Durham Virtual School

Policy for Children in Care and Previously in Care.

Policy and Guidance for Durham Schools

West Pelton Primary School & Nursery

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SCHOOL POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND PREVIOUSLY IN CARE IN DURHAM

Purpose

To promote the educational attainment, achievement, progression and welfare of Children in Care whether they attend a Durham school or an Out-of-Authority school and for all Children in Care (CIC) of other local authorities who attend Durham schools. The local authority has a statutory role to play for all children in its care and acts as a Corporate Parent.
In light of the extension of the role of Designated Teachers and The Virtual School Head this policy will also make reference to children who were previously children in care (PCIC) and are adopted, have a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order (previously residence order).

Rationale

Children in Care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children in care have suffered a disrupted childhood and experienced adverse experiences. It is nationally recognised that there is considerable educational under-achievement when compared to their peers. Children in Care often achieve poor exam success rates in comparison to the general population. Fewer children in care progress to Higher Education or follow progression pathways that will lead to future economic success and well-being. Experimental data from the Department for Education (DFE) suggests that children who were previously in care are also not achieving in line with their peers.

Legal Framework

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 emergency orders for their protection (Sections 44 and 46)
- Children who are the subjects of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)
- 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)

Children who are cared for on a voluntary basis are “accommodated” by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act – they may live in foster care, in a Children’s Home or in a residential school.

The term “in care” refers only to children who are subject to a care order by the courts under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 – they may live with foster carers, in a Children’s Home, in a residential school, with relatives or with parents under supervision.

For all children who receive more than 75 days of ‘short breaks’ in every 12 months CLA status applies and an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is appointed. As the care arranged is not continuous academic attainment does not have to be reported in the same way to the DfE. A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is not required for these children and they do not qualify for pupil premium plus, however schools will attend a child’s Looked After Review (LAR) and provide a report in relation to their education.

Nationally all these groups are said to be “Looked After Children” (LAC) or Children in Care (CLA). In Durham we know these children as Children in Care (CIC). They may be looked after by our local authority or may be in the care of another authority but living in ours.

For the purpose of this policy, Children Previously in Care include those:

- that were adopted from care
- that left care under a Special Guardianship Order
- that left care under a Residential Order on or after 14 October 1991 (under the Children Act 1989).
- that left care through a Child Arrangement Order
- that were adopted from abroad but were in state or church care in their country of origin

a) The Name of the Designated Teacher (DT) for Children in Care and Children Previously in Care is:

Ms Victoria Hewison

b) The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children in Care and Children Previously in Care is:

Within School

- To celebrate the success of all Looked After Children.

- To ensure the CIC has a named key adult who they are comfortable with, who can advocate for them and is accessible during the school day.

- To work closely with school SENDCO to ensure any additional or SEND are quickly identified and therefore appropriately met.

- To ensure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have an understanding of the difficulties and educational disadvantage faced by CIC and PCIC and that staff understand the need for positive systems of support to overcome them.

- To promote positive relationships for the CIC throughout the school community with those the child will come into contact with. Ensuring they understand the effects trauma and attachment has on them and the behaviours they may display because of this.

- To inform members of staff of the general educational needs of CIC and PCIC, and to actively promote the involvement of these children in school homework clubs, extra-curricular activities, home reading schemes, school councils, etc.

- To act as an advocate for CIC and PCIC.

- To develop and monitor systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals and the Durham Virtual School.

- To hold a supervisory brief for all CIC, e.g. to ensure all relevant education and care information is available to school staff and carer(s), and that this information is kept up to date. It is important to be aware that some children in care do not want all adults or peers to know about their accommodation or care status; this is a sensitive area and should be addressed with caution and respect of the child/young person's wishes.

- To monitor the educational progress, attainment, and attendance of CIC and PCIC

- To intervene if there is evidence of individual under-achievement, absence from school or internal truancy.

Work with Individual Children in Care

- To help ensure that each pupil has a high-quality Personal Education Plan (the PEP should be initiated by the young person's DT). The PEP sets out appropriate targets and support available. (Systems are different across Local Authorities).

- To consult with the child or young person and ensure they have an appropriate adult who they feel comfortable with, who will attend school events e.g. parents' evenings; sports; drama events to provide support and encouragement.

- Ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus is targeted at improving attainment, supporting achievements and enrichment opportunities.

Previously Children in Care and Pupil Premium Plus

- Ensure that the parents and guardians of PCIC are aware of the Pupil Premium Plus and how they can enable the school to apply for it. This means either a letter needs to go out to all parents or information is collected on admissions data collection forms. Parents / guardians will need to provide documentary evidence (such as the legal order) to prove the pupil was previously in care. The pupil is then recorded on the October Census each year.

