



## **POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE (LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN)**

Sitwell Junior School aims to promote the educational achievement and welfare of all Children in Care

**Designated Teacher for Children in Care: Mrs Sarah Walker**

**Governor with responsibility for Children in Care: Mr. Peter Sheldon**

The governing body is committed to providing quality education for all pupils at Sitwell Junior School based on equality of access, opportunity and outcomes. This policy includes requirements set out in “Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children in care under section 52 of the Children Act 2004” (Nov 2005) and associated guidance on the education of Children in care.

The aims of the school are to:

- ensure that school policies and procedures are followed for children in care as for all children
- ensure that all children in care have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- provide a differentiated curriculum appropriate to the individual’s needs and ability
- ensure that children in care take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- ensure that carers and social workers of children in care pupils are kept fully informed of their child’s progress and attainment
- ensure that children in care are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision
- ensure that children in care in our school are fully supported to achieve to their full potential

In striving to achieve the school’s aims for children in care, as detailed above, the school will actively promote and support the Governing Body, Designated Teacher, and all school staff to undertake the roles and responsibilities set out in **Appendix 1** in relation to children in care.

Who are Children in Care?

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. They fall into four main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subjects of a care order (section 31) or interim care order (section 38)
- children who are the subjects of emergency orders for their protection (sections 44 and 46)
- 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)

The term ‘looked after’ was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to **care orders** and those who are **accommodated**. More recently the term ‘**children in care**’ has been introduced and used to refer to this group of children, in response to children and young people’s dislike of the term Looked After Children or LAC. In this document therefore, the term ‘children in care’ will largely be used, although the two terms mean the same thing and can be used and are used interchangeably.

#### Admissions

The Governing Body endorses council policy. The Council, as the Admission Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, believes that admissions criteria should not discriminate against Children in Care. This stance is also endorsed by the Barnsley Admissions Forum. Due to care placement changes, children in care may enter school mid-term. It is vital that we give them a positive welcome. If necessary we may offer additional support and pre-entry visits to help the new pupil settle.

#### Inclusion

This policy recognises that all pupils are entitled to a balanced, broad based curriculum. Our Children in Care policy reinforces the need for teaching that is fully inclusive. The Governing Body will ensure the school makes appropriate provision for all children in care.

#### Allocation of resources

The Governing Body will ensure that the school allocates resources to support appropriate provision for Children in care, meeting the objectives set out in this policy.

#### Monitoring the progress of Children in care

The social worker for a child in care should initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days of the child joining the school, or of entering care, and ensure that the young person is actively involved. It is vital that the school assesses each child in care’s attainment on entry to ensure continuity of learning. The role of the Designated Teacher in developing the Personal Education Plan is set out in **Appendix 2**.

The school will monitor and track the achievement and attainment of all pupils at regular intervals. Children in care will require their PEP to be reviewed, according to their needs, as initiated by the reviewing officer or social worker, and the young person’s views should be sought by the Designated Teacher and noted on the PEP.

#### Record Keeping

The Designated Teacher will know who all the children in care are in school and will have access to their relevant contact details including parents, carers and the social worker. The Designated Teacher will also know about any children in care from other authorities. It is important that the school flags children in care status appropriately in the school's information systems so that information is readily available as required.

#### Staff Development

We encourage staff to attend courses that help them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to support children in care. Part of the Designated Teacher's role is to develop awareness of issues associated with children in care.

#### Partnership with parents/carers and care workers

At school we firmly believe in developing a strong partnership with parents/carers and care workers to enable children in care to achieve their potential. Review meetings are an opportunity to further this partnership working.

#### **Links with external agencies/organisations**

We also recognise the important contribution that external support services make in supporting children in care. Colleagues from the following support services may be involved with individual children in care:

- Children's Social Care Fieldwork Teams
- Educational psychologists and others from Local Authority Special Educational Needs services
- Medical officers
- School nurses
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Education Welfare Officers
- Social care worker/Community care worker/Residential child care worker
- Youth Offending Service
- Life Chances Team

#### **Children in care policy review and evaluation**

We consider the Children in Care policy to be important and we will undertake a thorough review of both policy and practice each year. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Rationale for roles and responsibilities:**

Children in care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and it is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational underachievement when compared to their peers. For example, they may experience:

- a high level of disruption and change in school placements
- lack of involvement in extra curricular activities
- inconsistent or no attention paid to homework

This may result in:

- poor exam success rates in comparison with the general population
- underachievement in further and higher education

These issues may also affect young people who are adopted.

The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to improve outcomes for all children. To date the outcomes achieved by Children in care have been unacceptably poor and the Government is committed to addressing this disparity. As corporate parents we all have a part to play in this by vigorously applying the principles of good parenting by:

- giving priority to education
- listening to children
- providing stability and continuity
- taking corporate responsibility
- promoting inclusion
- raising standards
- intervening early
- promoting early years experiences
- celebrating success

#### **The Role of the Governing Body is to:**

- Nominate a Designated Governor for children in care, to take the lead role in matters relating to children in care.

