Act 1989. In these cases, the Local Authority has gone to court to assume parental responsibility because the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer 'significant harm'. These children may be cared for by foster carers, in residential homes, in residential schools, by relatives or occasionally still living at home under supervision.
- being ACCOMODATED by councils with the agreement of their parents under S20 of the Children Act 1989 (e.g. if the parents are ill or otherwise unable to care for their child). In these cases ,parents retain full parental responsibility. The child may live in foster care, in a children's home or in a residential school.

The definition of a Previously Looked After Child is a child/young person who is no longer being looked after by the local authority. This is because they have either been returned back home to their family or are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship order or child arrangements order.

The Board of Trustees of Chiltern Way Academy is committed to providing quality education for all its students, based on equality of opportunity, access and outcomes. It is recognised that nationally there is educational underachievement of Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, when compared with their peers, and is committed to implementing the principles and practice, as outlined in the statutory guidance, "The roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for Looked After children" and "The Children and Young Persons Act 2008", also the Designated Teacher (Children Looked After) (England) Regulation 2009. Also, the guidance of "Improving the attainment of looked after young people in secondary Schools." The Children Act places a duty to safeguard Children Looked After, to promote their educational achievements and to ensure that they are able to "achieve and reach their full potential."

The Social Exclusion Unit's report 'A Better Education for Children in Care' (SEU 2004) identified five key reasons why children in care under achieve:

- Their lives are characterised by instability
- They spend more time out of school
- They do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- Primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development

- They have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education

All children in public care are individuals, with distinct identities and needs shaped by their racial origins, religious beliefs, gender, sexuality and/or whether or not they are in any way disabled. They all have the potential and equal right to succeed.

The Improving Attainment Guidance recognises the collective responsibility of Local Authorities and schools to support looked after young people by setting out these principles:

1. Doing the things they do for all young people but more so
2. Balancing high levels of support with real challenge
3. Skilfully linking each young person to a key person they relate well to
4. Making it a priority to know the young people well and to build strong relationships
5. Developing strong partnerships with carers, local authorities and specialist agencies
6. Making things happen and seeing things through
7. Ensuring consistency as well as discrete flexibility
8. Actively extending the horizons of each young person
9. Planning for future transitions

#### **Academy Responsibilities:**

As a school, we must implement the statutory elements of the Guidance and Outcomes of 'Every Child Matters':

- There must be a designated teacher for children in care in every school
- Every child in care must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- To support Early Years and Post 16 settings, social workers and carers in raising attainment of children in care, and in doing so, promote the educational and social inclusion of all Looked after Children

Through effective communication, early intervention and liaison with all relevant services we will offer practical support to contribute and implement to the efficient tracking and monitoring of the child's educational needs and achievement.

The Virtual School is a crucial link that works with all relevant agencies to ensure that the needs of the looked after child are met. We have a duty to work with them in order to improve outcomes and encourage higher aspirations for the child.

**The designated teacher should:**

- Promote the educational achievement of every child looked after on the school's roll.
- Promote a culture in which Children Looked After believe they can succeed and aspire to further and higher education.
- Promote a culture in which Children Looked After are able to discuss their progress and be involved in setting their own targets, have their views taken seriously and are supported to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Make sure that Children Looked After are prioritised in any selection of students who would benefit from one-to-one tuition arrangements and that they have access to academic focused study support.
- Have lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** within the school.
- Attend necessary meetings such as CLA reviews (with a designated safeguarding staff member) and PEPs in order to find out and communicate information about the child.
- Ensure that the child's CARE PLAN, which details how roles and tasks concerning their education and other aspects of their life will be shared between carers, parents, social worker and school, is adhered to. The designated teacher or other nominated staff will liaise/communicate with relevant agencies to ensure that the care plan is regularly reviewed and monitored.
- Be a source of advice for teachers at school about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual students who are looked after
- Have the key role in making sure there is a central point of initial contact within the school and manage the process of how the school engages with others (e.g. social workers, virtual school heads).
- Ensure confidentiality on individual children, sharing confidential and personal information on a need to know basis, bearing in mind the wishes of the individual student.
- Be aware of the document 'the roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked after children – statutory guidance for school governing bodies' 2009

**Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

It is a statutory requirement that every child in care, who is of a statutory school age, has a PEP. This forms part of their statutory Care Plan. It is a record of what needs to happen for the child to enable them to fulfil their potential and it reflects any existing education plans, such as EHCP. It helps to create a shared understanding of what everyone, including the child, need to do to help them achieve their potential.

The PEP is reviewed every term and the child should be involved in this process.

It is the Designated Teachers role and responsibility to ensure that all relevant information is filled in prior to the PEP date, both tracking/monitoring info and the child's own wishes and feelings section. They should then be part of the meeting in order to share information about the child at school and be part of the planning and target setting for the next term. It is the designated teacher's responsibility to communicate any problems arising or new targets with the rest of the school teaching and support staff.

### **Good practice for all staff:**

- The School will set challenging targets for all children in the school, including children in care. We will have high expectations of them, both with regard to attainment, behaviour and also participation in broader school activities. It recognises that there are often additional hurdles for children in care to overcome due to their early life experiences, so support will be offered to help them achieve their potential and narrow the gap between their attainment and their peers.
- Teachers will also recognise that sensitivity is needed in dealing with aspects of the curriculum that deal with family values and experiences which are likely to rekindle distressing memories.
- The school recognises that children in care are likely to have emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families and the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it hard to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences. We have an important role to play in helping to ensure that unmet emotional needs do not lead to disaffection or difficulties with behaviour, which in turn lead to the child not being able to access their education.
- Continuity is vital for children already suffering disruption in their life so we will always aim to tackle the underlying causes of poor behaviour, e.g. through pastoral support programme and behaviour management, with exclusions only being used as a last resort.
- Understanding how important it is to see children looked after as individuals rather than as a homogenous group.
- Appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows a Child Looked After's status.

### **Attendance**

School should ensure that all students attend regularly, as continuity and stability are known to promote educational success for children in public care. Where non-attendance is identified, early intervention is essential as this signals to the child the importance of their education and that because they are in care of the Local Authority they are a priority.

The Designated Teacher together with other relevant staff, e.g. designated safeguarding and attendance staff, will work with the child, carer, social worker and Virtual School to find a solution to the non-attendance and to offer support or strategies to improve the attendance.

### **Post 16 Education**

The aim of all professionals working with young people in care going in to post 16 education is to overcome the barriers that contribute to the further educational underachievement of young people in care.

As their primary provider of education, we will endeavour to make the transition from year 11 to further education as smooth and stress free as possible, be it to our own sixth form provision or higher education elsewhere.

### **Good practice suggests that the Board of Trustees will:**

- Ensure that the admission criteria and practice prioritises Children Looked After according to the DfE Admissions Code of Practice.
- Ensure all Trustees are fully aware of the legal requirements and guidance for Children Looked After.
- Ensure there is a designated teacher for Children Looked After. The appointment of a Designated Teacher in accordance with the Regulations is a core function of the Trust Board. The guidance referred to earlier sets out what the Academy Trust Board collectively will need to do in order to fulfil its duty under section 20 of the 2008 Act and the Regulations.