- Ensure parents/guardians are informed and included in discussions around the use of Pupil Premium Plus for their child.

Liaison with other Partners

- To liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensuring all CIC and PCIC in school are safeguarded.

- To work closely with school SENDCO to ensure any additional or SEND needs are quickly identified and therefore appropriately met

- To help an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) co-ordinate education and CIC review meetings, so that the Personal Education Plan can inform the child's Care Plan.

- To attend, arrange for someone else to attend, or to contribute in other ways for CIC at care planning meetings and PEP meetings.

- To be the named contact for colleagues in the Durham Virtual School and other local authorities as appropriate.

- To ensure the speedy transfer of information and school records between agencies and other schools. Support Durham Virtual school in producing a Pupil Profile when a child moves school.

- To ensure the school admits CIC and PCIC in line with the Admissions Code of Practice. Where a school is over PAN a CIC or PCIC will go to the top of the waiting list.

- To ensure that the Head Teacher considers a range of strategies before imposing a suspension or permanent exclusion for a CIC, which should be a last resort. This includes contacting the Head of The Virtual School and the Inclusion and Alternative Provision Co-ordinator.

Training

- To develop a knowledge of challenges faced by Children in Care and Education Inclusion procedures by attending training events organised by the Local Authority and other providers.

- To attend training for Designated Teachers as appropriate.

- To cascade training to school staff as appropriate.

c) The name of a Governor with special responsibility for Children in Care and Children Previously in care:

Mrs Michelle Radford

d) The role of that Governor:

- The named governor will provide a report to the Governing Body on an annual basis (unless it will be easy to identify individual children whereby work on behalf of all vulnerable groups may be more appropriate):

Areas that should be reported:

- A comparison of test scores for looked after children as a discrete group, compared with the attainment and progress of other pupils.
- Formal examination data as a discrete group.
- The attendance of pupils as a discrete group, compared with other pupils.
- The level of suspensions/permanent exclusions.
- Pupil destinations.
- Good News stories and celebrations of achievement.

- The named governor should be satisfied that the school's policies and procedure ensure that CIC and PCIC have equal access to:

  - The national curriculum (if appropriate)
  - Public examinations (if appropriate).
  - Careers guidance.
  - Additional educational support.
  - Extra-curricular activities.
  - Work experience if appropriate.

- The named governor should be aware of how attachment and trauma can affect a child/young person and consider this to allow challenge to the behaviour policy when considering Suspensions and Permanent exclusions for CIC and PCIC.

e) Responsibility for Children in Care in School

It is important that all teaching staff who are in contact with the child or young person are aware that he/she is being looked after by the Local Authority. The responsibility for the transfer of this information should be that of the Head Teacher and/or the Designated Teacher for Children in Care. In addition to this it is important to be mindful of the views of the child/young person and only share relevant information in respect of their views.

Teachers working with the child/young person should have access to the child's targets in the PEP document to enable them to support them to achieve better outcomes.

It is appropriate for Learning Support Assistants (LSA) to have knowledge that the young person is being looked-after only when they are directly involved in the teaching of the young person or the direct supervision of them during breaks and lunch times.

In the absence of the usual class teacher, some information regarding the child's circumstances should be shared with the teacher covering the class. The extent of this sharing should be determined by the Head Teacher or the Designated Teacher for Children in Care. In many cases this may not be necessary. Only information required to safeguard a child should be shared.

f) Admission Arrangements for Children in Care

Admissions authorities of all mainstream and special schools must give the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria to CIC and PCIC, as defined in the School Admission Code. Due to care placement changes CiC may enter school mid-term. It is vital that as a school we ensure that they are given a positive welcome in order that they feel secure. The Virtual School

(VS) will support the transition and will arrange pre-entry visits along with the social worker and the Carer.

On admission, records (including the PEP) will be requested from the pupil's previous school and a meeting will be held with carer/parent/social worker. A date will be agreed for a new Personal Education Plan within 10 school days of a new child in care being admitted. An appropriate school admissions meeting will take place. In some cases, it may be helpful to provide a mentor from within the school community to support transition.

g) Involving the Young Person

It is important that a young person is aware that information is being recorded regarding their personal circumstances. How this is shared with them clearly depends on their age and understanding. It is good practice to consult and share with a young person the appropriate records that are held by school and the local authority. The explanation should emphasise that the school, the social worker, and their carer(s) are working together to help them achieve in school.