- Appoint a designated member of staff in accordance with Designated Teacher Regulations 2009 is a core function of the governing body.

In discharging this core function it is for the governing body of each school to determine, in partnership with the head teacher, the key responsibilities of the designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children in care, including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at the school.

The way in which the role of the designated teacher will be carried out will vary from school to school. It will depend on the number of child in care on roll and their particular needs as well as, for example, whether the school caters for primary or secondary age children. It will be particularly important for governing bodies, in partnership with the school's leaders, to ensure that the focus of the designated teacher's role is on assessing and meeting the teaching and learning needs of the child and that administrative tasks which support that work are undertaken by support staff.

The designated teacher should be given the appropriate level of support in order to fulfil their role. Some schools may never have had a child in care on roll and the designated teacher may not therefore be familiar with some of the issues and processes they need to know about. The governing body should, in partnership with the head teacher, needs to ensure that the designated teacher has or will, through their training and development, have the opportunity to acquire and keep up-to-date the necessary skills, knowledge and training to understand and respond to the specific teaching and learning needs of child in care. This means in particular that they make sure the designated teacher understands and helps others to understand: the emotional, psychological and social implications of separation from birth families and the reasons for that separation;

- - that children in care are not a homogenous group, but are individuals with many of the same needs as any other child;
  - the broad framework of the care system and the way it impacts on the child's education;
  - the reasons why many children in care under-achieve such as the possible impact of loss and attachment and how the role of the designated teacher, in promoting high expectations of educational progress, can make a difference to a child in care's achievement; and
  - their own role in contributing to the statutory review of the child in care's personal education plan which forms an integral part of the child's overall care plan.

The governing body should ensure that the designated teacher is a member of the teaching staff with appropriate seniority, professional experience and status to provide leadership, training, information and advice to others that will influence decisions about the teaching and learning needs of child in care. Where the designated teacher is not a member of the

senior leadership team, a member of the team should be designated as a champion of child in care issues to work closely with the designated teacher.

The governing body should monitor the effectiveness of the designated teacher in undertaking these responsibilities. The governing body should consider a brief termly (three times a year) report from the designated teacher on the progress and educational needs of child in care on the school's roll. It will be important to ensure that reports do not result in unnecessary bureaucracy and workload but contain sufficient information to aid school planning. To protect a child's need for confidentiality it is also important to ensure that the reports do not mention individual children by name. The reports should enable the governing body to make judgements about the designated teacher role in relation to:

- any workload issues arising as a result of the number of children in care on roll at the school and the number of local authorities which are involved;
- how child in care are making progress in relation to other vulnerable groups and all children at the school (i.e. educational, social and emotional progress); the pattern of attendance and exclusions;
- any process or planning issues arising from personal education plans (PEPs);
- whether any are identified as gifted and talented and how those needs are being met;
- whether any have special educational needs (SEN) and whether those needs are being met through statements;
- how the teaching and learning needs of children in care are reflected in school development plans and are being met in relation to interventions and resources;
- training undertaken by the designated teacher in order to impart knowledge and understanding about the education and wellbeing of children in care to colleagues;
- work with virtual school heads or their equivalents in local authorities;
- the impact of any of the school's policies, for example on charging for educational visits and extended schools activities, on children in care.

The governing body and school leadership team should then consider what actions are required to address the issues raised by the reports in relation to:

- whether the designated teacher has sufficient time and resources to carry out their role effectively;
- any training, support and development needs required to ensure the role can be carried out effectively;

- the extent to which school policies take account of the particular needs of children in care.

Those undertaking the role of the designated teacher are accountable for the part of their job relating to children in care both through the school's performance management system and to the governing body via the governing body's termly monitoring process described in 2.7 and 2.8 above.

**The Role of the Designated Teacher:**

When a child at the school is admitted to care, or when a child in care joins the school either at the beginning or during the school year, the first step for the designated teacher is to ensure that their educational needs are assessed and that appropriate teaching and learning provision is agreed and in place to meet their needs.

The key responsibilities of the designated teacher in relation to each child in care who is a registered pupil of the school should include carrying out - or arranging to be carried out - the following:

- Provide strategic leadership across the school to ensure that all staff understand and respond positively and with sensitivity to the individual needs of children in care on roll.
- Assess and identify the teaching and learning needs of children in care on roll involving others as necessary and co-ordinating within the school the development and implementation of the child's PEP to reflect those needs. Particular account should be taken of the child's needs when joining the school and of the importance of promoting an ethos of high expectations about what he or she can achieve. Lead the process of individual target setting and tracking of the progress made by children in care.
- Ensure that systems are in place that enables children to have an opportunity to contribute to their personal education plan and understand what the plan means for them.
- Ensure that the school has received the child's most recent PEP from the child's previous school or social worker.
- Ensure that the PEP is up-to-date and made available for the child's statutory care plan review.