Meetings in school should respect the child/young person's feelings and ensure that confidentiality is upheld. The part they play in the meeting should reflect their choice and their right to withdraw from the meeting. Their voice should always be reflected in the PEP document.

h) Communication with Other Agencies (Children in Care)

Schools should ensure that a copy of all reports (e.g. end of year reports) should be forwarded to the young person's Social Worker in addition to the Foster Carer or Residential Social Worker. It should be agreed at the PEP meeting what information parents will receive; this needs to be in line with the legal framework. A Social Worker will be able to advise on correspondence with parents and approaches to normalise consent for routine school activities.

i) Assessment, Monitoring and Review Procedures for Children in Care

Each looked-after pupil has a Care Plan which will refer to the Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a coordinated document that involves collaboration between the school, the Virtual School and social worker. The Designated teacher will take responsibility for the PEP This will identify, success/achievements, specific areas of concern and include achievable targets. The PEP developed by Durham is age group specific. Areas for consideration will include:

- Essential pupil information
- Contact and care information
- Education/(Provision)
- SEND (EHCP or SEND Support where appropriate)
- PEP meeting and attendance log
- Attendance records
- Attainment and progress
- Pupil views
- Parent/Carer views

- Careers planning
- Post 16 planning
- PEP outcomes (SMART targets) and use of pupil premium plus
- School change planning
- Next PEP arrangements

The PEP will be reviewed and updated termly, as part of the Statutory Reviewing process carried out by the Virtual School. The PEP will be stored on the Welfare Call system and hard copies circulated to relevant parties. School will circulate to carer; Social worker will circulate to parents if appropriate. If a child has a SEND support Plan or an EHCP this should be reflected in the PEP and a copy uploaded onto Welfare Call.

j) Durham will:

- Provide a Virtual Head Teacher who has responsibility for championing the education of CIC and PCIC, while acting as the Corporate Parent.
- Provide a CIC PEP Caseworker to support the school and the child, however it is the school/settings responsibility to complete the PEP and send out the invites to the meeting.
- Lead the drive to improve educational and social care standards for CIC
- Ensure that the education for this group of pupils is as good as that provided for every other pupil
- Ensure that CIC receive a full-time education in a mainstream setting wherever possible.
- Ensure that every CIC has a school to go to within 20 school days of coming into care or of coming to Durham from another authority
- Make sure that each CIC has a PEP according to national guidance
- Ensure that every school has a Designated Teacher for CIC and PCIC and that these teachers receive appropriate information, support, and training. This teacher should be a member of the schools Leadership team.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided whenever possible for CIC.
- Be available to provide advice and information for schools and parents / guardians for PCIC
- Provide advice and guidance for those CIC and Care Leavers in Further and Higher Education
- Be vigilant and proactive in identifying additional needs and the special education needs of CIC and work collaboratively with schools, other services and agencies to meet those needs
- Include CIC in events that celebrate the achievement of all children.
- Consider the views of all CIC through a variety of strategies.
- Be mindful of trauma and attachment and how some behaviours can be a reflection of previous experiences. Raise the profile across the school to provide an inclusive setting where CIC can thrive.

k) The Child/Young Persons Voice

In Durham we recognise that CIC have a voice and in order to reflect that voice across our education settings the Virtual Head works closely with the Children in Care Council (CICC). We support the **Children's Promise,** and this is reflected in all the work we do and our responsibilities as Corporate Parents. We ask all our schools to respect their voice and as a school acknowledge *that the following points are really import.*

- Treat you like all other children/young people in the school.

- Treat you with respect and to remember that everyone is different.
- To listen carefully to you and to try to act upon what you say
- To be honest and to share any information or changes with you
- To involve you in any decisions, plans or changes that affect you or your future.
- To give you the help and support that you need
- To help you to be the best that you can be in school, college, training, and work.
- To work together and support you during every change in your life.
- Not to share your information with everyone, only those who need to know to keep you safe.
- To think about the language, they use when they talk about you.
- We won't remove you from lessons for meetings without informing you beforehand, and where possible hold meetings out of normal school hours if you must attend. The Designated teacher or another trusted adult will advocate for you in meetings if it is your wish.

Further information available on The Virtual School Website:

DfE Statutory Guidance:

Statutory Guidance for Designated Teachers for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Statutory Guidance for Local Authority and Virtual School Head

Local Authority contact details for the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children are:

Durham Virtual School

Head of the Virtual School: Melanie Stubbs
CIC and PCIC Manager: Sarah Blenkinsopp

EMAIL: DurhamVirtualSchoolLAC@durham.gov.uk

melanie.stubbs@durham.gov.uk

sarah.blenkinsopp@durham.gov.uk

Written in consultation with Durham's Children in Care Council.