**Secure relevant services for the pupil where necessary.**

**Liaise with the social worker as necessary about the child's educational progress and needs, especially through contributing to the statutory review of the care plan.**

**Promote good home-school links through contact with the child's carer about how they can support his or her progress by paying particular attention to effective communication with carers.**

**Promote the pupil's inclusion in the school community and access to the school's curriculum, facilities and extra curricular activities.**

**Work with learning support assistants, class teachers and other school staff to support their understanding of issues which impact on the teaching and learning of child in care, including in relation to how information is shared.**

**Advise teachers at school about differentiated teaching methods appropriate for individual pupils who are in care.**

**Assist children in care when they transfer to their next school or college and ensure the speedy transfer of school records to a new school and ensuring that the local authority responsible for looking after the child has the most up-to-date version of the PEP.**

**It is for the school governing body to determine the key responsibilities of the designated teacher. However, the designated teacher should not delegate tasks to support staff which require professional judgements to be made about the teaching and learning needs of child in care.**

**All school staff will:**

- follow school procedures
- keep the Designated Teacher informed about a child in care's progress
- have high expectations of the educational and personal achievements of children in care
- positively promote the raising of a child in care's self esteem
- ensure any children in care are supported sensitively and that confidentiality is maintained
- be familiar with the school's policy and guidance on Children in care and respond appropriately to requests for information to support PEPs and review meetings
- liaise with the Designated Teachers where a child in care is experiencing difficulties



- give only official exclusions and only use exclusions in line with the school's exclusion policy, and relevant national guidance, being mindful to the difficulties this may create in the care placement
- contribute to regular liaison with social care colleagues and other appropriate professionals and keep carers fully informed at all times
- keep appropriate records, confidentially as necessary, and make these available to other professionals/parents/carers/pupil as appropriate
- make extra copies of reports available when required

## **Appendix 2**

### **Personal Education Plan Guidance**

**All children in care must have a care plan which is drawn up and reviewed by the local authority which looks after them. The care plan will identify intended outcomes and objectives for the child and provide the framework to work with the child and carers in relation to his or her emotional and behavioural development, identity, relationships and self care skills. The care plan must also include a health plan and a PEP that are developed and reviewed in partnership with relevant professionals. In the case of the PEP this will be the designated teacher.**

**Given the number of different adults involved in the child's care, the PEP is a vital document as it helps everyone gain a clear understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the child's education needs and how that will be provided.**

**The personal education plan, in addition to being part of the overall care plan, is part of a children in care's official school record. If the child moves schools it should be forwarded, along with other school records, to their new school, if known, and to the main contact (usually the child's social worker) in the local authority which looks after the child.**

**Receipt of the PEP template by the designated teacher**

**When a child on the school's roll becomes looked after the local authority which looks after him or her must ensure that the designated teacher is notified and receives the PEP pre-populated with basic information. This should include information about:**

**the child's details that the school needs to know - such as age; care status; where the child lives; school history and whether the child has a statement of special educational needs;**

**the child's carers;**

**the child's parents and what restrictions might apply in relation to contact with the child;**

**who to contact within the local authority that looks after the child (social worker and Life Chances Team contact).**

**Children who are already looked after when they join the school should have an existing PEP. This should be transferred to the child's new school.**

**Actions for the designated teacher in relation to the PEP**

**In partnership with the lead person in the local authority (in some cases the social worker, in others it will be another appropriate professional) the designated teacher will be responsible for the development and implementation of the PEP and its review. They should make sure that the document addresses:**

**short and long term goals agreed in partnership with the child and carers about helping him or her achieve his potential;**

**planned actions, e.g. on homework, extra tuition, study support, including by when, that the school and others will take to promote the educational achievement of the child based on an assessment of his or her educational needs;**

**how the progress of the child is to be monitored.**

**what other discussions are needed if planning reveals further support is required – e.g. possible action to support special educational needs involving the SENCO, educational psychologist or CAMHS or local authority education services;**

**what action may be needed to support the child’s long term targets and aspirations, for example, in relation to goals for the next Key Stage, success in public examinations consideration of further and higher education, work experience and career plans;**

**the achievements of the child both academically and in taking part in the wider activities of the school and in other out of school learning activities (e.g. sporting, personal development, community).**

**In order that there can be an informed discussion at the statutory review of the care plan about the child’s progress in school the designated teacher is responsible for ensuring that the PEP:**

**is reviewed before the statutory review of the care plan and that it is up-to-date and contains any new information since the last PEP review, including whether agreed provision is being provided;**

**is clear about what has or has not been taken forward, noting what resources may be required to further support the child and from where**